

Urban Gang Initiatives in the City of
Winnipeg

Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

This document is part of an ongoing effort of the Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg, Inc. (ACWI) to promote and disseminate information and knowledge on effective crime prevention programs, strategies and initiatives. This information is not intended to dictate what *must* be done nor is it intended to instruct organizations to replicate the models listed below. It is primarily meant to be a source of information for all those concerned with reducing delinquency, violence, and insecurity. It includes concise descriptions of innovative, promising and model prevention programs.

Please note that the ACW has reproduced, verbatim, Sections 2.0 and 3.0 of this report, from the paper “*Aboriginal Youth and Violent Gang Involvement in Canada: Quality Prevention Strategies*” written by Dr. Mark Totten, M.S.W., R.S.W., Ph.D. President, Totten and Associates, with his permission.

2.0 BACKGROUND

First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples comprise 4% of the population of Canada, or approximately 1,325,000 people (Statistics Canada, 2008). The majority lives in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and in the Northern Territories, and almost one-half of the Aboriginal population now live in urban areas. The proportion of Aboriginal peoples is increasing rapidly compared to every other group in Canadian society, and their average age is much younger than the rest of the population.

Most Aboriginal young people who grow up in high-risk environments do not become gang-involved – they have positive school and community supports, and particular protective individual attributes like perseverance and determination. Yet, Aboriginals experience a disproportionate burden of suffering, and this helps explain their participation in gangs. Factors related to this include racism, colonization, marginalization and dispossession; the loss of land, traditional culture, spirituality and values; and the breakdown of community kinship systems and Aboriginal law.

Psycho-social problems are linked to these factors, including:

- Entrenched and severe poverty, and overcrowded and substandard housing (Bittle, Hattem, Quann, & Muise, 2002; Dooley, Welsh, Floyd, Macdonald, & Fenning, 2005).
- High numbers of placements into child welfare, mental health and other institutions (Blackstock, Trocme, & Bennett, 2004; Grekul & LaBoucane- Benson, 2006; Trevethan, Auger, Moore, MacDonald, & Sinclair, 2002).

Alcohol and drug abuse: one quarter to two thirds of Aboriginal young people in remote communities inhale gasoline. The incidence of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) is very high (Canada, House of Commons Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs, 1990; RCAP, 1996).

- Low educational attainment and high rates of school drop-out and unemployment, which block conventional means of achieving success and bonding to broader Canadian society (RCAP, 1996; Statistics Canada, 2001).
- Ill-health and suicide: the suicide rate for young Aboriginals in many communities is approximately six times higher than the rate for non-Aboriginals (Chandler, Lalonde, Sokol, & Hallett, 2003; Shah, 1990; Statistics Canada, 2001; York, 1990).
- High rates of criminalization: Aboriginals are significantly over-represented at all stages of the justice system (Brzozowski, Taylor-Butts, & Johnson, 2006; Calverley, 2007; Dauvergne, 2008; Dauvergne & Li, 2006; Li, 2007).
- High rates of violence, where family violence, sexual assault, child witnessing of spousal violence, and homicide involving Aboriginals as both perpetrators and victims are serious concerns. On-reserve violent crime rates are elevated for both youth and adults. Youth are

accused of committing homicides on reserve at about 11 times the rate of youth elsewhere in Canada (Brzozowski et al., 2006; Calverley, 2007; Dauvergne, 2008; Dauvergne & Li, 2006; Li, 2007).

Aboriginal youth gang violence is different than that exhibited by other youth gangs in Canada. Rates of *internalized* violence, including suicide, drug overdose, and self-injurious behaviors are far higher than *externalized* criminal forms of violence. Preliminary Canadian data from the Prince Albert and Regina projects (Totten, 2009a and 2009b) suggest that far more Aboriginal youth gang members die from suicide and drug overdoses than homicide. These data also point to extremely high rates of other forms of self-injurious behaviours such as slashing and burning, particularly among young Aboriginal women. Most acts of physical violence in Aboriginal youth gangs are motivated by revenge, retaliation, and reputation (Kelly & Totten, 2002), and the result is that young Aboriginal men are killing other young Aboriginal men.

Most females who are gang-involved have personal relationships with male gang members, and those who do not become involved through sexual exploitation, forced prostitution, and sexual trafficking. Gang members use many forms of violence to initiate girls into and maintain their involvement in sex trafficking. Most girls are “gang-banged” as part of initiation into gangs. In some communities, family members socialize girls into the sex trade. This is a common way for families to make money and the practice is perceived as legitimate employment. In general, there is a poor fit between traditional, perpetrator-orientated theories of instrumental and expressive violence, and violence exhibited by Aboriginal gangs.

The process behind Aboriginal youth gang violence involves a number of identifiable steps:

1. Members feel loose bonds to the gang and there is fluid membership. Most have a fatalistic outlook on life, believing that they will die in the near future.
2. Members perceive a threat from a rival gang: this increases gang cohesion and solidifies temporary membership. The threat is often irrational, given the high degree of trauma most members have suffered. Intergenerational family ties are important, and often one family is at war with another family.
3. An incident takes place which sparks an escalation of gang violence. The gang responds in a chaotic and violent manner, similar to the process of spontaneous combustion. The fact that most gang members have cognitive impairments due to FASD contributes to the impulsive and unplanned nature of the violence.
4. The other gang retaliates. In this tinderbox-like environment, escalating violence affects the identities of those involved. This helps to spread gangs across neighbourhoods and reserves and increases membership. Collective and individual violence by Aboriginal gang members, whether

directed internally or at other gangs, which increases solidarity of gang members for a brief time, serving to unite them against a common enemy by increasing their dependence on each other and/or disciplining members.

Members talk about feeling a sense of honour, self-respect, and self-esteem when they engage in violence (Totten, 2009a and 2009b). It can also motivate some members to exit the gang when the violence reaches levels that are unacceptable to them.

3.0 Quality Violence Prevention, Intervention and Suppression Approaches

Although there are many Canadian gang prevention, intervention and suppression initiatives, few focus exclusively on Aboriginal youth, and most have not been adequately evaluated. It is hoped that this situation will change in the near future, given that the National Crime Prevention Centre is currently funding a number of multi-year projects, all with robust evaluation designs. We do nevertheless have some basis for determining what types of programs or approaches are likely to fail or to succeed.

What Doesn't Work?

In Canada, unproven gang suppression strategies have won out over evidence based treatment and prevention, and scarce resources are usually spent on “get tough” approaches. The approaches described below are proven to be ineffective and should be stopped.

- *Gang suppression program* evaluations have found mixed results. These programs seek to prosecute and convict gang members, especially gang leaders. Although effective in decreasing gang-related crime in the short term, they fail to address psychosocial issues such as child maltreatment, mental health, substance abuse, education and employment. Suppression initiatives should only be utilized to complement a range of interventions.
- *Incarcerating gang members* does not reduce future criminal behaviour (Aos, Miller, & Drake, 2006). Studies in the U.S.A. and Canada demonstrate that locking up gang members increases the chances of re-offending and staying in the gang (Benda & Tollet, 1999; Nafekh, 2002; Nafekh & Stys, 2004; Olson, Dooley, & Kane, 2004). Grouping early onset, high-risk youth together increases the negative bonding amongst members and leads to even more entrenched anti-social and criminal behaviour. Individualized approaches in facilities work best (such as cognitive-behavioural individual and family therapy), but gains are only maintained if adequate resources are provided to support long-term transition into the community following release.
- *Curriculum-based prevention programs* targeting youth at-risk for gang involvement, such as the American Gang Resistance Education and Training program (G.R.E.A.T.) and the D.A.R.E. program effect modest, short-term change. However, follow-up studies have found program participants to be as likely as non-participants to become gang members in the long-term (Esbensen & Osgoode, 1999; Esbensen, Osgood, Taylor, Peterson, & Freng, 2001; NIJ, 1998; U.S. Surgeon General, 2001).

- *Traditional detached-worker programs* are ineffective and can do more harm than good by increasing gang cohesion (Klein, 1995). Modern detached worker programs have included curriculum components addressing consequences of gang involvement, peer pressure, and substance abuse. These programs remain ineffective unless they are integrated into a comprehensive and coordinated community-wide approach.
- *Community development approaches* founded on the premise that there is a singular and cohesive “Aboriginal community” do not work. In reality, there are many competing interests in most reserves and urban neighbourhoods, and divisions reflecting religious and spiritual lines, access to income and wealth, gender, clans and ethnicities, family and gang allegiances. Programs must effectively engage these subgroups and address the concerns and priorities of each.
- *Child welfare models* that bring youth into care are replicating Canada’s sad legacy of Residential Schools. Grouping teens with varying degrees of antisocial conduct and attitudes in child welfare facilities leads to delinquency training. Negative attention-forcing behaviour is highly resistant to change: reprimands serve as rewards because they are reinforced by the reaction of peers. Longitudinal studies repeatedly show association with deviant peers is the strongest correlate of escalation in problem behaviors in adolescence. Children living in group care face much higher risks of being victimized by bullying, sexual abuse, physical restraints by staff, and ultimately being criminalized. A lack of permanency planning contributes to many Aboriginal children being moved from placement to placement, which contributes to attachment problems and deep-rooted feelings of rejection and shame.

