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DECEMBER 1995



NATIONAL  
CRIME  
PREVENTION  
COUNCIL

CANADA

MOBILIZING  
POLITICAL  
WILL AND  
COMMUNITY  
RESPONSIBILITY  
TO PREVENT  
YOUTH  
CRIME

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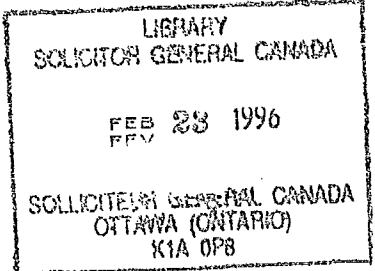


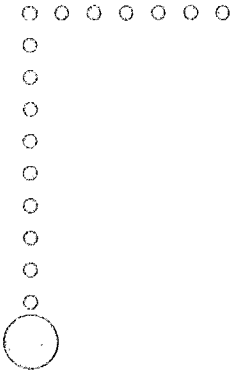
MOBILIZING  
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TO PREVENT  
YOUTH  
CRIME

A SUMMARY REPORT  
OF 30 CONSULTATION MEETINGS  
TO EXPLORE EFFECTIVE COMMUNITY  
RESPONSES TO YOUTH CRIME  
ORGANIZED BY THE YOUTH JUSTICE  
COMMITTEE OF THE NATIONAL CRIME  
PREVENTION COUNCIL

REPORT  
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DECEMBER 1995





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## WHAT IS THE NATIONAL CRIME PREVENTION COUNCIL?

The National Crime Prevention Council (NCPC) was created by the Minister of Justice and the Solicitor General of Canada, in cooperation with provincial and territorial governments in July, 1994. The Council is a key element of a national strategy to reduce crime

and fear of crime in Canada. Twenty-five people from across Canada were selected to be members of the Council. Each member has a three-year mandate and participates on the Council in a voluntary capacity.

## WHAT ARE ITS OBJECTIVES AND ORIENTATION?

The objective of the NCPC is to contribute to increasing individual and community safety and security in Canada. Using the lens of crime prevention through social development, the Council takes a holistic view of youthful offending. Our approach focuses on the social, economic and other factors associated with youth involvement in the criminal justice system, the reaction and response of the criminal justice system (including the detection, prosecution and sentencing of young people who get in trouble with the law), the interests of victims and communities, and the comparative costs of preventive and justice system responses.

The NCPC believes that a focus on prevention offers new opportunities for:

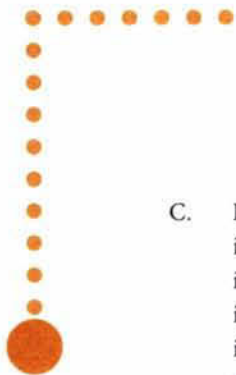
- developing cost-effective and timely interventions for youth at risk of conflict with the law;
- offering treatment and rehabilitation for young people who come into conflict with the law;
- providing opportunities for community involvement; and
- ensuring long-term protection of victims and communities.



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### **The Consultation Process That Led to This Report:**

Between May and August, 1995, the Youth Justice Committee of the National Crime Prevention Council (NCPC) held 30 consultations in six different locations across Canada<sup>1</sup>. Approximately 100 young people and 180 front-line workers and policy makers, working with or on behalf of young people participated in these discussions.

The purpose of these consultations was to learn more about what programs exist or have existed that:

- i) are effective in preventing youth crime;
- ii) can help cut the financial as well as social costs of the Youth Justice System, without reducing the safety and security of community members;
- iii) will promote increased family and community involvement in preventing youth crime, and
- iv) will encourage the reintegration of young people who have been in trouble with the law.

For these reasons, the committee members were particularly interested in exploring the potential benefits of expanding diversion and Alternate Measures programs. Alternate Measures is an official designation within the *Young Offenders Act* for pre-charge or post-charge diversion programs that use community based dispositions rather than incarceration for young people who have committed minor crimes. Committee members

were also interested in continuing the council's ongoing search for information related to early intervention and primary prevention programs.<sup>2</sup>

### **The Main Messages Consultation Participants Shared:**

The messages received were rich and varied, but there was virtual consensus on six guiding points.

1. **We know and have known for some time "what works" to prevent youth crime.**

What we really need is:

- i) the **political will** to implement our knowledge;
- ii) **public education**, which provides accurate information about the realities of young people as well as youth crime, and
- iii) sufficient **community mobilization** around what we know will work, to put this knowledge into practice.

2. **Alternative Measures Programs have not worked well to promote the YOA goals of expanded community involvement and shared responsibility in the reintegration of young people.**

Individuals consulted expressed the opinion that a greater emphasis on a range of community based pre- and post-charge diversion would be more effective in promoting these goals.

<sup>1</sup> The six locations visited include, in the order in which the consultations took place: Edmonton, Alberta; Summerside, Prince Edward Island; Vancouver, British Columbia; Whitehorse, Yukon; Toronto, Ontario, and Montréal, Québec.

<sup>2</sup> On December 7, 1994, the NCPC hosted a workshop on children and youth. Many of the participants have experience and expertise working in early prevention programs. In addition, the NCPC has a committee looking at early intervention from the prenatal stage of life to age six.







3. **The justice system alone cannot prevent youth crime.**

Community involvement is essential to the development of effective prevention programs.

4. **Effective prevention must promote more broadly based involvement and responsibility.**

Participants stressed that the responsibility of parents and other adults raising young children should be affirmed and supported and the contributions of extended family and community members encouraged. They emphasized as well that information and support, not blaming should be provided to promote the involvement of family and community members.

5. **To increase the responsibility, involvement and integration of young people, youth must be involved in the planning and, when appropriate, in the implementation of solutions to youth crime.**

Many young people consulted expressed the opinion that politicians should consult youth directly on the problems affecting young people and on programs and policies that impact on youth.

6. **Young people need clear, consistent and fair boundaries and consequences that make sense.**

Many young people said they feel that in all aspects of their lives; at home, in school, in the community and in the justice system; the "rules don't make sense". They also feel that people don't care enough about them to create boundaries. Both adults and youths consulted consistently told council members that the administration of the YOA currently does not provide such boundaries, nor do young people feel that consequences under the YOA for harmful actions make sense.

### **How The Report is Organized**

The report that follows elaborates on the points of consensus listed above by summarizing information from the consultations on the following questions.

- What do young people need?
- What works to prevent youth crime?
- What prevents communities from putting knowledge of "what works" into practice?
- What has the Alternative Measures program contributed to the Youth Justice System, and to knowledge of "what works"?
- Can we create a constellation of existing programs that work?
- What role can the National Crime Prevention Council play to make our knowledge of "what works" a reality?

### **Other Related Documents Available Through the National Crime Prevention Council**

From the rich information gathered through this series of consultations, the National Crime Prevention Council also prepared a Brief to the Standing Committee for Justice and Legal Affairs conducting the Phase II Review of the *Young Offenders Act*. This Brief contains many specific comments on the Youth Justice System and many recommendations related to the *Young Offenders Act* and to the Youth Justice System, based on the wisdom and information shared during the consultations. To keep the length of this report manageable, these critiques of the Youth Justice System and corresponding recommendations have not been included in this summary report. However, a copy of this Brief is included with this summary report to provide readers with the full range of information and ideas shared through the consultations. More detailed reports summarizing the ideas shared in each of the six locations in which the consultations were held are also available, and will be sent out, on request.

## INTRODUCTION

### **The Criminal Justice System: A Growth Industry in a Time of Cutbacks**

The criminal justice system, even in this time of severe cutbacks in most sectors across Canada, is a growth industry. "We already spend almost \$8 billion a year on criminal justice and our courts are backlogged, our prisons overcrowded and our police are understaffed."<sup>3</sup> The growth of dollars devoted to the justice system is puzzling given the love-hate relationship most people have with the justice system. Despite growing public expressions of disillusionment with the effectiveness and fairness of the justice system, people across Canada increasingly look to the justice system to solve a wide range of social as well as crime problems. This paradox is particularly striking when it comes to the Youth Justice System. Zero tolerance policies in schools, police officers stationed in schools, calls for more punitive measures for young people who get in trouble with the law (despite the fact that the custody rate per 100,000 for youths in Canada is more than four times higher than that of adults<sup>4</sup>), all contribute to public support for the growth of a system that many Canadians feel is not working.

#### **Is Some Serious Problem Solving Needed?**

Members of the National Crime Prevention Council, and other people concerned with youth crime and youth justice, are seriously questioning whether there are more creative, cost-effective and human ways to use public

money to prevent crime and protect public safety than the current justice system responses to the problem.

