



Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg, Inc.

Guns, Gangs and Drugs
Proposal Framework

January 2011

*Developed with funding provided by
Justice Canada*

Introduction

There is a need to conduct a comprehensive assessment of the City of Winnipeg's current Aboriginal gang problem and determine how to create a foundation for a comprehensive Aboriginal Gang Prevention Strategy that has targeted results for those youth involved in gangs or are at risk of being involved in gang activity. Key steps to this foundation building are communication and collaboration. The Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg wishes to mobilize the community to address the current Aboriginal Gang problem in Winnipeg. This will be done through the establishment of a Steering Committee which would include involvement of local citizens, including former gang-involved youth, law enforcement, corrections, probations, schools, employment programs, faith based organizations, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal community agencies and the private sector.

The Steering Committee would be broken down into four working subcommittees: prevention, intervention, suppression, and reentry. The subcommittees would identify gaps in community services and make recommendations on how to assess the local Aboriginal gang problem. Participation by these groups would allow for greater input from the community and a commitment to seeing a more comprehensive approach taken to tackle the Aboriginal Gang issue in Winnipeg. Information would then be used to initiate a Strategic Plan and identify next steps to the development of a Comprehensive Gang Strategy.

A strategic plan helps an organization determine where it is going over the next one, two, three or more years. The Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg Anti-Gang Initiative Strategic Plan will formalize a vision and purpose of gang prevention, intervention, and suppression services that continue effective services, that develop new services, or that leverage current services in a new way. The ultimate goal is to not institute programs, but rather develop strategies and processes for how partnerships are formed and work more collaboratively.

☐ **Vision** – Bringing together government, community organizations, and residents to form a partnership serving the City of Winnipeg for gang prevention, intervention, suppression, community education and awareness.

☐ **Purpose** – A citywide collaborative of proactive partners and communities taking on responsibility for coordination and oversight of targeted prevention and intervention in order to identify urban Aboriginal youth at high risk for gang involvement and increase their opportunities for participation in activities and programs that foster more positive life directions.

History

This planning process has been instituted as part of the Government of Canada's Guns, Gangs and Drugs Initiative to respond to youth involved in the justice system and in gun, gang and drug activities (hereinafter referred to as "youth") in order to promote the making of "smart choices" by youth vulnerable or already involved in youth gangs

through community-based educational, vocational, cultural and sporting opportunities. “Smart choices” are alternative choices that would be presented or made available to the youth, to help them resist gang involvement.

In November 2010 a successful proposal was made to the Department of Justice Canada to develop a Gang Prevention Steering Committee and sub-committees that would meet monthly and focus on hearing assessment information and initiating a Strategic Plan.

Understanding the Plan

Although important, the public cannot depend solely on the police, the courts and the correctional system to protect them from gang violence. Community safety is equally dependent on the commitment and work of other sectors, including municipal planners, public health officials, educators, and child intervention workers. A coordinated and collaborative approach is essential for tackling those multi-faceted issues that most impact community safety including homelessness, mental health, addictions and family violence.

This Strategy is to be based on broad, collaborative engagement involving the community as a whole, not just police. It recognizes and supports the role all community members have to play in reducing gang crime including parents, teachers, social workers, neighbours, and health professionals. It is responsive to the fluid nature of criminal organizations, recognizing that community actions and initiatives need to be agile and flexible, supported by robust and adaptive intervention and enforcement practices.

This initiative is not about which program to implement - it’s about agencies, residents, and program participants working together regardless of the program, because programs do come and go. **The initiative is about the vision of what we all want to collectively achieve.**

This is not to say that current activities in the City of Winnipeg are not making a concerted and successful effort in addressing gangs: we are. There are a number of programs like JustTV, Circle of Courage and Project Oasis that have worked with gang members. They have a great success rate and receive numerous referrals into their programs.

Now imagine if all of these systems step out of their silos and are talking to each other, coordinating their efforts to compliment one another, and developing a unified voice that speaks to the values and philosophy of an improved quality of life for all. This in essence is **our vision - not a new program, but rather leverage the resources we have to serve better; coordinate efforts to be more competitive in securing available dollars; and working to implement evidence-based gang prevention, intervention, and suppression strategies as a partnership.**

The ACWI proposal received funds to establish a Steering Committee. The overall role of the Steering Committee is to assess the community's perspective on the current status of our youth and how can we plan for varying trends and issues.

Another intent of the Steering Committee is also to establish additional subcommittees which would be facilitated or chaired by a member of the Steering Committee. These subcommittees serve to broaden the participation and information-gathering capabilities of the Steering Committee and ensure that all key stakeholders are represented in the process.

The Steering Committee will operate in a nonexclusive manner and the ACWI has invited participation to all interested parties. Notice of all Steering Committee meetings is to be distributed electronically as well as mail to those that have been involved or indicated interest in the Steering Committee work. Contacts will continue to be added to that list. In addition, Community members at large will be provided the opportunity to contribute to the work of the Steering Committee by providing feedback to the Steering Committee via the Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg's website.

What follows are the activities recommended for the Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg's Gang Initiative Steering Committee.