4.0 WHAT IS WORKING IN WINNIPEG

4.1 Just TV - Broadway Neighbourhood Centre

The Just TV project is an initiative for gang-involved Aboriginal youth and young adults aged 16-24 living in Winnipeg. It provides participants with alternatives to gang activity through art based programming. The project is supported by Public Safety Canada, National Crime Prevention Centre, Youth Gang Prevention Fund and is delivered under the umbrella of the Broadway Neighbourhood Centre (BNC), a not-for-profit grass roots agency dedicated to enhancing the quality of life of residents. The project started June 01, 2007 and runs until March 2011.

The Broadway Neighbourhood Centre (BNC) and Resource Assistance for Youth are part of the West Broadway Youth Service Providers Network, a coalition of youth serving agencies in the neighbourhood. This coalition has identified significant gang activity in the West Broadway area, and sees high risk young people becoming increasingly involved in these gangs and related street crime.

According to the City of Winnipeg’s Neighbourhood Profiles, almost 14.1% of the population in the West Broadway area is between 20 and 24.2 This figure is double that of the overall proportion of youth in Winnipeg (7%).³ In this area, 64.4% of the population falls below the low-income average - almost triple that of Winnipeg as a whole (20.3%).⁴ This combination of a large youth population, high levels of poverty and related social stressors creates a setting that fosters vulnerability among youth. In such settings, gangs become a viable alternative to living in a marginalized situation where legitimate opportunity structures are limited.

Just TV was developed in consultation with community partners and stakeholders and through participation in the Manitoba Gang Reduction Strategy. This Strategy is a three-pronged approach that balances prevention with intervention and suppression efforts. It includes a combination of direct interventions, complementary efforts and partnerships with law enforcement agencies and community organizations.

Just TV addresses multiple risk factors such as substance abuse, lack of positive social influences/positive role models, family histories of gang activity/involvement, low school success, lack of employment, anti-social behaviour, and involvement in the justice system.

The Evidence Base

The Just TV approach combines outreach, support and skill building activities. Its development was influenced by combining available evidence from the OJJDP Comprehensive Gang (or “Spergel”) Model and the Philadelphia Youth Violence Reduction Partnership (YVRP). Evidence from the National Arts and Youth Demonstration Project was also influential.

OJJDP Comprehensive Gang (or “Spergel”) Model

The Spergel Model is a balanced, three-pronged approach that encompasses prevention, intervention and suppression activities. The model presumes that gangs become chronic and serious problems in communities where key organizations are inadequately integrated and sufficient resources are not available to target gang-involved youth. To address these problems, the Comprehensive Gang Model calls for community institutions - including law enforcement, social welfare agencies, and grass roots organizations - to work together to achieve a more integrated, team-oriented approach. The main goal of the Spergel Model is to reduce and prevent gang crime and violence. The model was piloted in the Little Village neighbourhood of Chicago, Illinois, starting in 1992. With some subsequent modifications, this design gave rise to the OJJDP Comprehensive Community-Wide Gang Model in 1995 and has been implemented and tested in 5 sites across the United States. The evaluation concluded that:

- serious gang violence among the targeted gang members was lower than among members of comparable gangs in the area. Specifically, there were fewer arrests for serious gang crimes (especially aggravated batteries and aggravated assaults) involving members of targeted gangs in comparison with a control group of youths from the same gangs and members of other gangs in Little Village;
- using a combination of various social interventions involving youth outreach workers and suppression tactics, was more effective for more-violent youths, while the sole use of youth workers was more effective for less-violent youths;
- the project was apparently most effective in assisting older youths to significantly reduce their criminal activities (particularly violence) more quickly than would have been the case if no project services had been provided; and
- the project was particularly successful in reducing drug arrests for program youth compared to comparison and quasi program youth, who showed increased drug arrests.

Philadelphia Youth Violence Reduction Partnership (YVRP)

The Philadelphia Youth Violence Reduction Partnership is an intervention project involving members of street gangs in police precincts where the homicide rate among young people is the highest. The project was implemented in the first precinct in 1999 and was later extended to two additional precincts; essentially, the program aims to reduce violent crime-particularly homicide-committed by or against young people.

The YVRP is a result of the close partnership between various public agencies (police, probation) and community organizations (street workers, religious organizations) who work with the client group. Rather than working independently, the YVRP focuses on cooperation and coordination between the organizations. The joint action that results intensifies interventions with young people and further discourages them from engaging in crime. Another goal of this work is to promote social reintegration.

The evaluation data show that the homicide rate attributable to street gangs decreased overall in the precincts where YVRP was implemented and that close surveillance made it possible to detect a large number of offences that were subsequently penalized. The front-line workers were able to persuade a significant number of young people to attend assistance or rehabilitation programs.

National Arts and Youth Demonstration Project

In this project, 183 youth from diverse social, economic, and cultural cities across Canada participated in arts programming over the course of a 9 month school year. A number of behaviour and attitude factors were tracked closely. According to a 2004 evaluation of the project, youth participants demonstrated reduced conduct problems, reduction of emotional problems, increased confidence, improved interpersonal skills, improved conflict resolution skills, and improved problem solving skills as compared to a control group.

Just TV Program Participants

Just TV works with Aboriginal youth aged 16-24, who are at risk of joining or already involved in gangs.

Just TV Key Partners

Just TV involves many partnerships in the community. Some of the key organizations involved include:

- Resource Assistance for Youth
- Arty City
- Eat it (local organic grocery store)
- Manitoba Arts Council
- Manitoba Theatre for Young People
- Winnipeg Arts Council
- West Broadway Youth Service Providers Network (WBYSPPN)
- Wolseley Family Place
- West Broadway Neighbourhood Housing Resource Centre
- West Broadway Youth Outreach

- University of Winnipeg Students Association
- Government of Manitoba

Program Components

Outreach

Just TV Outreach/Support Workers liaise with community organizations and criminal justice practitioners to identify and recruit youth who are in gangs or at risk of gang involvement. Once identified, the youths' needs are assessed and the social support services that address their particular needs are identified. Through this process, the Outreach/Support worker develops rapport with each participant and encourages progress while monitoring participation and behaviour.

Support

The support component of the project is tailored to each youth. It is designed to develop self-knowledge, empathy and self-confidence as well as interpersonal, social, and daily living skills that enhance abilities to resist gang involvement or re-engagement. On a case by case basis, the Outreach staff help each participant deal with barriers. For example, Just TV staff help youth find affordable and clean housing, ensure they attend court dates, or help them enroll with Employment and Income Assistance. In addition to life skills assistance, youth are provided with workshops, exercises and training in goal setting and life planning to encourage them to focus their new-found self-confidence on education and vocational training.

Activities

The activities component is focused on the creation of a TV station. Youth participants receive professional instruction as they plan, write, shoot, edit and broadcast their own three to five minute "TV shows". The shows include drama, journalism, music videos, and commercials for local businesses. The key element is to connect with youth and guide them to work towards achieving concrete goals. As their main program goal, participants create a DVD targeted to younger teens that encourages healthy life choices and dissuades gang and crime participation.

The project is also undertaking a number of group documentary projects. These include a video in partnership with Onashowewin focusing on this organization's mandate of restorative and holistic approaches to justice. Another video documents the turning point in the life of a gang involved individual, and the process of reconnection to his Aboriginal heritage. The documentary component is a way for youth to develop empathy and community engagement that helps them acknowledge consequences of their actions. Through helping to educate younger people, the participants in Just TV recognize their own challenges, mistakes, and opportunities.

Evaluation Design

A comprehensive evaluation of the project is being conducted by a third party evaluator. The purpose of the evaluation is to thoroughly document the project's implementation and impacts in order to build knowledge of what program components work to prevent or reduce gang involvement.

The evaluation is structured to collect information from participants, criminal justice practitioners, social workers, and educators on participants' level of gang involvement and/or level of risk for becoming involved in gangs before program initiation, midway through the program, and upon

completion of the program. Analysis of this data will indicate if there have been changes over time in participants' levels of risk and levels of gang involvement.