"As a society, we are loading the back-end of the system—spending a lot of money after the fact—after the offence has been committed, after the community has been victimized. We believe that a big part of the answer to community safety can be found in prevention as part of an integrated response to crime and safety; in increasing our efforts to keep those at risk from getting entangled in the endless cycle of enforcement, punishment and incarceration that make up the criminal justice system."<sup>5</sup>

The NCPC recognizes the need to rethink how people across Canada address Youth Crime. NCPC members are committed to creating a national strategy for crime prevention based on developing the capacities of communities and governments to create a society in which young people will not turn to crime.

#### **Facing Some Hard Questions**

The ambiguity so many people feel towards the justice system and particularly its response to youth crime is generating some hard questions.

- Is it really young people who are the problem?
- Are we blaming young people for society's problems?

<sup>3</sup> Joan Pennell, Chair of the Youth Justice Committee, National Crime Prevention Council, quoted in a press release issued by the NCPC June 9, 1995, in Edmonton, Alberta.

<sup>4</sup> Judge Heino Lilles, "The *Young Offenders Act*: Some International Perspectives for Reform" quoted in an article in *The Edmonton Sunday Journal*, p. B1-B2, April 16, 1995.

<sup>5</sup> Joan Pennell, Chair of the Youth Justice Committee, National Crime Prevention Council, quoted in a Press Release prepared by the NCPC in Edmonton, Alberta, June 9, 1995

- Are young people today more irresponsible and violent than previous generations of youth, as much of the popular press would suggest?
- Are other dynamics contributing to the problem of youth crime?
- Are families, teachers, neighbours and other community members meeting their responsibilities to young people?
- Is the justice system contributing to youthful offending?

These questions have converged on a number of related questions that focus on solutions.

- Do we know what works to prevent youth crime?
- Do we know how to respond to crime in more cost-effective and human ways?
- Are there ways to serve both the needs of young people who get in trouble with the law and the needs of the victims of crime?
- What do young people have to say about the problems they face?
- What do young people say about the solutions to youth crime?

### **Looking for Answers to These Questions Through Consultations**

The Youth Justice Committee of the National Crime Prevention Council decided to look for answers to these and other questions by consulting with a broad range of people working with and for young people in different parts of Canada, and by consulting directly with young people, including young people who have been in trouble with the law. The consultations were held between May and August, 1995, in:

Edmonton, Alberta;  
Summerside, Prince Edward Island;  
Vancouver, British Columbia;  
Whitehorse, Yukon;  
Toronto, Ontario; and  
Montreal, Quebec.

The consultations were organized to include participants with varied work experiences and perspectives from a diversity of regions, and from urban, rural and isolated communities. Front-line workers and policy makers from the justice system, including: police, probation officers, lawyers, workers in youth correctional facilities, youth court judges and provincial/territorial government workers attended the consultations, or were interviewed separately by phone. A wide range of non-governmental organizations were represented as well. Attending were people working in such non-governmental programs as housing cooperatives, counselling programs, programs for Aboriginal youth, programs for young people from minority cultures, mentoring programs, recreational programs and support programs for street-involved youth. Several educators from traditional school boards and some from alternate schools came to the meetings. A few child welfare workers and health workers, academics and community spokespeople also took part in the discussions. In each location, between two and four meetings were organized with service providers and policy makers. Approximately 180 adults in total were involved in these meetings.

Youth organizations provided invaluable assistance by bringing together young people to talk with NCPC members. In each location, between one and three informal group discussions were organized with small groups of young people through organizations that work with youth. In total, over 100 young people met with members of the Youth Justice Committee of the National Crime Prevention Council through these consultations.

## **Goals of the Consultations and of this Report**

The consultations and this report are vehicles to assist the Council members:

1. in their preparation of a Brief to the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs concerning the broad-based Phase II review of the *Young Offenders Act* and of the Youth Justice System;
2. in their research to identify programs and approaches to crime prevention and social development that work to create healthier, safer, more caring communities;
3. in their deliberations around the potential of creating a more effective Youth Justice System through the expansion of alternative measures or diversion programs; and
4. in their ongoing initiative to develop an approach that will unify crime prevention efforts across the country.

This summary report has been sent out to all those who participated in the consultations as well as to other groups and individuals that work to prevent crime. The NCPD members view this report as another vehicle for sharing ideas. We welcome your comments on the report as well as any ideas the report may generate for you.

As you read this report, please remember that it is a brief summary of a wealth of perspectives, ideas and experiences shared during the consultations and through telephone conversations, and of material sent after the consultations. To help keep this report to a manageable length, it was necessary to synthesize many examples and points. If you are interested in more detailed information about the discussions in each of the six locations where the consultations were held, and about the range of participants included in these consultations, individual site reports can be sent to you on request.

## **PUTTING THE PROBLEMS AND THE SOLUTIONS IN CONTEXT: WHAT DID PEOPLE SAY ABOUT THE EXPERIENCES OF YOUNG PEOPLE ACROSS CANADA?**

### ***Young People are Scapegoats for Society's Problems***

Some people working with and on behalf of youth believe that young people are becoming the scapegoats for society's problems. They suggested that we blame young people and criticize them for not taking responsibility for the harm they cause, and for not taking responsibility for themselves more generally, without looking at the responsibility we all share for our children and for the growth of problems that contribute to youth crime.

### ***Young People are Not Protected from Being Victimized***

They pointed out that, while there are some young people who commit very serious crimes, the vast majority of young people who come into conflict with the law commit single, or occasional minor property crimes. They pointed out as well that, by focussing on young people who commit crimes, we often fail to recognize that young people are more likely to be the victims of crime than to commit crimes. Several participants brought in a newspaper article summarizing an interview with a youth court judge in Edmonton. In the article, the judge referred to a study that found

that 23 percent of crime victims were between the ages of 12 and 19, twice their proportion of the population. He also pointed out that of every 10 sexual assault victims, four are children and four are teens.<sup>6</sup>

A report from Statistics Canada confirms the disproportionate victimization of young people:

"Younger Canadians...tend to have higher rates of criminal victimization than older Canadians. According to the 1993 General Social Survey, those aged 15 to 24 had a rate of personal victimization twice that of those aged 25 to 44 and over four times that of those aged 45 to 64...Younger Canadians were substantially over-represented among sexual assault victims in particular: 63% of sexual assault victims were under age 18 in 1993."<sup>7</sup>

Participants in the consultations emphasized that because we focus on the crimes young people are committing rather than on the harm young people are experiencing, we are not doing enough to protect our young people from being victimized. Greater concern with the victimization of young people could also help reduce the number of young people who commit crimes, since many young people who get in trouble with the law have themselves been victims of crime, most often physical or sexual abuse at the hands of a family member or acquaintance. It is generally recognized by researchers that such victimization increases the risk of future criminal behaviour. For example, the 1993 report of the Standing Committee on Justice and the Solicitor General, "Crime Prevention in

Canada: Toward a National Strategy", concluded that:

"Childhood abuse breeds abusers...abused children are three times more likely than the rest of the population to become violent adults."

The Standing Committee report also cited one Canadian study which found that over 50 percent of violent young offenders witnessed wife abuse in the home, and another study from Manitoba which found that over 90 percent of the 35 young sex offenders studied were sexually abused as children.<sup>8</sup>

***Young People are Not Given Opportunities for Meaningful Involvement in Society***

Many participants, and particularly young people consulted, stressed that they feel they have no hope, no opportunities and no meaningful role in society. Many of the young people consulted said they got in trouble because they had nothing to do. They said that young people need to be given, or helped to create, a range of recreation opportunities, learning opportunities, and the opportunity for work that will provide training and experience for long-term work.

One adult participant pointed out that we're not helping young people make the transition from childhood to adulthood in a positive way. He pointed out that in past generations, there would be predictable "rites of passage" to adulthood. For example, an apprenticeship would be a training "rite of passage" to life-

<sup>6</sup> quoted from an interview with Judge Walder White, printed in *The Edmonton Sunday Journal*, April 16, 1995, p. B1-B2

<sup>7</sup> p.10, Jennifer Chard for the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, "Factfinder on Crime and the Administration of Justice in Canada" *Juristat*, Volume 15, Number 10, Statistics Canada, June 1995.

<sup>8</sup> These studies are cited on pages 10 and 11 of the report of the Standing Committee on Justice and the Solicitor General, "Crime Prevention in Canada: Toward a national strategy". *Twelfth Report of the Standing Committee on Justice and the Solicitor General*, Issue 87, Ottawa: Supply and Services Canada, 1993.

long work. Attending university was once a fairly predictable “rite of passage” to guaranteed self-sufficiency. Today, he pointed out, there are no predictable “rites of passage”. Apprenticeships are virtually non-existent. University degrees are no longer any guarantee of financial security or even of a job. Therefore, young people are creating their own “rites of passage”. Violence, sex and drugs are becoming the signs that a young person has moved from childhood to adulthood.