1. Community Resource Inventory:

A critical step of the strategic planning process is to ascertain those services that exist in or serve the targeted neighborhood. It is equally important to determine the financial, human, and existing infrastructure resources. Steering Committee Members are to provide guidance and consistency in conducting an inventory of:

1. Existing programs, both community and justice system, that provide services targeting youth and/or the families of youth who may be at risk of or are participating in youth gang crimes. Each Steering Committee Member is to identify the programs/services they administer or that act as a resource.
2. Potential financial resources, both public and private, that could be used to support the development of a comprehensive approach to gang reduction in the City of Winnipeg.
3. Human resources who could be recruited to assist in the community effort. These human resources may be citizens of the community or individuals and businesses that have an interest in or serve the community.
4. Businesses, schools, churches, hospitals, and universities that could provide support to the program with services, logistics, finances, or human resources.

In order to create the above Community Resource Inventory, the Steering Committee will need to look at:

- **Community Demographic Data** – what factors in the community are affecting or contributing to the local gang problems?
- **Law Enforcement Data** – should examine this data to determine the level and extent of gang involvement in local crime problems, including the prevalent types of crime being committed by gangs and to determine the demographic profiles of gang members who are the most heavily involved in crime. This type of data will help to determine the target criteria for the intervention and suppression activities.
- **School Data** – need to identify which risk factors are affecting local youth, particularly young people who are affiliated with gangs. Need to examine gang issues in and around local schools.
- **Community Resources** – need to examine what resources and services are currently available. This should enable the Steering Committee to be aware of gaps in services that may need to be addressed to effectively serve gang members.

The Community Resource Inventory will allow for the Steering Committee to record information about community organizations, programs, services, and activities that could be incorporated into a collaborative, comprehensive approach to gangs. A community resource inventory is an essential first step in problem assessment. Collected information can be entered into a searchable database. Once the database is populated, the user can produce a matrix that answers the questions, “What does our community have in place?” and “What do we need that is missing?”

2. Development of Vision, Mission and Case for Support

The Steering Committee should develop a vision and mission statement to reaffirm why this anti-gang effort is needed in the community.

3. Identification of Risk Factors

What is a risk factor?

Risk factors can be defined as life events or experiences that are associated with an increase in problem behaviours, such as drug use or gang activities. For example, being the child of a

single-parent who is often absent from the home and lacks adequate support, can be considered a risk factor. The negative influence of a friend or sibling can be another.

Risk factors can be divided into five categories:

- Individual characteristics
- Peer group
- School
- Family
- Community

Risk factors and prevention

The identification of the specific risk factors associated with youth gang involvement helps us determine where and how to focus prevention efforts.

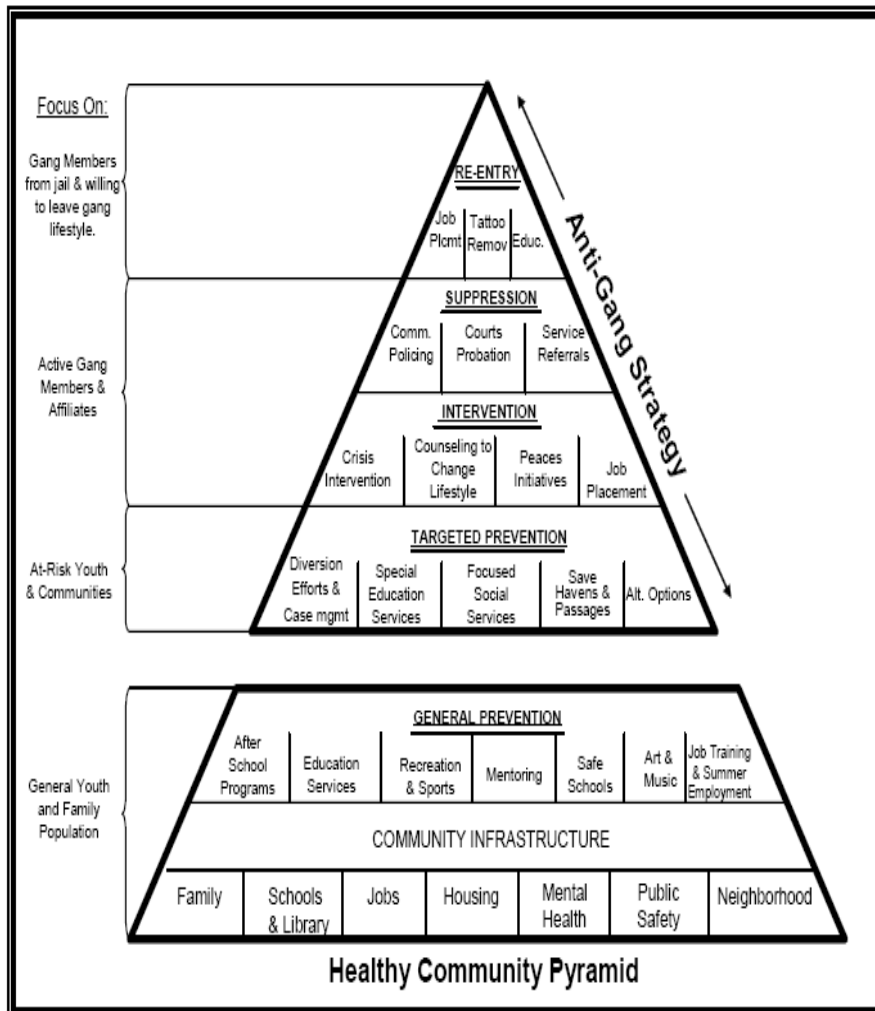
Briefly, we know that:

- The more risk factors that a youth experiences, the more likely he or she is to join a gang. Research also suggests that the presence of risk factors in multiple categories increases the probability of gang involvement.
- The increase in gang violence and crime in some Aboriginal communities has been attributed in part to an increasing youth population, inadequate housing, drug and alcohol abuse, a high unemployment rate, lack of education, poverty, poor parenting skills, the loss of culture, language and identity and a sense of exclusion.
- Gang cohesion, culture and lifestyle are also important considerations.

4. Discussion re: Follow Up and Sustainability

Document relationships formed with Memoranda of Understanding between all Steering Committee Members.

Figure 1. "Healthy Community Pyramid"



Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg (ACWI) Anti-Gang Strategy Steering Committee Draft Terms of Reference

Section 1. Establishment

The ACWI Anti-Gang Strategy Steering Committee (hereinafter the “Steering Committee”) is hereby established to enhance anti-gang law enforcement efforts and develop gang prevention policies in the City of Winnipeg.

Section 2. Membership

a. The Steering Committee members shall be invited to participate by the Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg. The Steering Committee shall consist of at least 25 members, but no more than 50 members. The Steering Committee shall appoint a Chair and a Vice Chair of the Steering Committee.

b. The Steering Committee members will include the following persons or their designees from the following organizations/departments:

1. City of Winnipeg Police Services
2. Government of Manitoba Justice Department
3. Winnipeg School Division #1
4. Various Aboriginal Anti-Gang Program Coordinators
5. Faith based organizations
6. An academic who has conducted research on gangs and gang activity
7. Youth
8. Elders
9. Probation Services
10. Employment Agencies
11. Schools
12. Federal/Provincial youth departments

Section 3. Duties

The Steering Committee and Sub-Committees shall have the following duties:

a. Develop a comprehensive plan to ensure a well-coordinated, citywide enforcement program. The program should increase the flow of gang-related information among various law enforcement agencies, correctional institutions, the judicial system and Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal organizations working in gang-related programming.

- b. Investigate and identify current and emerging gang issues.
- c. Investigate and identify policy changes to better prevent, mitigate, and address gang activity.
- d. Recommend legislative and executive action necessary to implement a comprehensive, coordinated plan and to make identified policy changes. The Steering Committee shall report its progress, findings, and recommendations to the urban Aboriginal Community.

Section 4. Meetings

- a. The Steering Committee and its Sub-Committees shall meet monthly or on an as needed basis.
- b. Meetings shall be held upon the call of the Chair of the Steering Committee.
- c. A majority of the Steering Committee shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business.

Section 5. Administration

- a. The Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg staff shall organize all Steering Committee meetings, prepare reports on behalf of the Steering Committee, identifying current and emerging gang issues, assist with gang-related grants, and update the Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg website to ensure the urban Aboriginal community is kept informed of the work conducted.

Section 6 – Guiding Principles of the Steering Committee

The following draft principles should be understood and adopted for the Steering Committee's prospects for lasting success will be enhanced. They represent a way of doing business; they do not prescribe or direct the business to be done.

1. An approach that incorporates intervention, suppression, and prevention is essential.
2. Police are vital partners; other agencies and groups, including community and faith-based organizations, concerned about gangs also must participate.
3. Both formal and informal community leaders must be involved.
4. All segments of the community, including residents, must be engaged and mobilized.
5. The Implementation Plan must acknowledge and address both perceptions and realities about the community's gang problem.
6. The Strategic Plan must address short- and long-term action.
7. The process must start with a clean slate; groups must be redirected from casting blame to finding solutions.
8. The *process* of developing the Strategic Plan is important.

9. Objectives of the Strategic Plan must be feasible, observable, and measurable.

SUB-COMMITTEE WORK: *Prevention, Intervention, Suppression, and Re-entry.*

The following four core questions were created to assess the community's needs for each of the sub-committees:

1. What do you think are the most important concerns facing teens (12–25 years old) in the City of Winnipeg today?

2. What additional services (facilities, programs, activities, etc.) would you like the community to offer?

3a. Do you foresee different challenges for teens (12–25 years old) in the next five years than what we face today? If so, what are they?

3b. How should the community plan for them?

Potential Triggers for Sub-Committee Members to answer the above questions

- What do you see your teens afraid of?

- What are your fears for the teens?

• What bothers the teens you know?

• In the neighborhood (school, parks, sports teams, church, mall), what issues do you see with teens?

• What are your concerns for teens during weekends and after school?