Preliminary Results

As of June, 2009, there were 30 outreach and support participants, and 26 activity participants. Referrals to the program have been higher than anticipated due to an emphasis on recruitment by staff and the spread of information about the program by word of mouth in the community. An early participant in Just TV, who created an urban music video highlighting issues of childhood abandonment, and the connections of it to his future criminal activity, was reunited with his family and has become a role model in the program. His story will form the basis of a detailed case study that will be used to educate and raise awareness among young people of the realities of the gang lifestyle.

Implementation Observations

Attendance

Due to complex environments, there are often external circumstances that make it difficult for the youth participants to attend the 4.5 hours, twice a week programming for the full nine month period. During 2009, eight participants attended the full Just TV programming for the entire nine months of the program year. Others attended in short bursts and left for periods of time. Just TV staff try to stay in touch with all the participants and help them through outreach and support activities. When external issues are resolved, participants come back to the activity programming. The youth are always welcomed back but sometimes their space in the TV Station activities has been filled by someone else. Every effort is made to reconnect youth with their video or creative projects when they return to the program. A variety of strategies are being tried to balance the number of participants that can be successfully involved at any given time and the reality that attendance is not constant. Just TV staff have also noticed that there is interest from younger, at risk youth and that they often seem more willing to attend regularly. Exploration of how to include youth 13-15 is underway.

Media as an Intervention Tool

Media and music in particular, are successful means for attracting youth to the program. Due to the wide reaching nature of interests shown by Just TV participants, staff are required to be very adept in a variety of artistic mediums and to have openness to trying various forms of artistic activity. Just TV employs three staff each with different artistic backgrounds and interests. Hip Hop has proven to be powerful for engaging the participants. It is a music genre conducive to communicating messages about street and gang experiences.

Training participants to use technical equipment requires time from professionals and access to equipment. This can be expensive but is proving well worth the investment as it provides the youth with marketable skills that increase the likelihood of finding jobs. Increasingly, the video products of the program are being submitted to film festivals, music showcases and other community events. This provides opportunities to demonstrate success that most of the youth have never had access to before.

Participant Safety

Participants in the project have history in other parts of the city and for those who are gang affiliated, attending the program activities means they may be entering parts of the city that are unsafe for them because of the presence of rival gangs. These youth are provided with transportation to and from the program in an effort to avoid safety problems. Efforts are also made to ensure that only one youth involved or affiliated with each gang is enrolled in the project per year. All participants are required to drop their colours upon entering the building. These strategies help reduce the opportunities for gang affiliations to spark violent behaviour and staff report that youth from rival gangs are working side by side during program activities to help one another with their projects.

Skilled Staff

Program success and particularly attendance is reliant on the ability of staff to connect and inspire youth. It has been demonstrated over the last two years of programming that the success of a creatively based program such as Just TV relies on having staff who are artists themselves. This means finding staff with a very particular skill set combining artistic experience with the abilities, interest and capacity to work with very high risk youth.

Evaluation

Program staff has developed a system for recording evaluation data, including a record for the number of contacts each staff member has with participants. Feedback received by project staff as a result of evaluation and monitoring data has assisted them to adapt and change the programming to better suit the needs of participants.

4.2 Project O.A.S.I.S. – New Directions

Project O.A.S.I.S. is designed to prevent at-risk, newcomer youth aged 12-19 living in Winnipeg from joining gangs. The project includes neighbourhood mobilization, referral services for individuals and families, trauma and loss treatment, job training and education, and recreational programming.

Project O.A.S.I.S. is delivered by New Directions for Children, Youth, Adults and Families. It is supported by Public Safety Canada, National Crime Prevention Centre, Youth Gang Prevention Fund. The project started in June 2008 and runs until March 2011.

In response to the gang related, violent deaths of four young men on the streets of Winnipeg in 2005, Project Violence Intervention and Prevention (V.I.P) emerged. Project V.I.P. staff noted sharp increases in the involvement of young, newcomer, refugee youth in gang related violence and crime.¹ They also identified the different and complex dimensions of working with youth and families who have experienced the horrors and traumas of war and violence in their home countries. Simultaneously, the province of Manitoba began consultations with community partners and stakeholders to develop the Manitoba Gang Reduction Strategy.³ The Strategy further identified needs for more comprehensive gang prevention, reduction and suppression for newcomer, refugee youth. Project O.A.S.I.S was developed to respond to these needs and fill gaps in services. It provides newcomer, refugee youth and their families with gang prevention, gang intervention and gang suppression programming, including assistance complying with criminal justice system conditions and with exiting gangs.

The Evidence Base

Much like Just TV, Project O.A.S.I.S. activities were developed and designed by combining evidence from the Office of Juvenile Justice Comprehensive Gang (or “Spergel”) Model and the Milwaukee Wraparound program.

OJJDP Comprehensive Gang (or “Spergel”) Model

Milwaukee Wraparound

The Milwaukee Wraparound is a comprehensive program that focuses on delivering strength-based, individualized care to delinquent youth and their families. It was designed to reduce the number of youth being institutionalized by providing family-based treatment and programs within the community. The program targets youth ages 13 to 17 with serious emotional, behavioural, and mental health needs and their families.

The goals of Wraparound Milwaukee are to:

- reduce anti-social behaviour;
- help families access available services;
- increase association with pro-social peers;
- increase family cohesion; and
- minimize out-of-home placements.

Evaluation has demonstrated that youth who received interventions from Wraparound Milwaukee had significant reductions in recidivism rates. They had significant decreases in felony referrals, misdemeanour referrals. They also committed fewer sex offences, property offences, assault offences, and weapons offences.

Project O.A.S.I.S. Program Participants

Project O.A.S.I.S. works with male, African, refugee youth and their families. The youth are between 12 – 19 years of age, have come in contact with the Youth Criminal Justice System and have experienced trauma and loss as a result of war and violence in their home countries.

Project O.A.S.I.S. Key Partners

The Project O.A.S.I.S. involves many partnerships in the community. Some of the key partners involved include:

- The Manitoba Youth Centre
- The Manitoba Adolescent Treatment Centre
- Faculty of Social Work, University of Manitoba
- Mount Carmel Clinic
- Needs Centre for War Affected Families
- Welcome Place
- Manitoba Labour and Immigration

Program Components

Referrals to the program come from a variety of sources but most often through information about youth who are involved in the Criminal Justice System. Case workers make weekly visits to Headingly Correctional Centre, Winnipeg Remand Centre and Manitoba Youth Centre, where they provide support to youth. They meet with institution staff and justice officials to develop plans to support youth as they transition from incarceration back in to the community.

Project O.A.S.I.S. encompasses the following activities:

Wraparound Service

The youth, family members, corrections staff, and project staff are all involved in the process of conducting in depth assessments of each participant and developing a solution-focused intervention plan, including referrals to assistance agencies. The particular needs of newcomer, refugee youth have resulted in the establishment of a network of culturally appropriate resources and service providers. Some examples of the services included in the plans are cognitive behavioural intervention groups that encourage change in negative behaviours, attitudes and patterns; drug and alcohol treatment programs; services specializing in sexualized behaviour of youth and children; health services; housing services; and education, employment, cultural and recreational resources. Specific plans for each family are also developed to strengthen the protective factors already present and reduce the impacts of risk factors. Plans can include family counselling and support and referrals for individual members to services that will increase the overall economic, educational and skill levels within the family.

Treatment for Trauma and Loss

War-related trauma and loss have profound impacts on the physical and emotional well being of people. This is a significant and unique influencing element in the gang related activity of newcomer refugee youth. Project O.A.S.I.S. provides culturally sensitive and appropriate healing and treatment that brings together best practices from social work, psychiatry, music therapy, family therapy and mental health services. The knowledge and experience of the families and of their local communities are also important resources for full understanding of the difficulties youth are struggling with.

Successful treatment for trauma and loss takes time and is essential for improving the mental health and well being of the youth. As a result, the foundation for better problem solving and for making positive and healthy life choices is rebuilt.

Employment Resources

Work experience and opportunities for training are key components of each participant's plan. Resources include referral to New Directions' Training Resources for Youth program and to other local work experience services, recruitment of specific employers who provide opportunities to explore different types of work, and education for the youth about employer expectations, interview techniques, resume development and workplace etiquette. Where required, on the job coaching is also provided.

Recreation Services

Participants are introduced to a variety of pro-social recreational, cultural and religious activities. They get assistance to join programs that already exist and have also initiated activities that are new to the community including an African drumming group, a soccer team and a marathon relay training group.

Evaluation Design

A comprehensive evaluation of the project is being conducted by a third party evaluator. The purpose of the Evaluation is to thoroughly document the Project O.A.S.I.S. implementation and impacts in order to contribute to the knowledge of what project components work best to prevent or reduce gang involvement.