Many young people said they experience hopelessness about their future. As one young man said:

“I can’t ever imagine owning a home, or even a car, or being able to afford to raise children the way I’d want to. The idea of a career or even a steady job is beyond my wildest dreams.”

### ***The “Rules” Don’t Work***

Some young people feel tricked by adults who tell them to follow the “rules” in order to succeed in our society. As one young person said:

“You tell me to go to school. You tell me to follow the rules. You tell me that crime doesn’t pay. But then I see my brother who has a B.A. slinging hamburgers at McDonalds for minimum wage. And I look at the guy who dropped out of school in Grade 10 who has been selling drugs and pimping for four years. He’s the one with great clothes, two cars and money to spend. The rules adults tell us to follow don’t work.”

Other young people said that even the education system isn’t organized according to these “rules”. A few young people spoke about the practice in schools to keep young people with their age group, regardless of their academic performance. As one young person said:

“When I discovered in Grade 6 that even when I got 36 percent I was still going to pass into Grade 7, I thought it was great. I partied through Grade 7 and 8. But when I found out in Grade 9 that it still didn’t matter, I didn’t feel like partying any more. It made me feel real bad about myself. It made me feel like no one cared what happened to me.”

## **WHAT DID PARTICIPANTS SAY YOUNG PEOPLE NEED?**

### **1. *Opportunities and Responsibilities to Go Along with Rights***

Participants in the consultations said that our society is doing our young people a disservice by teaching them rights but not giving them ample opportunities to learn how to become responsible members of society. They pointed out that we are not doing young people a favour by “letting them off” in different aspects of their lives, by giving them rights but few responsibilities. Passing to the next grade at school

when you don’t earn the marks, or doing what you want at home because your parents can’t be bothered to monitor your activities or enforce any rules, don’t make young people feel free, but abandoned. Young people come to understand this lack of accountability as a sign that they are worthless, untrustworthy and that no one cares about them.

Most young people consulted said that young people should be held accountable for their actions in a fair, consistent and

clear way. Even when young people were asked if they thought the parents of young people who get in trouble with the law should be held responsible for the acts of their children, most young people said that in general young people make the decisions and should take responsibility for their actions.

## 2. *Meaningful Things to Do*

Many young people said that they get into trouble because they don't have anything meaningful to do. They said that young people need to be given a range of recreation opportunities, learning opportunities that are appealing to them, and jobs that will lead to something. They told us it is hard to motivate yourself in school or in work when you know that you'll probably never move beyond a "Mc-job", no matter how hard you try.

## 3. *Fair, Clear and Consistent Consequences*

Many young people said that they feel angry and frustrated because the consequences of their actions at home, at school and in the Youth Justice System make "no sense at all". They said that if the justice system is to be fair, each individual situation has to be taken into account, but there should also be some distinction in consequences between more- and less-serious crimes. One young man demonstrates how neither of these principles were used when deciding consequences for him in the following quote:

"How can I have respect for a system that put me in custody for three months for some small thefts and stuff I did a year before, even though I was back in school and really trying to get my life together by the time I got to court, but then a year later, when I stabbed someone with a knife in a fight, I was given three months again—I had a knife and I

tried to kill somebody! Does that make any sense?"

Another young person emphasizes the importance of looking at individual situations in handing down fair sentences.

"Sentences make no sense at all. If you're really trying to turn your life around, you shouldn't be put away. Other people who don't try, but look good and can con the judge, keep getting off. It all depends on the judge you get and on the way you look. Nobody really looks at who you are."

Young people emphasized that while the individual's situation must be taken into account, it is essential for young people to know that there will be real consequences for serious crimes. Young people consulted said that there is virtually no difference in the sentences given for petty crimes and for serious crimes like aggravated assault, sexual assault, attempted murder or murder.

"If you know you're going to get pretty much the same sentence no matter what you do, you figure you may as well go for broke and do something really serious. It's all a joke. The system makes no sense at all."

## 4. *Meaningful Consequences*

Young people also stressed the importance of the sentence fitting not only the crime, but the potential of the young person to turn his or her life around. They emphasized, for example, that community service orders should be used in part to stimulate young people to want to learn and work. Therefore, they should involve doing something that the young person finds meaningful. For example, young people suggested that, instead of giving young people "make work" projects, the justice system in partnership with community members could involve young people in

building a playground for young children or a skateboard park for older youths, or in repairing the homes of elderly or disabled people.

Some said the same principle should apply in schools and in families. Too often, they said, both at home and at school, the consequences for a harmful action or for breaking a rule just felt like a way to get the young person out of the way so the teacher or parent could avoid dealing with the problem.

#### 5. *A Life Free From Abuse*

Many young people consulted had experienced abuse from parents, from other family members, and/or in foster care. Several said that they had tried to get help by telling a neighbour or a teacher, but that it rarely resulted in any help. In fact, it sometimes just made it worse for the young person. One young girl said that she told a teacher, and eventually a child welfare worker did come to her house, but the visit didn't change anything.

"My mom just talked real nice to her...My mom's a real good actress. And the social worker believed her and left. She never asked us kids what was going on."

#### 6. *A Guarantee of the Physical and Emotional Nutrients of Life*

Many of the young people consulted, especially street-involved young people, said that often they would get involved in crime because they needed money to eat or to pay for a place to stay. They said there are too few youth shelters and people will not help young people. As one young woman from Toronto said:

"The restaurant owners would rather throw food out than give it to us. No-one cares about kids."

A street worker who has worked with young people for years added:

"We can't and won't look at how we're raising our kids, neglecting them, abusing them, so we blame the kids instead."

Some participants emphasized that it is not just in poor families that neglect and abuse occur, as some would like to believe. People spoke about the chronic problem of the virtually-abandoned children of many successful professional parents who see their children an hour a day on good days, or of the children who grow up in families where the parents literally work in another country, but buy their children a condominium in Canada and leave them for much of the time to fend for themselves.

#### 7. *Young People Need a Voice in What Happens to Them*

Young people and people who work with youth emphasized the importance of involving young people in planning, implementing and even evaluating programs and decisions that affect them. In the justice system, they said that young people should be given a chance to tell their side of the story. As one young woman said:

"You can't respect the law when it doesn't respect you. The things I did were about survival. No-one ever asked me why I did what I did."

Many of the young people who spoke to members of the National Crime Prevention Council through these consultations said that politicians should make a point of speaking directly to young people instead of learning about the problems and needs of young people through other adults. They said that politicians should not always expect young people to come to them, but should go to the malls, to the schools and to other places that are part of the lives of young people. They added that consultation processes that supposedly involve young people often are very manipulative, and make young people



feel disempowered, because the people organizing the consultations expect young people to fit into bureaucratic timetables and venues. Also these types of consultations tend to exclude street youth because they have no phones and no fixed addresses.

8. *Young People Need to Be Part of the Solution*

People consulted, including the young people who met with Council members, stressed that young people know best what their problems are and have good ideas about what to do to solve them. They stressed that many young people are sick of feeling unsafe at school or in their local malls. They suggested bringing young people together to help create ways to make the halls in their schools or their malls safe.

They emphasized that young people often will not react well when programs are created *for* them without their input. However, if a community group said that they had some money to create a recreation program for young people and asked for their ideas for that program, then young people would feel some ownership of the program.

People consulted, on the whole, spoke positively about peer-education, peer-mediation and peer-support programs as good ways to make young people part of the solution to youth crime. However, a few

people commented that these programs cannot just be seen "as the best thing since sliced bread", since there is some evidence that peer mediation, for example, doesn't work as well with young people who have been in trouble, and will not work if power imbalances are not accurately assessed and sensitively addressed.

9. *Young People Need Accurate, Complete Information*

Most people who shared ideas with Council members through these consultations said that young people, like the general public have inaccurate information about the problems of young people, the extent and nature of youth crime and the Youth Justice System. It is difficult for young people to make informed decisions when they are dealing with inaccurate or incomplete information.

10. *Young People Need Positive Role Models*

Young people said that they need significant, caring people in their lives, people they can look up to and try to emulate. For many children, their parents and other family members do not fill this role. They told Council members that too often the media and the street scene create the drug pushers and the murderers...the people with money and power... and turn them into the role models young people come to look up to. Youth need other choices.

## WHAT DID PARTICIPANTS SAY ABOUT “WHAT WORKS” TO PREVENT YOUTH CRIME?

There was a significant feeling across the six sites that people working with youth know and have known for some time “what works” to prevent youth crime. Participants in almost every meeting stressed that it is political will, not more knowledge, that is needed to prevent youth crime. The major elements of an effective, sensitive and preventive approach to youth crime identified by participants, are highlighted briefly below.