A variety of data collection and analytical techniques, including both quantitative methods (risk assessment surveys, financial analyses) and qualitative methods (interviews, field observations of programs, client file audits) are being used. Youth participants and their families and community stakeholders will be interviewed before, during and after program activities to measure change over time. A pre-, mid, post and follow-up design will allow for the measurement of change over time. A non-randomized comparison group will also be used to inform the project outcomes.

Preliminary Outcomes

There are currently 24 young men involved in Project O.A.S.I.S., some of whom are incarcerated. Project O.A.S.I.S. has been working intensively with the families including making home visits, assisting with access to employment opportunities, introducing them to services such as food banks, and providing interpreters.

Project O.A.S.I.S. is also providing support to the youth for education and employment. Three youth are currently involved in General Educational Development studies in literacy and numeracy and two are successfully involved in work placements. Over 30 employer contacts have been developed in to an Employer Network. Links with other community organizations and services have been forged in order to support youth and families, notably to provide anger management, recreation and psychological assessments for youth.

Over the last three months, some youth engaged in the program have successfully transitioned from probation and have not re-offended. More time is needed to fully explore the relationship between recidivism rates and involvement in the program.

Implementation Observations

Parents and Families

Reaching and engaging parents of the youth are very challenging. Parents are struggling with their own trauma and loss and with the stresses of understanding and settling in a new country. Many of the families are being led by single mothers and some do not have the time or resources to participate in the program. Others do not want to be involved. Project O.A.S.I.S. staff continue to reach out to families and explore new ways of engaging them. Currently the project is working

intensively with five of the families. The parents are accompanied on visits to see their incarcerated sons and to court appointments.

Staff provide information and resources to help with understanding the Canadian Criminal Justice System. The staff works together with the parents to develop strategies to be used when the youth come back to the community to ensure they follow the conditions of their release. Once engaged and receiving support, parents report they are appreciative.

Cultural Issues

Some youth are suspicious about Western medicine and hesitant to accept treatment. This makes it difficult for program staff to fully implement programs and treatment for youth. Involving elders in the project allows opportunities for youth to learn and experience alternative, non-western ways of treatment. Families also feel comfortable involving elders in the process.

Behavioural issues

The depth and degree of the psychological and emotional issues experienced by the youth is not surprising given their backgrounds. Many of the youth have anger issues, and experience abrupt swings from feeling calm to aggressive. These are symptoms of trauma and recovery is essential to the youth being able to move forward. Without recovery, they end up back on the streets without the skills to understand what drives them and why. It has been critical to the program to build a strong network of supports for this healing work that includes psychological assessment and grief counselling.

Incentive Programming

The lack of resources for food and survival are often part of the reasons youth become involved in criminal activities. Incentives like stipends are very important to stabilizing youth and getting them engaged in the program. Gift cards have not been found to be as useful as the participants do not want or cannot use them easily. Cash incentives are sometimes difficult to justify and policies regarding them need to be clear and consistent for success.

Participant Engagement

Regular and predictable attendance is an ongoing issue. There are times when youth are present but not ready or able to participate. It is important to gauge their situations and see what issues they are dealing with. This helps to determine what is best for them on that day, and to maintain flexibility and resourcefulness. Continued participation in classroom, group and individual programming indicates youth are attached to the project. Project staff know that it is vital to stick with the youth through good and bad days and experiences in order to build relationships that become the foundation for change.

4.3 Turning The Tides - Ndinawemaaganag Endaawaad Inc. (Ndinawe)

The Turning the Tides: Community-Led Gang Prevention through Mentorship project (Turning the Tides) is designed to prevent at-risk youth aged 15-19 from joining and engaging in gang activities in Winnipeg's North End. The project follows an intensive mentorship model designed to intervene with youth gang activity and related violence. Turning the Tides is delivered by Ndinawemaaganag Endaawaad Inc. (Ndinawe) and is supported by Public Safety Canada, National Crime Prevention Centre, Youth Gang Prevention Fund. The project started in December, 2007 and runs until March 2011.

Winnipeg's North End has experienced gang activity, including sexual exploitation of children and youth, gun violence and drug related crime. Since 2001 the youth crime rate in the North End has increased, resulting in higher incidents of violent crimes, including homicide, attempted murder and assault.

Turning the Tides was developed in consultation with community partners and stakeholders and through participation in the Manitoba Gang Reduction Strategy. This Strategy is a three-pronged approach that balances prevention with intervention and suppression efforts. It includes a combination of direct interventions, complementary efforts and partnerships with law enforcement agencies and community organizations. Turning the Tides addresses gaps in services and supports through holistic, integrated approaches to working with youth, families and the community in preventing and reducing gang involvement.

The Evidence Base

The program designed by Turning the Tides is based on a combination of elements from successful programs. It has similarities to mentoring programs and the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) Comprehensive Gang (or "Spiegel") Model.

Mentoring

Mentoring is a process that focuses on relationships to teach, impart, or institute changes in behaviours or attitudes. When well-implemented, mentoring can be a useful strategy with at-risk youth who experience multiple risk factors for delinquency, such as few positive role models, few opportunities for community or after-school activities and poor school performance.³ The approach assumes that by creating pro-social attachments, commitment to socially appropriate goals, and involvement in conventional activities, youth will be less likely to engage in delinquent behaviours because they have more to lose from the negative consequences of crime. Big Brother, Big Sisters⁵ and Quantum Opportunities Program⁶ have evaluated mentoring components with positive results.

Turning the Tides Program Participants

Turning the Tides works with male and female youth, aged 15 to 19 who are at risk of gang involvement or already involved in gangs.

Turning The Tides Key Partners

Turning the Tides involves many partnerships in the community. Some of the key organizations involved include:

- United Way of Winnipeg
- Neighbourhoods Alive!
- Youth Justice Renewal
- Ndinawe Transitional School

Program Components

Turning the Tides participants are identified through a variety of mechanisms. Direct referrals are

received from the Manitoba Spotlight Program⁸, Manitoba Justice, self-referral, Salvation Army Youth Justice, and existing programs including Ndinawe's safe house, youth resource centre services, Fine Option, and ongoing street outreach activities. Referrals are also received through ongoing consultations with community partners such as police, probation services, Ma Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre's Family Services and relevant child and family service authorities.

Mentoring

Participants are matched with experiential mentors who provide positive adult role models and access to appropriate programs, services, employment and other opportunities that help youth find alternatives to gang involvement. Mentors receive referrals and meet with potential participants to assess their needs and readiness for the program. Once accepted into the project, individual plans are developed for each participant. Needs, relevant risk and protective factors, youth interests and aptitudes are taken in to account. Mentors help youth define educational goals and aspirations and link them to appropriate resources such as transitional school and tutoring to build towards the part-time, supported work component of the project. Mentors also link and monitor youth participation in relevant recreation, counselling, addiction treatment and cultural activities. Once the plan of activities is established, structured daily meetings give Mentors and youth opportunities to build solid and meaningful relationships and ensure plans and activities are appropriate. In addition to the benefits of building constructive relationships through mentoring, youth are also exposed to a range of programs and opportunities to experience "giving back" to the community. One of the intentions of this is to "ladder" youth into opportunities for part time work and further training.

Employment Skills

Part-time work opportunities are provided through Ndinawe programs and partners who identify paid, part-time employment opportunities. Mentors work with the Program Coordinator, employer and youth to provide support and monitoring throughout the work placement. The goals of this part of the project are to improve work readiness skills and attitudes, provide legitimate income earning experiences, increase income and increase labour market attachment.

Community Involvement

The project involves ongoing and deliberate discussion with youth and families, service providers, government representatives, police and a wide variety of community partners to identify what is working for youth and the community. Program staff share tools, practices and lessons learned with community stakeholders as the project unfolds.

Evaluation Design

A comprehensive evaluation of the project is being conducted by a third party evaluator. The purpose of the evaluation is to thoroughly document the Turning the Tides project implementation and impacts in order to contribute to the knowledge of what project components work best to prevent or reduce gang involvement.

A variety of data collection and analytical techniques, including both quantitative methods (risk assessment surveys, financial analyses) and qualitative methods (interviews, field observations of programs, client file audits) are being used. The sampling strategy is to use a non-randomized comparison group design through a pre-, mid, post and follow-up test, to measure change over time.

Preliminary Outcomes

From January 31 to June 30 2010, the project was at capacity with 24 youth. One youth was on a waiting list. Project staff reported they were connecting well with families and youth, developing partnerships with community organizers, and providing recreational resources. As of December, 2010 the program had eight youth in community work placements. Two of the youth were hired on as full-time, permanent employees, and five youth were almost ready to transition into employment in local businesses.