### 1. *Approaches that “Work” Get At the Roots of the Problem*

Participants reminded NCPC members that research has shown repeatedly that the factors associated with persistent crime include:

- family violence and neglect;
- lack of supervision from parents or other caring adults, parental rejection, and lack of parent-child involvement;
- difficulties in school;
- neighbourhoods characterized by poor housing, lack of recreational, health and educational facilities;
- the disintegration of social supports;
- peer pressure;
- youth unemployment and blocked opportunities; and
- poverty.<sup>9</sup>

People consulted stressed repeatedly that the systemic problems and inequities which affect our whole society are felt particularly strongly by youth today. We know that, despite concerted public education and intervention efforts, dating violence as well as violence and

neglect in families is still a major problem across Canada. The income needs of most families force parents to spend more time at work and less with their children, thus reducing the time and supervision that even very caring parents can give their children. We know that more young people are living in poverty. We know that school drop-out rates are on the rise. We know that cutbacks to health, education and social programs will reduce the number of recreational, health and educational facilities as well as the already-tenuous social supports of many families who rely on public programs for social support because they do not have extended family or a supportive network of friends.

The young people consulted spoke of their isolation from parents and/or from positive adult role models. The growing fragmentation of our society on the basis of age leads young people more and more to rely on their peers for support and guidance, thus increasing the potency of peer pressure.

Youth unemployment and blocked opportunities are by now a fact of life for many young people, and have created a level of hopelessness and a rising suicide rate among young people.

Cultural clashes and racism contribute to blocked opportunities for youth who are members of minority groups. While minority youth are not the only young people feeling that their opportunities are limited, in general, Aboriginal youth and other young people from minority groups experience these barriers most keenly. Those consulted also pointed out that racism influences the decisions of

<sup>9</sup> For a succinct discussion of the research identifying these factors, see p.10-12 and p.35. The John Howard Society of Alberta, “Crime Prevention Through Social Development: A Resource Guide”, Alberta, 1995.

educators, child welfare workers, health officials and justice system officials on how to deal with problems involving youth from minority groups. People consulted told NCPC members that racism contributes to the over-use of the justice system to deal with problems involving youth from minority cultures. They said it contributes as well to the over-representation of young people from minority cultures in custodial facilities and the under-representation of minority youth in Alternative Measures Programs.

Situational factors which contribute to crime, such as unattended residences and more accessible consumer goods, are part of the fabric of life in most communities in Canada. Despite gun-reform legislation, many young people consulted said that it is easy for young people to buy or find handguns and other potentially lethal weapons.

These problems must all be taken seriously and addressed in a concerted way if youth crime is to be reduced. *Policies and programs related to the Youth Justice System must be tied to social policies and social programs.*

## 2. *Approaches that "Work" Emphasize Early Prevention and Intervention:*

Consultation participants reminded NCPC members that it has long been known through research and practical experience that the future of a child is largely determined by the time he or she is five or six years old. Good pre-natal care helps ensure that babies are born healthy and strong. There is also strong evidence that strong pre-school programs which help build academic and social skills as well as self-esteem have a major effect on the child's ability to succeed in his or her later years. The famous Head-Start and Perry

Preschool Programs have long been touted as examples of the benefit such early intervention can have.<sup>10</sup> Readers may be interested to know that the NCPC has another committee looking in depth at Early Intervention before the age of six.

Participants in the consultations also stressed the importance of including parenting education in an early prevention approach. Several people suggested that parenting courses should be compulsory in high school, that proactive support for parents who are having difficulty raising their child or adapting to their parenting role should be readily available in all communities, and that early intervention should be made with parents that child-care workers, nursery school teachers or neighbours notice cannot control their preschool child.

Participants highlighted as well the need to look at improving foster care. They suggested that foster care must be made more stable. Several young people spoke of living in ten or more foster care homes. Participants suggested that consistent training and monitoring of foster parents should be provided along with support to help children stay with the same foster parents until they can return to their natural parents, where appropriate, or live on their own.

## 3. *Community Ownership and Responsibility is Essential*

The often-repeated adage that "It takes a village to raise a child" was echoed by many participants in the consultations. People emphasized that effective prevention programs must not be seen as the responsibility only of police and other justice officials. Instead, the community generally must see that we all have a

<sup>10</sup> For another discussion of the importance of such early intervention, see p.47-49, Premier's Council on Health, Well-being and Social Justice, "Yours, Mine and Ours: Ontario's Children and Youth Phase One", Toronto, Ontario, 1994.

responsibility to help prevent crime by building the kind of communities where inequality, limited opportunities and crime can't thrive, and where individuals feel like part of the community.

4. *Programs Must Be Created By and For the Community:*

Closely connected to the preceding point is the message communicated by those who participated in the meetings that a "cookie-cutter" approach to programs will not work. Programs that are effective in one community cannot simply be transposed to another community. Instead, to create effective programs in different communities, the ideas on which a program in one community is built can be communicated to and grappled with by a different community. They must then re-create the program to fit their realities, strengths, problems and needs.

5. *Programs Must Involve Multidisciplinary Efforts:*

Continuing on the theme of collaboration, participants pointed out that one-dimensional programs do not work. A program that looks at crime only as a legal problem will not be successful, because it will not be able to address the roots of the problem. Crime is in fact a social, health, educational and legal problem. Effective programs will include all these aspects in some way, and will recognize that collaboration requires nurturing and some education for those people used to working in single-discipline programs.

6. *Programs Must Have Political as well as Community Will Behind Them:*

People consulted emphasized that the best program may wither if there is not the political will behind it to help open doors to collaboration across sectors and agencies, to positive media coverage, to public acceptance and, of course, to stable funding.

7. *Effective Programs Have Stable, Long-Term Funding:*

Many participants emphasized the negative effects on programs of having unpredictable and inadequate funding. While front-line workers generally agreed that programs and their goals must be evaluated continuously to show that they are still working effectively, programs that demonstrate they "work" must have funding stability to allow flexibility in responding to changing conditions and needs in their communities.

Currently, most front-line programs for young people are funded through demonstration programs which guarantee only three years of funding. During the consultations many programs represented were losing their funding or were anxious about the prospect of losing their funding. Participants emphasized that, while change can be creative, cutting the funding for a program once it has established that it "works" is counterproductive not only for the program staff but for the youth and communities the program serves.

8. *Effective Programs Focus on the Unique Needs and Situations of the Individuals they Help:*

Participants stressed over and over that it is impossible to help turn someone's life around unless you know who you are dealing with and what problems, needs and strengths that person has. They asked policy makers not to focus on one solution, thinking it will work for everyone. For example, while some of the youth consulted felt that wilderness camps would be extremely helpful for many young people who have been in trouble with the law, or are at risk of committing a crime, others felt that it would be meaningless for some whose sense of self is totally urban. For others, including young people who are severely traumatized from long-term

sexual assault, it could even be destructive unless there was extensive counselling and sensitivity to their needs.

Those consulted said that we need to apply human, problem-solving approaches if we want to really deal with the underlying issues that contribute to a young person committing harmful and/or illegal activities.

Aboriginal people who attended the meetings as well as a few non-Aboriginal participants emphasized that responding to young people as individuals may include meeting their spiritual needs and their needs to understand and explore their cultural heritage, traditional language and history.

9. *Programs that "Work" Emphasize the Positive Not the Negative*

People in the consultations told NCPC members that "if you expect the worst from people you will probably get the worst." Similarly, if you "focus on the negative, it will be pretty hard to move beyond the negative." Participants said that our youth have lost their place in our society. Too many people see young people as "a problem" or even as "the enemy". We need to give them a positive place.

People also emphasized that if we continually emphasize young persons' problems and faults, they will not see the strengths on which they can build. We will further erode their self-esteem and the resiliency on which they can build positive lives. As one person said:

"We need a true commitment to youth. Currently too many policies and programs for youth are disrespectful and negative toward young people."

Other people suggested that if we emphasize having fun instead of "fixing problems" young people would be attracted to programs and, in fact, would address their problems while building their strengths and enjoying themselves. Some participants spoke of the literacy programs set up in shopping malls through "Performers for Literacy" as a good example of this approach. Performers, often celebrities well-known to young people, read to young people, meet with them, act out skits, involve young people in interactive computer games, etc. And this program comes to where many young people are after school and on weekends — shopping malls.

A positive orientation also means communicating successes and sharing good news, not only problems or crimes. Young people and communities must be congratulated and rewarded for their successes in building healthy communities, in achieving something and in preventing crime.

10. *Continuity "works"*

Another element that participants said must be present in programs that "work" is continuity. Too many programs for young people are short-term, one-dimensional and do not include links to other programs or links over time. Successful programs will connect young people to other programs they need and will provide long-term service and/or follow-up support.

## WHAT PREVENTS COMMUNITIES FROM PUTTING KNOWLEDGE OF “WHAT WORKS” INTO PRACTICE?

The major problems and barriers that were identified by participants revolved around one central observation:

As a society we rely on official systems too often and too soon to solve problems related to young people. As a result:

- young people are frequently isolated from their families and communities;
- families and communities become disempowered and may become less accountable; and
- responses to problems take on the characteristics of bureaucracies with their scheduling and divisions of responsibility.