Implementation Observations

Building Strong Relationships

The success of a mentoring approach lies in the development of strong relationships based on high levels of trust between Mentors and youth. Given the experience of the youth and their general lack of trust, building these relationships in relatively short time spans is challenging. Staff use a log book extensively to record day to day activities and observations. They meet together weekly to review and discuss progress of each youth and brainstorm together on ideas for overcoming barriers to building relationships. Project staff find that when they are all well informed about each youth, they are better positioned to support one another, and make the most of opportunities that may arise to improve the quality of relationships with youth participants. When staff do community service work along side youth, strong connections are forged quite quickly. This helps youth see Mentors differently from other adult authority figures in their lives and provides one to one time together that allows issues to surface naturally.

Accepting the Pace of Change

Initial adjustment to the program and accepting that progress can be slow is hard for many of the youth participants. There is an initial expectation that immediate, major changes in life will occur as a result of entering the program when in fact, it takes slow, steady steps and hard work to achieve the goals of leaving gang life styles. The intensive, one on one, individual approach is critical to dealing with these issues. Mentors anticipate the ups and downs youth will experience, are prepared for mistakes and set backs and use these to help the youth realize that the changes they need to make permeate every aspect of their lives. Working to understand what motivates each youth to change is a key role for Mentors. Each participant brings a unique combination of experience with gangs, families, and communities and keys to successful change come from within so Mentors spend as much time with the youth as they can to understand what makes them tick. The power of recognizing the smallest indicators of change and of patience as youth struggle with the issues in their lives cannot be underestimated.

Participation

To increase participation and encourage learning, program staff continually search for alternative ways to incorporate life skill training in useful and entertaining activities. Staff have found incorporating life skills teaching with recreational, cultural and employment activities a successful approach. For example, after watching a movie, youth participate in a critical discussion about race and gender issues based on what was portrayed. Participants have shown a positive change in behaviour following these themed discussions. Cultural activities such as Sun Dances that provide insight and appreciation of heritage also sustain interest and participation. Participation issues

become less problematic as youth successfully transition from community service hours to employment placements. They become fully engaged in understanding the mechanics of budgeting money and workplace etiquette and experience success with employers that motivate them to keep moving forward.

Gender-Based Programming

The needs and services required for female participants differ from those of the male participants. Female participants are less likely to get involved in program activities being offered and therefore, building strong relationships with program staff has been more difficult. Experimentation with different curriculum is underway and discussions with female participants are helping to figure out what will work best for them.

4.4 Ojijita Pimatiswin Kinamatwin (OPK)

Ojijita Pimatiswin Kinamatwin (OPK), is a North End, community- based program that works with Aboriginal street gang members. They learn construction skills on the job in the course of renovating North End houses. The project is supported by the Province of Manitoba and the Winnipeg Partnership Agreement. The project started in 2001 and runs until March 2011.

Meaningful change equires long term solutions aimed at addressing the poverty and systemic racism that are the root causes of street gangs and violence. Building pride and self-esteem through the provision of the right kinds of jobs and investing in more community recreation and drop-in centres for kids and families in the North End are important steps in that direction. Community groups know that this strategy will work because there are successful, small-scale examples— such as OPK and BUILD—now operating in Winnipeg’s North End.

OPK addresses multiple risk factors such as substance abuse, lack of positive social influences/positive role models, family histories of gang activity/involvement, low school success, lack of employment, anti-social behaviour, and involvement in the justice system.

OPK Program Participants

OPK works with Aboriginal youth aged 16-24, who are already involved in gangs. Participants do not have to quit the gangs and unless they commit serious crimes, they are still welcome in the program.

OPK Key Partners

OPK involves many partnerships in the community. Some of the key organizations involved include:

- Winnipeg Partnership Agreement
- Local Investment Towards Employment (LITE)
- North End Housing Project
- United Way of Winnipeg
- Neighbourhoods Alive

Program Components

Ogjiita Pimatiswin Kinamatwin (OPK) is a small non-profit organization in Winnipeg's inner city. The organization works with offenders who are newly released from a federal penitentiary or provincial jail. All participants in the OPK program are members of an Aboriginal street gang. These groups are involved in low-level drug dealing, rivalries with other gangs, or disputes over territory that can result in violence. The gangs take names that emphasize their Aboriginal identity. Participants in OPK have served time for such crimes as manslaughter, forcible confinement, weapons offenses and drug trafficking. Those coming out of the penitentiary have served sentences greater than two years. The OPK Program was started at the request of leaders of one of Winnipeg's more well-known street gangs. These young men indicated that some of their members had reached their twenties, had young children, and were tired of constant surveillance by police, and repeated experiences of incarceration. They were looking for opportunities to try to live more 'legitimate' lives. With long criminal histories, limited education, and little job experience, however, there appeared to be few openings for these men.

The OPK Program provided work in an inner-city non-profit housing renewal project. Training was provided by Aboriginal trades persons who were themselves ex-offenders. The Program included Aboriginal cultural learning, counselling, and referral to educational opportunities.

Gang members recently released from prison have for a variety of reasons become interested in leaving behind the criminal part of their gang involvement, and developing lifestyles less likely to bring them into conflict with the law. For the men in this program, desistance from crime did not necessarily mean a departure from the gang itself. Rather, they see themselves as having taken a conscious decision not to be involved in criminal activity, but not to leave the gang. The scheme works with them on learning carpentry skills as part of an urban housing renovation project. A major part of the program is the encouragement of pro-social values through traditional Aboriginal cultural teachings. Use of the 'gang' ethic builds teamwork and commitment not to reoffend among members.

Preliminary Results

As of March 31, 2010, a total of 69 participants have taken part in the OPK program since 2001. There is a waiting list of approximately 30 Aboriginal youth that wish to take part in the program. Referrals to the program have been higher than anticipated due to an emphasis on recruitment by staff and the spread of information about the program by word of mouth in the community.

Since 2001, the OPK participants have renovated 25 derelict houses in Winnipeg's North End.

Implementation Observations

Participant Safety

Participants in the project have history in other parts of the city and for those who are gang affiliated, attending the program activities means they may be entering parts of the city that are

unsafe for them because of the presence of rival gangs. These youth are provided with transportation to and from the program in an effort to avoid safety problems. Efforts are also made to ensure that only one youth involved or affiliated with each gang is enrolled in the project per year. All participants are required to drop their colours upon entering the building. These strategies help reduce the opportunities for gang affiliations to spark violent behaviour and staff report that youth from rival gangs are working side by side during program activities to help one another with their projects.

Skilled Staff

OPK currently has 9.5 employees and a budget of about \$450,000 per year.

Holistic Healing

The staff of OPK have concluded that to assist gang members in the process of desistance it must deal holistically with the effects of colonization. OPK's Program cannot be interpreted simply as employment training. Nor is it a matter of gang members coming to view themselves as no longer criminally involved. It works to address the issues of structure, culture and biography as these relate to the gang members wishing to desist. Participants in OPK must cognitively and emotionally come to terms with their position as colonized people within Canadian society. This intrapersonal and social transformation may be described as symbolic healing or decolonization.

Holistic healing has a number of dimensions. In the OPK Program at least four appear critical to desistance. Subjectively, healing involves dealing with the biographical trauma of painful life experiences such as child- hood abuse or abandonment by parents who themselves may have been traumatized by colonization, largely through the residential schools. Second, it involves dealing with negative racial stereotyping that participants experience from an early age, part of the structural legacy of colonialism as it has impacted on each of them. Third, OPK participants must develop for themselves a coherent and acceptable explanation for their position as low income, often unemployed citizens, who occupy the lowest stratum of an unequal and racially segmented society. The acquisition of 'lost' Aboriginal cultural teachings is part of this process. Finally, this healing must involve developing new forms of social capital that go beyond the limited bonding capital offered by involvement in a gang, and provides bridging capital and linkage capital that can enable participants to build new lives. It is these forms of social capital that offer the potential for moving beyond the structural constraints that exist in society. It is the lack of such capital that may make successful desistance more difficult for these men.

Opportunities are provided by OPK for participants to experience symbolic healing in several parts of its Program. Participants regularly meet with Aboriginal elders in counselling or advising relationships. Counselling is offered in terms of wisdom reflected in Aboriginal traditions. Advice is based on applying traditional values to stressful and trying life situations. In contrast to biomedical healing, this process is concerned with the social aspects of illness. It teaches people to cope with trauma and dysfunction. It gives them a coherent explanation for why trauma may have occurred. If the trauma cannot be overcome, symbolic healing offers a way of coping with the ongoing pain. Symbolic healing invokes emotional reactions, it helps create new patterns of thought, and it takes

place in the presence of healers who are perceived to exemplify the healing path. Participants in OPK have regular opportunities to take part in traditional ceremonies such as the sweat lodge, the pipe ceremony, and the Sundance (or Thirst Dance). These ceremonies are also encounters with a traditional cultural value system, opportunities for cathartic release of emotions, and they take place in the presence of a traditional healer.

Evaluation

Program staff has developed a system for recording evaluation data, including a record for the number of contacts each staff member has with participants. Feedback received by project staff as a result of evaluation and monitoring data has assisted them to adapt and change the programming to better suit the needs of participants.

Research has shown that men who are involved in street gangs are currently on a path that will likely lead them into prison. Federal imprisonment costs us all about \$80,000 per year per inmate. If the 30 men who are interested in working with OPK end up following this path, then it will cost us \$2.4 million per year to keep them locked up.

With these figures, it quickly becomes obvious that there is the potential to reduce the level of violence, but save money at the same time by investing in an expansion of the work that an organization such as OPK does. It has also been shown that young men and women—at least some of them people who might otherwise be attracted to street gang membership—are working in significant numbers with the BUILD programs in the North End. One of these programs involves renovations to a number of large Manitoba Housing units. To its credit the provincial government has agreed to hire locally, and there has been no difficulty in finding workers. Another program involves retrofitting buildings. Again, large numbers of young people have signed on to do this work, likely saving the province considerable cost by steering these youngsters into the workforce and away from crime.

4.5 Onashowewin

Onashowewin is an Aboriginal justice program that works with victims and offenders, as well as community members and elders. It accepts referrals from a number of sources for both youth and adults who have been charged with a variety of offences. In addition to a case development model, Onashowewin utilizes a number of processes to resolve conflict where charges have been laid and these include victim/offender mediation, Community Justice Forums and conciliation as well as specific programs for offenders.

The approach of Onashowewin is to try and address underlying issues that have led to criminal behaviors and make the offenders accountable for their actions. The offenders may participate in one of the in-house programs or may be referred to other community programs, services or assessments. We accept both young offenders as well as adults at various points in the justice system. The objective of Onashowewin is to help restore, heal and transform relationships and the community.

Onashowewin accepts referrals from a number of sources for people who have been charged with a variety of offences. They accept both young offenders as well as adults at various points in the justice system. They offer victim/offender mediation, Community Justice Forums, conciliation as well as programs for offenders.

Their program is not retributive, as is the mainstream justice system. They do not punish, even though we do hold offenders accountable for their actions. They do not judge people based on a single criminal incident. Their approach is to try and address underlying issues that have led to criminal behaviors. Their objective is to help restore, heal and transform relationship and the community.

When the staff meet with an offender, they help identify issues that may be contributing to criminal behaviors. In cases in which the victim is willing to participate staff also work with the victim to help them deal with issues stemming from the incident. They may facilitate victim-offender mediation, peacemaking circles and conciliation. These may lead to agreements in which the offender provides a formal apology, pays restitution, performs community service, etc.

Onashowewin Programs

In-House Programs: Mino-Pamatezwin

Onashowewin utilizes a Case Development Model, which strives to deal with underlying issues that a client (and potentially the whole family unit) may be experiencing. This Case Development Model utilizes holistic approaches and strategies which may encompass a cultural component, i.e. traditional mentoring, participating and helping with various aboriginal ceremonies and/or customs, in combination with mainstream practices and techniques, i.e. counseling, anger management, rehabilitation, etc.

The clients may participate in one of the in-house programs and/or may be referred to other community programs, services or assessments. A combination of both in-house programming and referral to other resources may also be conducted. The Clientele Case Plan is developed in accordance with clientele needs and supports, and takes into account the circumstances of the offence and is conducted in cooperation and consultation with the client, the community, the various resources and agencies, as well as the referral source.

Shift to Live (Empowering Justice)

The Shift to Live Program is a one (1) day two (2) hour program which provides preventative education opportunities for youth, 12 to 17 years of age, who have been charged with auto theft or related offences.

The sessions are structured to deliver different themes throughout the duration. The ultimate objective of the program is to promote responsibility, respect, caring, ownership of behaviors and independence to form their own thoughts and actions.

Topics include: taking responsibility, impact on the victims, civil penalties/MPI, the real deal on crime, peer pressure, respect, traditional teachings, etc. Guest speakers may include Winnipeg Police Services, community Elders, Crown prosecutions, community service providers, Manitoba Public Insurance, etc.

Mino-Pamatezwin Theft Under Program

The theft under program is a three week program for offenders who have been charged with Theft Under \$5000.00 or related charges.

Clients deal with their charges by attending facilitated session with: Loss Prevention Officers, Business Owners, Police Officers, Community Elders and Community Service Providers. All meetings are set up to work together on ways to resolve matters outside of a court setting.

Topics include taking responsibility, impact on the victims, peer pressure, respect, traditional teachings, etc. Guest speakers may include loss prevention officers, business owners, community Elders, community service providers, etc.

Healthy Decision Making Program

The healthy decision making program is a three week program for individuals who have been involved in a variety of offences. This program provides an opportunity for participants to learn about positive lifestyle changes. We will work towards developing strategies to build self esteem and to overcome peer pressure. This program gives participants an opportunity to listen, learn and share their life experiences.

Topics of discussion may include but limited to: self-esteem, self-determination, cultural awareness, self-identity, controlling your destiny, knowing ourselves, self-empowerment. Guest speakers may include community Elders, community service providers, etc.

Onashowewin Key Partners

- Manitoba Justice
- Aboriginal Justice Directorate of Justice Canada
- Southern Chiefs Organization

4.6 Circle of Courage – Ka Ni Kanichick

The Circle of Courage project works with Aboriginal youth between 12 and 17 years who are either involved in, or at high risk of involvement in, gangs. The project aims to reduce gang violence and criminal activity by providing intensive skill development and cultural reclamation programming along with education, counselling and connections to multiple support services. The Circle of Courage is supported by Public Safety Canada, National Crime Prevention Centre, Youth

Gang Prevention Fund and is delivered by Ka Ni Kanichihk Inc. The project started in November, 01, 2007 runs until March 2011.

Residents of the Centennial neighbourhood in Winnipeg have identified lack of safety as a major issue. They report high rates of drug use and drug dealing and the presence of gangs. Concerns about retaliation by gangs often keep residents from taking steps to improve safety. Parents of teens fear their children will be drawn into drug use and gang activity. The Centennial neighbourhood also has high rates of sexual exploitation and sex trade activity which is linked to organized criminal activity.

Circle of Courage was developed in consultation with community partners and stakeholders and through participation in the Manitoba Gang Reduction Strategy. This Strategy is a three-pronged approach that balances prevention with intervention and suppression efforts. It includes a combination of direct interventions, complementary efforts and partnerships with law enforcement agencies and community organizations.

The Centennial neighbourhood is also supported through Manitoba's Neighbourhoods Alive! initiative. Neighbourhoods Alive! is a provincial long-term, community-based, social and economic development strategy that supports and encourages community-driven revitalization and the Circle of Courage project is part of these efforts.

The Evidence Base

The Circle of Courage project is designed based on the combination of two key approaches for working with youth:

Youth Engagement

The youth engagement approach provides youth with the opportunity and capacity to effect positive change in their lives and in the lives of their family by building resiliency against a number of risk factors associated with gang activity. This approach incorporates skill development, experiential learning and education, which allows youth to take leadership roles in selecting the activities and initiatives that are appropriate for their needs.

Circle of Courage

Circle of Courage is an approach to youth empowerment that is based on contemporary healing and resiliency research and traditional, Native philosophies of child-rearing. This approach encourages the development of four core values that exist among healthy individuals and in functioning communities. These four universal growth needs are: belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity. The approach is based on the idea that risk factors for children and youth are related to living in hazardous environments characterized by discouragement. Through the Circle of Courage process, environments are changed to promote courage as a key factor to meet the needs of young people and reclaim them from high risk lifestyles.

Program Participants

Circle of Courage works with Aboriginal youth aged 12-17, who are at risk of joining or already involved in gangs. The program plans to assist 60 youth over its four year pilot period.

Key Partners

Circle of Courage involves many partnerships in the community. Some of the key organizations involved include:

- Resource Assistance for Youth
- Winnipeg School Division
- Neighbourhoods Alive! (Winnipeg)
- Government of Manitoba
- Urban Aboriginal Strategy of the Government of Canada
- Centre for Aboriginal Human Resource Development.

Program Components

The Circle of Courage approach begins with building understanding of each youth participant's history, unique needs and strengths. The components of the project are then blended to provide maximum opportunities for individual growth and development. Key underlying themes are an emphasis on positive self identity and support for youth-adult partnerships. The components of the project include:

Education

Circle of Courage staff work with the Winnipeg School Division to identify ways to reconnect participants to education and ensure attendance at school. This includes the development of alternative classrooms and e-learning opportunities.