The barriers that emerge from this central problem and that were identified by participants at the consultations are summarized below, along with some of the ideas participants raised for addressing these problems.<sup>11</sup> It is noteworthy that this issue and the problems arising from it were addressed without consensus by participants and with many qualifications. Discussions around barriers often were consensual during the actual consultation meeting. However, following the meeting, participants called the facilitator to add cautions or alternate points of view.

Overall, those consulted urged that greater family and community participation in programs and problems involving young people be encouraged. However, some people reminded Council members that official programs and systems were needed to protect the rights of individuals and to help reduce the

inequality and inconsistency that can emerge from too great an emphasis on community-based solutions.

### 1. *The Roles and Responsibilities of Parents and Other People Raising Children are Inadvertently Undermined by Official Responses*

#### *The Problem*

Many people in the discussions grappled with the dilemmas surrounding the involvement of parents and other family members in the prevention of youth crime. It is revealing that this subject was so explosive that most people who raised these dilemmas did not raise them during the meetings, but rather called or wrote to the meeting facilitator afterwards to ensure that this issue would be included.

Some participants spoke of the apparent increase in the number of parents who were “giving up” on their children. People spoke with dismay of the parents who were not willing or able to accompany their children to court. Others cited statistics on the high rate of abuse and neglect young people suffer at the hands of family members.

While most participants acknowledged these problems and agreed that continued vigilance concerning the rights and safety of young people must be built into policies and programs affecting young people, many wondered if, as a society, too much emphasis has been put on the negative side of parenting, and not enough on the positive. They wondered if, in our concern

<sup>11</sup> Suggestions for change have not been formulated as recommendations in this paper, since they were not presented as recommendations by participants at the meetings. Readers may want to refer to the Brief to the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs on Reform to the YOA, for recommendations made by NCPC members, based in part on these consultations.

to identify and respond to child abuse and neglect, our justice and child-welfare systems have been too quick to intervene. In the process, they asked, have these systems unwittingly undermined the effectiveness and responsibility of parents and other people raising children?

A few participants who work with young people from Aboriginal or minority cultures added that the narrow definitions of "parents" to include only birth parents, step-parents or adoptive parents can lead to assumptions that a young person is abandoned or neglected when in fact the young person is being cared for well by members of the extended family or by adult friends.

#### *Suggested Solutions*

The participants who raised these concerns encouraged greater education and support for parents or others raising young people, to help them raise their children more effectively and to help involve them in intervention and prevention programs for young people. They stressed that while child abuse, neglect and poor parenting are very real problems in our society, policies and programs which inadvertently weaken families and family responsibility in the name of youth protection must be identified and addressed.

Further, several participants concurred that every effort be made to identify problems and to provide early intervention to parents and children experiencing problems before the child has entered school, or is in the very-early school grades. Most participants agreed that when children are young it is less common for families to "give up" on their children. However, families who have lived with difficulties and feelings of failure until their children are adolescents, may feel too overwhelmed and disempowered to take positive responsibility for change.

## 2. ***There is Not Enough Early Intervention***

### *The Problem*

Participants in the consultations raised the problem of our society's reluctance to intervene with young children who manifest violent, destructive, or disturbed behaviour. They pointed out that such problems are often identified by numerous teachers, by neighbours, and by parents of other children. Yet, in the interest of not labelling the child, and in the interest of "not getting involved", most commonly nothing is done to address the underlying problems behind the violence, destruction or disturbed behaviour, or even to change the child's behaviour until the child has reached adolescence and has committed a serious act of violence.

### *Suggested Solutions*

Participants said it is essential to find ways to intervene at this early stage in ways that address the root problems, that emphasize support and problem-solving rather than blame, and that help family members, friends, teachers and others who are part of the child's life take responsibility for assisting that young child to find non-violent or non-destructive ways of dealing with anger, frustration and the desire for power or control.

## 3. ***The Justice System is Being Used Inappropriately to deal with health and social problems***

### *The Problem*

Many participants suggested that cutbacks to social and health programs, combined with an emphasis through the media on punitive attitudes toward young people, have contributed to an increased reliance on the justice system to deal with problems involving young people.

Several people who attended the meetings spoke of the dearth of counselling or substance abuse treatment programs for young people. They said that many young people are unable to get help unless they commit a crime. Once they enter the justice system, treatment can be ordered by the court.

Others said that as a society people are abdicating responsibility for solving everyday problems by redefining virtually every instance of conflict in criminal or litigious terms. For example, some participants pointed out that schools are redefining typical schoolyard conflicts, that have existed as long as children have congregated in schools, as assaults and therefore as crimes. People who made this point acknowledged that there are forms of violence in some schools that may require justice system intervention, matters such as violence involving weapons, swarming and extortion involving violence. However, they asked if responding to a typical schoolyard fight as an assault under zero-tolerance policies, and turning the participants over to the police, will reduce such behaviour in the future? Some suggested that, instead of reducing violence in accordance with the intention of the policy, such policies could increase violence by convincing young people and adults that they are incapable of solving everyday problems without resorting to violence or to the justice system. Some participants extended this point to suggest that parents and educators are abdicating responsibility for boundary-setting, for discipline and for problem-solving related to incidents involving conflict, damage or harm and, instead, are transferring responsibility to the justice system.

#### *Suggested Solutions*

Most participants felt that the implications of cuts to social and health programs, including the shift in responsibility and

expenditures to the justice system, should be seriously reviewed and addressed.

The majority of participants also expressed a desire for a public education campaign to demystify youth crime and to raise awareness of problem-solving approaches that do not involve the justice system. This campaign would show people that some of the perceived or (in some locations) actual increase in violent youth crime is, in fact, a change in reporting, definition and tolerance of actions. Such a campaign could also promote individual and community accountability for dealing with minor conflicts and problems involving young people. Once again, people were not suggesting that the purpose of such education would be to condone the harmful actions or to exclude justice system intervention in serious crimes. Instead, such education could help reduce fear and encourage people to take responsibility for problem-solving.

#### 4. ***There is Too Little Follow-Up and Follow-Through***

##### *The Problem*

One of the most common problems noted was the lack of follow-up and continuity in programming. Participants said that the best counselling, treatment or training programs will be of little use if young people are not helped to adapt what they learn to everyday life. Some people spoke of the futility of providing programs in youth custody centres but then releasing the young person back to an abusive home environment and to friends who are involved in crime.

Others said that young people are given different messages in different programs and that there is no continuity or follow-through to help them make sense of disparate messages.



*Suggested Solutions:*

Participants felt that follow-up should be an automatic component of every program put in place.

5. ***Programs are Fragmented and Territorial***

*The Problem*

Programs for young people are increasingly in competition for scarce resources. Such competition breeds territoriality. The result is that many service providers will not share information with one another and will not collaborate to solve young persons' problems according to their individual needs.

*Suggested Solutions*

Participants felt that funders should build the need for real collaboration concerning specific individuals into funding requirements. They pointed out that while more funding agreements do ask for evidence of cooperation, funders are satisfied if those seeking funding are part of a coordinating committee. Some participants pointed out that most coordinating committees do not problem-solve around actual individuals.

6. ***The Youth Justice System is Racist and Classist:***

*The Problem*

Some participants said that despite increased efforts in some locations to hire more Aboriginal or minority-culture police and probation officers, the Youth Justice System still discriminates against young people who are not white and/or are not from mainstream cultures. Those consulted said that much of this discrimination is based on erroneous and negative beliefs about the families of young people from Aboriginal and minority cultures.

One example raised of such discrimination was that Aboriginal youths and youths

from minority cultures are rarely recommended for Alternative Measures programs because they are not seen to have the skills or the family support to benefit from such programs. Another participant said that, in her community, if black or Aboriginal youths are involved in a typical fight at school that does not involve weapons or result in serious harm, they are more likely to be expelled and the police are more likely to be called in than if white youths are involved in a fight. When white youths are involved in such a fight, generally parents are called in and expected to deal appropriately with the problem. She added that parents from minority cultures are rarely even informed by the school if the child is expelled. She went on to suggest that parents from Aboriginal or minority cultures are not considered to be as responsible, as caring, or as capable of dealing effectively with the prevention of future violence as white parents are.

A few participants pointed out that similar attitudes exist about poor children and their parents. They pointed out that low income often is seen as evidence of irresponsibility and general inferiority. These attitudes influence decisions made concerning youths from low-income families and their families.

*Suggested Solutions*

Cross-cultural sensitization of: justice system workers, workers in other programs and the general public was seen by participants as essential to reduce racism. Similar sensitization courses also can be used to challenge and change beliefs and attitudes about low-income families. Participants also stressed that community-based programs which reflect the uniqueness of each community will be more responsive to cultural differences.



7. ***There is Too Little Evaluation of Programs***

*The Problem*

While participants in programs generally have a good idea of the success of their programs, there are few evaluation studies which allow for comparisons across programs or even across time in the same program.

*Suggested Solutions*

Participants suggested that funding for programs should include an automatic evaluation component. Some participants also suggested that some uniformity in funders' evaluation criteria, to the extent possible, would be beneficial.

8. ***Cuts to Social and Health Programs are Increasing the Root Causes of Crime***

*The Problem*

Participants said that cuts to social and health programs not only are shifting responsibility for social and health problems to the justice system, but also are increasing poverty, reducing the potential for early intervention, reducing recreation programs for young people, and generally increasing the conditions that contribute to youth crime.

*Suggested Solutions*

Most participants acknowledged the need to reduce expenditures, although a few questioned whether the rhetoric around cost-cutting was in fact a political-control tactic. However, participants were united on the need to assess the real economic and social costs of reduced funding to health and social services.

9. ***Funding Policies and Practices Work Against Effective Program Delivery***

*The Problem*

Currently most government funding and some private foundation funding is short-term and rewards "innovative" programs. These funding restrictions mean that many good services are forced to close their doors once they are established because they are no longer "innovative" and their start-up funding has ended. Other services are forced constantly to redefine and reinvent themselves to stay alive. This means that service continuity for young people, their families and communities is lost. It also means that an inordinate amount of staff time is devoted to seeking and justifying funding. This is time taken away from front-line work with young people, their families and/or other community members.

*Suggested Solutions*

Participants urged funders to look seriously at the cost/benefits of sustained funding for programs that can show through evaluations that "they work".

10. ***Misinformation Reduces the Effectiveness of Policies and Programs***

*The Problem*

Participants said that erroneous information about the experiences and needs of young people and about the realities of youth crime are not only fuelling fear and punitive attitudes on the part of the public, they are also negatively influencing the work of policy makers and service providers. Some of the participants who work in the justice system said that they are increasingly visible and accountable to the public. Therefore, if the public is calling for more punitive measures for young people, even if these reactions come from misguided beliefs about youth crime, there is pressure on justice system representatives to respond to public demands. Policy

makers also spoke of the influence that public demands can have on their use of time and on their decisions.

#### *Suggested Solutions*

Participants said that a comprehensive and long-term public education program is needed to provide accurate and comprehensive information about:

- the needs and problems of young people;
- the realities of youth crime;

- the justice system's responses to young people who get in trouble with the law;
- the importance of family, community and youth responsibility and involvement in the solutions; and
- the many ways that young people are working to benefit the community.

Participants also said that media must be made more accountable for their negative presentation of young people and for their glorification of crime.

## WHAT HAS THE ALTERNATIVE MEASURES PROGRAM CONTRIBUTED TO THE YOUTH JUSTICE SYSTEM AND TO KNOWLEDGE OF "WHAT WORKS"?

### **How Have Alternative Measures Programs Worked?**

The consensus of people who were part of the consultations was that the principles on which the Alternative Measures provisions of the *Young Offenders Act* are based are laudable. However, while the programs are working well in some locations, generally, participants said that they are not being used very widely and, where they are used, these programs rarely promote the *YOA* principles of: community involvement, reintegration of young people, and reducing justice system intervention, where appropriate.

More specifically, participants said that Alternative Measures programs are:

- widening the justice net by involving mostly young people who would not be brought into the justice system, but would merely receive a warning, if the Alternative Measures programs did not exist;

- rewarding service groups and agencies that don't question the existing system with contracts to manage Alternative Measures programs;
- reducing rather than expanding the range of community-based programs helping to reintegrate young people by cutting funds to community programs not selected for Alternative Measures programs;
- restricting Alternative Measures programs to a narrow range of options such as essay or apology writing, that do not speak to the unique needs and realities of many young people and do little to address the harm done or to reintegrate the young person into the community;
- excluding Aboriginal and minority youth because these youth are not seen to have the skills or family support to benefit from Alternative Measures programs;
- further reducing the access of young people to needed counselling, treatment and/or training, since such options are rarely seen as appropriate components of Alternative Measures dispositions.

In one meeting, some of the participants said that the Alternative Measures program was now being used with young people who had committed serious or repeat offences. They said this expansion was not based on an attempt to expand *YOA* principles, but was being used inappropriately and, in their opinion, irresponsibly as a cost-cutting measure.

A few participants, in provinces where Alternative Measures can be applied pre-charge and post-charge, also pointed out that Alternative Measures programs were rarely applied pre-charge. These participants expressed the concern that Alternative Measures programs could never promote increased community involvement, increased reintegration of young people, and reduced use of the justice system, unless there was a significant increase in pre-charge use of Alternative Measures programs.

### **What Have Experiences with these Programs Revealed About “What Works”?**

Some participants concluded that attempting to increase community involvement through the leadership of the justice system holds many pitfalls. They suggested that community intervention could not simply be added on to the Youth Justice System as it is currently administered. Instead, they suggested, what’s needed are new approaches that foster real collaboration around problem-solving approaches. They said that such collaboration should include young people who come into conflict with the law, people who are victimized by them, the families of the young people and the victims, service providers connected with the young person, and other community members. Justice system officials would bring their expertise and experience to the collaboration, but the problem-solving processes could not necessarily be led by the justice system.

### **CAN WE CREATE A CONSTELLATION OF EXISTING PROGRAMS “THAT WORK”?**

Participants in the consultations emphasized that programs already exist across Canada to make a reality of the knowledge of “what works”, summarized earlier in this report. Currently, there is no one location in Canada where there exists the full range of programs needed to prevent youth crime effectively. However, participants were convinced that examples of programs, that promote the approaches and principles highlighted throughout this paper, could be identified and pulled together into an ideal constellation of programs.

Accordingly, an attempt has been made to recreate the vision they presented by selecting some of the many services described by participants at the consultations which embody

the characteristics of approaches “that work”. Readers should note that these are only some of the many excellent programs across Canada that could have been selected. In addition, the pool of services from which these were chosen was limited to those identified by consultation participants. Therefore, most of the programs are located in or near the six locations in which consultation meetings were held. Where no program was identified that filled a need raised by people at the consultations, an appropriate program was “borrowed” from another jurisdiction. If no such program was known by the author of this report, the type of service needed was still included to encourage community members to complete the constellation.

The individual programs that follow, and even the constellation of programs that follows, should not be interpreted as “models” that can simply be transferred to different locations. In accordance with the emphasis on community ownership and appropriateness repeated by many participants, programs would have to be adapted to the unique realities of each community. In the process, individual programs would change, as would the links between them. Depending on the size, strengths and needs of a community, it is possible that fewer programs could be created that embody the goals and accomplishments of the long list of programs that make up the ideal constellation presented in this paper.

The programs presented have been organized into categories to clarify the different components of an ideal constellation of preventive and interventive responses which emerged through the consultations. However, this division is frequently artificial, since most of the programs included could be placed in more than one category. In particular, while a separate section called “Setting the Stage” has been created, most of the programs include their own stage-setting process.

Finally, readers should note that only very brief descriptions of the programs have been included. As a result, the richness of each program cannot possibly be communicated fully. Where cost figures or evaluation data were available, this information was added to the description. People who attended the consultations were adamant that effective prevention provides good value by reducing both social and financial costs in the long term. Participants stressed that the initial cost of putting such a constellation of programs in place should be put in the perspective of the real, long-term costs of not preventing youth crime.

#### **A. Programs That “Set the Stage” for Community-Based Prevention**

In order to create an environment in which community-based, collaborative approaches to prevention can thrive, initiatives are needed to promote the involvement of youth, to create collaborative mechanisms, to strengthen communities, and to provide accurate information about youth crime and the needs of young people. Examples of programs that achieve these goals follow. Only one, two or three examples of each aim is included, in the interest of brevity. However, other examples of programs that achieve these major goals exist across Canada.

##### ***i) Programs that Open the Doors for Youth Involvement***

EDMONTON YOUTH COUNCIL

###### *Background*

The Edmonton Youth Council was developed in February, 1995, in response to recommendations of a 1993 report of the Mayor's Task Force on Safer Cities called “Children and Youth are Today”. It helps make young people part of the political process so that they can contribute to decisions about policies and programs that affect children and youth.

###### *Description*

The Edmonton Youth Council is intended to make the concerns, needs and desires of Edmonton's younger people known to Edmonton City Council, Edmonton school boards and other jurisdictions. The Council has 28 members, aged between 12 and 23. These young people were chosen to represent the diversity of young people in Edmonton. The members represent different educational institutions, community organizations, ethnic and religious groups, and youth serving agencies. The Council recognizes that despite the diversity of its membership, it cannot fully represent all

youth. Therefore, the Council attempts to be accommodating and open to all youth groups and individual young people.