Employment Preparation

Two tools tested by Ka Ni Kanichihk are used with participants in the program. "Guiding Circles" is a career exploration instrument that is based on the medicine wheel. It helps youth identify inherent talents and determine how they can be further developed for employment opportunities. "Career Cruising" is a comprehensive and interactive career guidance resource that provides the information youth need to make career choices along with information on appropriate education and training requirements. Classes include presentations and information on issues such as workplace behaviour, Manitoba Labour Board and Employment Standards, Manitoba Workplace and Safety Act, Manitoba Human Rights Legislation, job search techniques, cover letter and resume writing, interview techniques and employer/employee expectations.

Emotional and Spiritual Wellbeing

Aboriginal elders, traditional healers and Aboriginal counsellors who have experience working with victims of post traumatic stress are available to youth. Various methods are used including healing circles, sharing circles, healing ceremonies and individual counselling.

Case Management

Program staff support youth to navigate various systems including the courts, child welfare, schools and community organizations. Staff connect youth with community resources such as transitional housing and places to access food, clothing and community services.

Mentors

Participants are matched with young Aboriginal male adults who are living positive and healthy lifestyles. Mentors are identified by community partners and are based on mutual interests, age and availability.

Recreation and Leisure

Youth participate in a range of leisure and recreational activities during their time in the project. Examples include sports, movies, bowling, swimming, camping and art. Planning and organizing appropriate individual and group activities is ongoing throughout the year.

Preliminary Results

Since the beginning of 2009, 64 youth have registered with the project. 15 of these youth are actively participating in the full program which is the maximum number the staff can work with at any one time. At the end of June, 2009 there were 12 youth on a waiting list to enter the full program.

The project is reaching the intended youth. The youth involved report gang and criminal involvement. One youth voluntarily turned himself in to the Manitoba Youth Centre with support from Circle of Courage. After his release, he began attending the program regularly and has been out of the Youth Centre for over four months. This is the longest time period without incarceration that he has ever achieved. Other youth report avoidance of former friends to reduce the chances of getting in to trouble again. Further evaluation and time will provide more information about the connections between participating in the project and recidivism rates.

Implementation Observations

Individual Programming

Taking the time for in depth assessment to understand the context, experiences and needs of each youth is critical for success. Through this process, youth build trust and confidence in the project staff and this is essential to move ahead in their lives. The individual focus for each youth is intensive and staff can provide the level of intervention required for up to 15 youth at any one time.

Staffing

Finding experienced, appropriate male staff who can be positive role models, understand the philosophy of the project, and are willing to work from noon to 8:00 p.m. is an ongoing challenge. As the project works with youth, some of them are beginning to mentor younger boys and this may evolve in to having a pool of potential employees.

Balancing Participation between Project and School

Participants enjoy spending time in the program and with program staff and often chose to attend the project rather than school. This caused concern for program staff, school officials and social service agencies who want the youth to do both. Efforts to balance program and school participation include project staff working hours that are conducive to the youth attending school and having school and project staff work together to find ways to motivate youth to stay in school.

4.7 CHOICES Youth Program

CHOICES is a comprehensive youth program started in 1997 and is designed to give youth the tools they need to make healthy choices in their lives. The CHOICES Youth Program operates in eight schools in the Winnipeg School Division. The program targets students in Grades 6-8. The

program focuses on acquisition of basic cognitive skills, social and life skills training to promote social competency and resistance to peer pressure.

The goals of the **CHOICES Youth Program** are to:

- FOCUS on social and life skills training.
- INCREASE a safe school environment.
- REDUCE negative behaviours.
- IMPROVE the community environment.
- REDUCE substance abuse, dropouts, and gang activity.

CHOICES consists of five components:

Classroom Component

The classroom facilitator (a Justice employee) meets with each of the 6 school groups once in a day 6 cycle. Classroom curriculum focuses on social skills to build resiliency and covers topics such as gang resistance, substance abuse prevention, and conflict mediation. There is a school staff member who acts as a **CHOICES** contact in each school.

Wilderness Experience

The wilderness program provides 3 outings throughout the year (1/2 day wall climbing and team building, overnight winter camp, and 3-day canoe or hiking trip). This component reinforces and tests the skills youth learn in the classroom and evening program in real life settings.

Mentor Evenings

The evening mentor program brings youth and role models (volunteer university students) together one evening a week for fun learning activities, art, sport and field trips. The purpose of this component is to provide emotional support to attend school and community activities. These mentors become caring and significant adults in the lives of the youth.

Family Involvement

Family nights, which happen once a month, are an opportunity for the youth and their family to build connections through social activities. The families are transported by bus to the activity and back to their schools. Examples of outings are hockey and baseball games, roller skating, or bowling. Parents also receive a monthly newsletter (with parenting tips and program updates) and are encouraged to call the program coordinator as needed.

Follow-up Club

The follow club is the component where each young person is connected to a positive activity of their choice within the community. Choices may include sport, music, arts, or volunteering. Activities are planned for Spring Break and Summer. Community service projects are utilized as a means of involving young people in their neighborhood.

CHOICES Key Partners

- The Winnipeg School Division
- Winnipeg Police Service
- Manitoba Justice
- Various Community Agencies and Businesses

4.8 West Central Youth Outreach Project

The West Central Youth Outreach Project (WCYO) is designed to prevent at-risk youth aged 12-18 from joining and engaging in gang activities in the West Central area of Winnipeg. The Project provides extra support for teen girls through a program called RESPECT. The WCYO Project is delivered in partnership by the Spence Neighbourhood Association (SNA) and West Central Women's Resource Centre (WCWRC). It is supported by Public Safety Canada, the National Crime Prevention Centre, Youth Gang Prevention Fund. The Project began in June, 2007 and runs until March, 2011.

In Canada between 1988 and 1998, the arrest rate of female youth for interpersonal offences increased twice as fast (127%) as the rate for males (65%). Winnipeg faces a similar issue with the rate of growth for predominantly female gangs and related violent activity. In 2001, the West Central neighbourhood recorded one of the highest crime areas in Winnipeg. Incidents include high rates of gang violence, sex trade and sexual exploitation linked to organized criminal activity.

The WCYO Project was developed in consultation with community partners and stakeholders and through participation in the Manitoba Gang Reduction Strategy. This Strategy is a three-pronged approach that balances prevention with intervention and suppression efforts. It includes a combination of direct interventions, complementary efforts and partnerships with law enforcement agencies and community organizations.<http://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/prg/cp/ythgng/cpa17-wcyop-eng.aspx> - ftn05

The West Central neighbourhood is also supported through Manitoba's Neighbourhoods Alive! initiative. Neighbourhoods Alive! is a provincial long-term, community-based, social and economic development strategy that supports and encourages community-driven revitalization and the WCYO Project is part of these efforts.

The Evidence Base

The WCYO was designed based on a combination of evidence. Key approaches underlying the project are:

Philadelphia Youth Violence Reduction Partnership (YVRP)

The Philadelphia Youth Violence Reduction Partnership is an intervention project involving members of street gangs in police precincts where the homicide rate among young people is the highest. The project was implemented in the first precinct in 1999 and was later extended to two additional precincts; essentially, the program aims to reduce violent crime - particularly homicide - committed by or against young people.

The YVRP is a result of the close partnership between various public agencies (police, probation) and community organizations (street workers, religious organizations) who work with the client group. Rather than working independently, the YVRP focuses on cooperation and coordination between the organizations. The joint action that results intensifies interventions with young people and further discourages them from engaging in crime. Another goal of this work is to promote social reintegration.

The evaluation data show that the homicide rate attributable to street gangs decreased overall in the precincts where YVRP was implemented and that close surveillance made it possible to detect a large number of offences that were subsequently penalized. The front-line workers were able to persuade a significant number of young people to attend assistance or rehabilitation programs.^[6]

Youth Engagement

The youth engagement approach is designed to help youth effect positive change in their lives and in the lives of their families by building resiliency against a number of risk factors associated with gang activity. It incorporates skill development, experiential learning and education, which allows youth to take leadership in selecting the activities and initiatives that are appropriate for their needs.^[7]

Respect

The RESPECT program is a peer-led approach to support women. Women who participate in programs such as RESPECT are more likely to overcome feelings of anxiety, loneliness, depression, and self-injury. The team members in the programs examined provided practical personal advice, empathy, and avenues to express themselves.

Program Participants

This project works with youth aged 12-18 who are currently involved or at-risk of joining gangs.