The Council operates within the concept that all members of the Council shall be equal in power and responsibility. Youth with criminal records are eligible to apply without discrimination. However, a Council member automatically is removed from the Council if convicted of a criminal offence while holding office. Decisions are reached by consensus. The members meet once a week.

The current major sponsor for the Council is Capital City Savings. It also receives funding and information support from Edmonton Community and Family Services.

#### *Accomplishments*

Members have addressed a range of key issues involving youth. Related to the Youth Justice System, members wrote a letter to the Alberta Government in protest of a \$500 bond that young people who came in conflict with the law were being required to sign before they could get legal aid. Partly as a result of the efforts of the Youth Council, this practice was discontinued.

### **ii) Programs that Promote Collaboration**

YUKON YOUTH EMPOWERMENT AND SUCCESS (Y.E.S.)

#### *Background*

Y.E.S. emerged in the Yukon from an "Out of the Mainstream Youth" conference sponsored in 1994 through Canada's Drug Strategy (Health Canada). Participants who attended the conference recognized a need to address the problems of out-of-the-mainstream youth in their individual communities, as well as in the Yukon as a whole, by:

- creating supportive partnerships between adults and young people, and

- strengthening the ability of young people to act on their own behalf.

#### *Description*

Y.E.S. is a partnership between youth and interested adults. The organization will consist eventually of youth and adults from all the communities in the Yukon. A real attempt is made to involve "out-of-the-mainstream" and "at risk" youth, but other interested youth can join as well. Members are from Yukon First Nations, government and nongovernment agencies who work with youth at risk, "out-of-the-mainstream" youth and youth who have rejoined the mainstream, as well as individuals who are committed to assisting youth.

Y.E.S. operates as an information clearing-house for information on youth initiatives and what resources are available within the Yukon and across Canada. Y.E.S. also can assist interested youth in accessing training in leadership skills, community development, public speaking, etc. Y.E.S. has no money available for program development but, instead, can assist youth-and-adult partnerships in identifying and securing funding for specific projects.

Y.E.S. is a nonprofit organization overseen by a volunteer board of directors. The only paid staff are the youth trainee and the Y.E.S. coordinator.

#### *Accomplishments*

The program currently is contacting all the Band offices, local groups and government departments in an attempt to identify all the youth initiatives that exist within the Yukon. This information, complete with contact names and numbers, will be made available to all interested people.

Y.E.S. also is assisting youth within the Yukon to organize and plan a youth conference. The point of the conference is to initiate a dialogue between youth and adults. It is also a starting point to examine what youth feel is lacking for them in their

communities. It will help youth take the first step in planning how the youth can begin to effect change.

### **iii) Programs that Strengthen the Ability of Communities to Solve Their Own Problems through Focussed, Front-Line Coordination**

*PARTNERS FOR YOUTH, EDMONTON, ALBERTA*

#### *Background*

In January, 1992, the Young Adult Employment report "Investing in Our Future" was released in Edmonton as part of the Mayor's Task Force on Safer Cities. The report recommended a multi-disciplinary school-based approach for the delivery of services to children and families. While the program was intended initially as a crime-prevention project, it has taken on a more general aim of serving the needs of young people and their families.

#### *Description*

Through a partnership between the Edmonton Catholic School District, the school community and key government agencies, two Edmonton Catholic schools now provide children and families with one-stop, school-site-based access to a wide range of preventive and support services. St. Nicholas School, for example, houses a complete front-line service team consisting of a school counsellor, the school principal, a social worker from Edmonton Community and Family Services, an intake supervisor from Alberta Family and Social Services, a police officer, a child welfare worker, a public health nurse, a mental health therapist, an English as a Second Language worker, a probation officer and a youth worker from Edmonton YMCA.

The team provides:

- support to families;
- information on other community resources;

- referrals to other resources;
- crisis intervention;
- preventive activities;
- health promotion for students and their families;
- educational/career consultation; and
- interpretation/translation services.

#### *Accomplishments*

This school-based team approach reduces the stigma and difficulty that many young people and families experience trying to access services. It provides a reminder that help is available on a day-to-day basis in the school and therefore encourages people to seek help before problems escalate beyond control.

#### *Cost Considerations*

While no cost figures were available, participants at the consultation stressed that there are considerable financial and personnel savings in this type of program. The team members are not extra workers hired by their organizations. Instead, people already working with youth and their families are relocated to enable them to work more efficiently and effectively with other people from other agencies also working with children and their families.

### **iv) Abuse Prevention Programs**

*CONJUGAL VIOLENCE-PREVENTION PROJECT FOR THE CHINESE-CANADIAN COMMUNITY, Montreal, Quebec*

#### *Description*

"This community-oriented prevention program on family violence within the Chinese-Canadian community aims to: compile an inventory of existing resources in a bibliography, develop culturally-adapted resources, increase awareness and understanding through outreach such as workshops, develop information campaigns using posters and ethnic media, and

encourage community participation. The project is being directed by an Advisory Committee with representation from other major ethnic groups. An evaluation process has also been established for the project and its findings were to be circulated through press releases to all major Chinese media across Canada.”<sup>12</sup> Publication of a final report, presentations at conferences and workshops and a press conference in Montreal also are planned.

#### v) **Public Education Programs**

JUSTICE RESOURCE SERVICE, Prince Edward Island

##### *Background*

The Justice Resource Service was created in 1982 with funding from the Solicitor General of Canada. It was created to promote community involvement in criminal justice issues. By 1985 the Community Legal Information Association was established to deal with public legal information. The Service has been instrumental in bringing together community groups around victims' concerns and family violence issues. In April, 1989, the Victims Service Program was established as a province-wide program. “From approximately 1987 to the present, there has been a growing amount of support for more emphasis on prevention, and efforts which emphasize crime prevention and community safety have been ongoing. The approach that has always been taken seeks to build on existing structures, emphasizes relationships and communication, and recognizes the potential for citizen involvement. A fundamental principle is the ability of communities to solve their own problems.”<sup>13</sup>

##### *Description*

“The service is a province-wide resource which undertakes a wide range of activities to support the overall administration of justice and delivery of correctional programs. Current activities primarily involve further promotion, coordination and support to:

- crime prevention and community safety efforts, including a long-term provincial strategy;
- continuing efforts to deal with the impaired driving issue, including a long-term provincial strategy;
- assisting justice and related services in addressing violence and abuse issues, particularly in the context of the criminal justice response to family violence; and
- continuing prevention, community development and inter-agency approaches in supporting traditional justice services as well as involvement of community organizations.”<sup>14</sup>

##### *Accomplishments*

The accomplishments of this program are too numerous to list in this report. Only a few will be highlighted, namely:

- the development and demonstration of a youth network committed to community crime prevention;
- the merging of provincial strategies on both Community Safety and Crime Prevention;
- providing information, consultation, planning support and administrative assistance to numerous community-based initiatives on substantive criminal-justice problems;

<sup>12</sup> This description is quoted from p.19, The John Howard Society of Alberta, “Crime Prevention Through Social Development: the Canadian Experience with CPSD”, 1995.

<sup>13</sup> This description is taken from p.8, The Federal-Provincial-Territorial Working Group on Community Safety and Crime Prevention, “Models of Practice for Community Safety and Crime Prevention”

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.



- providing training to professionals and the public on issues such as domestic violence, cross-cultural sensitivity, conflict dispute mediation and resolution;
- coordination of provincial crime prevention month

## B. Early Intervention Programs:

### i) Parent Support Programs

SUPERMOM PROGRAM, Charlottetown, P.E.I.

#### *Background*

This is a program focused on young, first-time single mothers. It is organized through Child and Family Services and funded by welfare assistance and Child in Care funds.

#### *Description*

"Program participants voluntarily accept to move in with foster families with their infants for periods ranging from 3 to 12 months. They receive support, guidance and instruction in an atmosphere that accepts the reality of their maturity level and their responsibilities. The approach and the rules of the home are structured to address these needs of the individual given the circumstances. This is a 6 bed program which pays the caregivers foster care retainers for their regular involvement in case planning and support meetings."<sup>15</sup>

BABIES BEST START, Scarborough, Ontario

#### *Description:*

"The model involves the recruitment, training and supervision of low-income parents from the community who are paid an hourly wage to carry out a friendly home-visiting service to new parents of similar ethno-cultural background. Parents are

encouraged to attend a 12-week 'Nobody's Perfect' parent-education program and a 10 week 'Mother Goose' program to teach parents how to communicate and play with, touch and enjoy their children."<sup>16</sup>

ONWARD WILLOW...BETTER BEGINNINGS,  
BETTER FUTURES PROJECT, Guelph, Ontario.