Key Partners

The WCYO Project involves many partnerships in the community. Some of the key organizations involved include:

- City of Winnipeg
- West Central Women's Resource Centre
- Daniel McIntyre St. Matthews' Community Association
- Magnus Eliason Recreation Centre
- Manitoba Justice

Program Components

Youth are referred to the WCYO program by agencies and businesses in the community, parents, Youth Outreach Workers and through self-referral. Outreach Workers provide intensive mentorship to 15 youth and provide more general support to many others.

The main program components are:

Mentoring

One to one meetings between Outreach Workers and youth selected for intensive mentoring occur up to five times a week. Youth are selected based on assessment of risk factors for gang involvement such as lack of school participation, low family stability, family gang involvement, violent behaviour (often including weapons) and association with known gang members. Once selected, youth must voluntarily commit to the program. Outreach Workers focus on building positive trusting relationships, providing youth with basic needs, connecting and accompanying youth to supportive resources and activities and on providing advice. Outreach Workers also assist the youth and their families through crisis situations, often helping them navigate the social services and criminal justice systems.

Outreach

Outreach Workers spend time on the streets and in the community where youth gather. Their goal is to get to know who the youth at risk are and to begin providing them with assistance to meet basic needs. As relationships develop, Outreach Workers assess barriers the youth are facing and identify which youth are involved or at highest risk of involvement in gang activity. This knowledge allows Outreach Workers to develop individual service plans designed to assist each youth and to accommodate particular needs such as literacy and social skills. Outreach Workers facilitate group sessions that promote pro-social behaviour and opportunities for youth to learn new behaviour management skills.

RESPECT Youth Support Circle

Facilitated by a Coordinator and Youth Co-facilitator, the girls' youth support circles run for three 10 week sessions per year with one two-hour circle each week. An average of 6 girls participates each week with at least four spots reserved for girls identified by Youth Outreach Workers. The circles are held at a local community centre where the environment is safe for teen girls to share the struggles and successes of their lives. Topics such as building self-esteem, body image and neighbourhood safety are addressed through the activities. The group fosters positive friendships

between the participants, and the Coordinators become supportive, available adults within their lives.

RESPECT Peace Begins at Home Circle

The participants in this Circle are mothers, grandmothers and female guardians of youth participants. The program consists of three 10 week sessions per year with one 2 hour circle each week. The Peace Begins at Home peer support sharing circle provides a safe place for the women to talk about challenges with their children and the community issues that contribute to the risks their children face. Topics for discussion include crime and gang issues, abuse and violence, communication skills and boundary issues. Women learn from one another and apply new skills and strategies with their children. The facilitators provide confidential mentoring for the women.

Community Resource Network

This is a community forum to discuss collaboration and sharing of resources, identify needs and concerns, and reduce gaps in services for youth.

Preliminary Outcomes

In June 2009, the project was providing intensive mentorship for 14 participants. A range of activities have emerged as the program evolves including youth volunteering, youth groups, clubs, individual and team sports, a youth resource centre and a free weekly community clothing bank

Outreach activities have led to identifying hot spots in the community where youth engage in negative behaviour. These hot spots are often in known gang turf. Program staff is concentrating their outreach in these areas and as a result, the youth participating in the program are at very high risk of joining, or are already involved in, gangs.

Families of youth participants and other high risk youth are actively seeking support from the program staff. These families often have long histories of experiencing gang activity and violence and are being assisted to find resources.

Implementation Observations

Addressing Individual Needs

Recognizing and understanding the individual needs of youth is a foundation for success in the WYCO. It is critical to build trust and to develop a plan of action that addresses the specific context

and environment for each youth. Outreach Workers extended their hours from 24 to 30 hours per week to allow more one to one interaction with the youth.

Accessing Families

Reaching families of high risk youth is challenging. They are often isolated, without resources and fearful of Child and Family Services involvement. A successful strategy to build trust has been helping families through crisis and providing them with basics needs. Project staff have learned the importance of ‘giving’ as a way of initiating relationships with families.

Retention of Staff

The nature of the work, remuneration, the hours required and the special skills and experience needed makes finding and retaining staff hard work. In order to reduce burn out, the WCYO has re-organized so that while each youth has one ‘primary’ worker, all Outreach Workers are familiar with each youth and the plans they are implementing so that any one of them can support the youth if required.

Barriers

Limited amounts of recreational and skill building programming are available in the community. Youth over the age of 12 often cannot access programming until 6:30 pm and many WCYO participants are no longer welcome at community programming due to severe behaviour issues. These factors limit the options for youth in the WCYO Project and the staff continues to work with their partners to find solutions and provide access to services.

5.0 OTHER RESOURCES

MANITOBA JUSTICE

PROJECT GANG-PROOF RESOURCE LINE

Manitoba 1-800-691-4264

Website: www.gov.mb.ca/justice/safe/gangproof/index.html

Non-emergency resource line for youth, parents and others dealing with gang-related issues. Callers will be referred to the appropriate resources.

PUBLIC SAFETY INVESTIGATION UNIT

Winnipeg (204) 945-3475 / Manitoba 1-800-954-9361

Website: www.gov.mb.ca/justice/safe/scna.html

Investigates and inspects properties in Winnipeg. Call the Public Safety Investigation (PSI) Unit if you suspect a property is being used by individuals and or gangs involved in drugs, prostitution, solvent abuse, firearms and unlawful liquor sales. All calls are confidential and your identity will never be revealed.

ABORIGINAL COURT WORKER PROGRAM

Winnipeg (204) 945-3909

Provides Aboriginal peoples involved in the court process guidance to better understand the criminal justice system and the judicial process. Services are provided in Winnipeg and throughout the province.

TURNABOUT

Winnipeg (204) 945-5609 / Manitoba 1-866-276-5081

Assists children under 12 who have come into conflict with the law. The program is a partnership between provincial agencies, community groups and local police services.

LIGHTHOUSES

Winnipeg (204) 945-1549 / Manitoba 1-800-626-4862

Website: www.gov.mb.ca/justice/lighthouses/index.html

Community-based crime prevention program designed to develop partnerships among youth, police, justice personnel and the community to promote opportunities for youth to get involved in pro-social, recreational and crime prevention activities.

Manitoba Lighthouse Sites:

MANITOBA SUICIDE PREVENTION LINE

Manitoba 1-877-435-7170

Available to Manitobans experiencing suicidal thoughts, those who are concerned that a friend or family member may be at risk of suicide, and those who are grieving the loss of someone from suicide.

RCMP MANITOBA INTEGRATED GANG INTELLIGENCE UNIT

Winnipeg (204) 983-2778 / Thompson (204) 677-6955

Serves areas of Manitoba outside of Winnipeg with offices located in Winnipeg and Thompson.

WINNIPEG POLICE SERVICE

- **Community Services**

Winnipeg (204) 986-6322

Provides an all-inclusive crime prevention education program to help citizens of Winnipeg take action against crime in their community.

- **Organized Crime Unit**

Winnipeg (204) 986-6048

Winnipeg Police Service enforcement unit that deals with all forms of gang suppression against street gangs, outlaw motorcycle gangs and other groups or criminal organizations.

NEW DIRECTIONS

TRAINING RESOURCES FOR YOUTH (TRY) – PROJECT: VIP

Winnipeg (204) 786-7051, ext. 256

Project: VIP is a violence, intervention and prevention program designed for young people who are difficult to service, at the highest risk of being murdered on the street, and who are committed to change. Building on TRY's success in working with youth offenders, Project VIP uses research based on best practices, intense case management and wraparound services (from trauma therapy to grief therapy and anger management). Project staff work to find the right way to pull the youth out of the environment they are in and show them a different path.

NORTH END WOMEN'S CENTRE INC.

PEACE BEGINS AT HOME

Winnipeg (204) 589-7347

Peace begins at home is a project of the North End Women's Resource Centre. Its focus is creating peer support groups for female caregivers raising their children in neighbourhoods struggling with crime. This project offers the opportunity for women to learn more about raising peaceful youth and to share and honour their experience of parenting in neighbourhoods struggling with crime.

LOCAL PRINT RESOURCES

Project Gang-Proof: A Handbook for Families and Community Members

Manitoba Justice, Public Safety Branch

1-800-691-4264 / email: crimeprevention@gov.mb.ca

Website: www.gov.mb.ca/justice/gangproof

Combating School Violence: Practical interventions for managing disruptive students, conflicts, gangs and safety issues.

By Spencer Clements and Gary Sova, inner-city educators in Winnipeg for over 25 years. To order, contact: (204) 475-0842 Email: sclements@newdirectionsindiscipline.com

Invisible Gang Members: A Report on Female Gang Association in Winnipeg

By Melanie Nimmo. Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. (June 2001)

Available online: www.policyalternatives.ca/documents/Manitoba_Pubs/gangs.pdf