#### *Background:*

This project is part of the "Better Beginnings, Better Futures" program—a 25-year prevention-policy research and demonstration project, involving separate programs in ten communities.

Its goals are:

- to prevent emotional, behavioural, social, physical and cognitive problems;
- to promote healthy child development; and
- to enhance communities.

It is funded jointly by the Ontario government and the federal government.

#### *Description:*

This "Better Beginnings, Better Futures" program is focused on parents of children aged under five, who are poor and from minority cultures.

Community development activities undertaken through this project include: leadership development, publishing a newsletter, lobbying, and community events to bring residents together.

Parent-support activities include: take-a-break groups, home-making activities, recreation activities, peer home visitors who assist parents with child development and nurturing, teen activities, drop-in child care and respite care.

<sup>15</sup> This descriptions was taken from p.21 of The John Howard Society of Alberta, "Crime Prevention through Social Development: The Canadian Experience with CPSD", 1995

<sup>16</sup> p.18 Ibid.

PARENT TALK, BOYS' AND GIRLS' CLUB,  
Edmonton, Alberta

*Description*

This is a program for parents who are having trouble with their teenage children. Problems may range from breaking rules and curfews, or skipping school, to trouble with the law, dependence on drugs, or abusive acts towards parents or other family members.

Through the program, group meetings for parents of teens, facilitated by a coordinator, are held weekly in the evenings. The groups are structured to promote the learning of new-parenting strategies as well as positive problem-solving approaches. However, the meetings also provide an opportunity for parents to share problems and success stories, issues, concerns and feelings with one another.

**ii) Headstart and Quality Child Care**

PRESCHOOL PROGRAMMING FOR CHILDREN IN  
POVERTY IN EDMONTON

*Background*

Headstart Programs have existed in Edmonton for 25 years. The impetus for the programs came from educators, child and family service providers and community members who were concerned at the number of four- and five-year-olds who were not as prepared for school as most of their peers. These people wanted to ensure that all children have the opportunity to benefit fully from their school experience.

*Description*

There are currently four Head Start programs in Edmonton, and there is interest in increasing the number of these programs in the municipality. The Head Start programs focus on children aged from three to five in low income families. Head Start is based on the belief that, in order to help the children, the entire family must be

helped. Accordingly, parents or other adults raising children and the children are involved in the programs.

These programs are community-based and therefore are created to respond to the particular needs of each community. There are many different forms of parent support provided. Food banks, nutrition programs, literacy programs for parents, parent support groups, and parenting courses are among the services provided to parents and other family members.

For the children, readiness for school is a key element and considerable emphasis is placed on giving children a range of experiences that prepare them for academic learning and that provide the basis for positive social interactions with peers and educators. Program organizers are always aware however that the child's basic needs must be met if that child is to realize his or her potential for learning. Therefore breakfast and lunch programs are a part of the programs.

Children with disabilities are encouraged to be involved. The programs are located variously: in a day care centre in one community; a church in another; a school in a third; and a townhouse in a fourth.

The programs are funded jointly through the Family and Community Support Services, Alberta Education, Grants for the Disabled, the federal government's Brighter Futures program and diverse and multiple private donations.

*Accomplishments*

Headstart programs have been shown in the U.S. and in Canada to result in many benefits including:

- more students completing school and with better grades;
- fewer young people needing mental health services;

- fewer parents abusing alcohol, with concurrent reductions of alcohol's impacts on children;
- a reduction in family violence; and
- fewer students with preventable disabilities, and reduced demand for medical services.<sup>17</sup>

### **iii) Child Abuse Prevention Programs**

THE CHILD ASSAULT PREVENTION PROJECT (CAP), Montreal, Quebec

#### *Background*

The Child Assault Prevention (CAP) Project was developed by the CAP Project in Columbus, Ohio. The Montreal program is modelled on this U.S. program and is one of the programs coordinated through the Montreal Assault Prevention Centre.

#### *Description*

CAP works with pre-school and elementary school children as well as adults to create a safer community for all. There are three components to the CAP project:

- a three-hour parent program;
- a 2.5-hour staff in-service; and
- two-hour children's workshops.

"CAP raps" are optional 30-minute information sessions which the Centre can provide to group decision-makers who would like to know more about the goals and structure of the program.

The adult workshops for staff and parents provide: a history of CAP and the Montreal Assault Prevention Centre, an overview of child assault, the role of parents in reducing children's vulnerability, positive ways of responding to children with problems, and a description of the children's workshop.

The children's workshops build on children's abilities. Workshop facilitators attempt to promote confidence, not fear, using language children can understand. Children are prepared to recognize potentially dangerous situations, taught practical skills and strategies to face all situations of abuse, informed of their right to be safe, strong and free, informed about different forms of assault, and taught easy-to-learn strategies to reduce their vulnerability.

### **iv) Early Intervention Programs which Focus on Young Children Manifesting Disruptive Behaviour**

THE EARLY INTERVENTION EXPERIMENT, University of Montreal

#### *Background*

In the early 1990's, Richard Tremblay and his colleagues at the University of Montreal initiated a research study to attempt to identify children manifesting problem behaviour at an early age and to find appropriate and effective ways of intervening at that time so that the problem behaviour would not escalate into delinquent behaviour.

#### *Description*

The experiment began with young boys in Grade 1 who had been identified by their kindergarten teachers as displaying disruptive behaviour, including fighting, oppositional behaviour and hyper-activity. The boys were assigned randomly to a treatment, observation or control group.

In the treatment group, the researchers worked with parents, trained the boys in social skills, and taught them to use fantasy and to be critical of television. The parents were given a reading program. They were also given training courses to teach them to:

<sup>17</sup> Description adapted from a promotional sheet provided by The Edmonton Safer Cities Project.

- monitor their children's behaviour;
- give positive reinforcement for pro-social behaviour;
- punish effectively without being abusive;
- manage family crises; and
- generalize what they learned.

The boys were asked to report on their own anti-social behaviour. Parents filled out questionnaires and attended observation sessions.

#### *Accomplishments*

Less than two years after the study began, the boys in the treatment group were reporting less fighting than the untreated groups. Further, the behaviour of the treated boys in the classroom suggested that the treatment had been beneficial.

In addition, he found behaviour characteristics in young children that predict future delinquent behaviour. More specifically, the research team discovered that "kindergarten boys with high novelty seeking, low harm avoidance and reward dependence were found in the most delinquent behaviour category from age ten to twelve, almost three times as often as the base rate."<sup>18</sup>

### C. Preventive Support and Activities for Older Children and Youths, Including Young People Considered "At Risk"

Participants in the consultations emphasized that virtually all adolescents are "at risk" of committing at least one crime during their adolescence, although not all young people are caught and/or processed through the justice system. Therefore, in the sections that follow, programs intended for the full range of children or

young people in a community have been combined with programs focussed on youths identified as "at risk".

#### i) *Recreation Programs*

Many participants at the consultations stressed that providing fun-oriented, free recreational programs makes a major contribution to using adolescent energy positively. A wide range of recreational programs is offered across Canada by schools, by Boys' and Girls' Clubs, by YMCA's and YWCA's and by a variety of other youth-serving agencies. These programs are not described in this report because they are fairly well known. The first program highlighted here uses the positive principles of recreation to work with "at risk" youths. The second showcases a recreation-and-leadership program for Aboriginal youth. However, people at the consultations stressed that the benefits of more traditional recreation programs are also a central part of a community-based youth crime prevention program.

THE ROPES PROGRAM, P.E.I.

#### *Description*

The Adventure Group in P.E.I. focusses on high risk young people. Probation refers some young people to the Adventure Group. The Ropes Program is a high-impact program to deal with low self-esteem and low confidence. Through the program, young people are taught problem-solving and achievement by climbing ropes, beams, and generally challenging their physical abilities and facing their fears. Many of the activities require coordination, so young people also are taught the importance of cooperation in achieving personal goals through this program.

<sup>18</sup> p. 218, Tremblay, R.E., Vitaro, F., Bertrand, L., LeBlanc, M., Beauchesne, H., Boileau, H. and David, L., "Parent and Child Training to Prevent Early Onset of Delinquency: The Montreal Longitudinal-Experimental Study" in J. McCord and R.E. Tremblay (eds) *Preventing Antisocial Behavior, Interventions from Birth Through Adolescence*, New York: Guilford Press

The physical activity is combined with time to talk about their experiences and work through any problems that may have arisen.

**ABORIGINAL YOUTH CULTURAL CAMP AND LEADERSHIP TRAINING, Edmonton, Alberta**

In the summer of 1995, the Edmonton Social Planning Council's Aboriginal Initiatives Program, the Big Sisters and Big Brothers Society of Edmonton, the Ben Calf Robe Society and the Edmonton Young Offenders Centre collaborated to develop two summer youth camps, one for young urban Aboriginal men and another for young urban Aboriginal women aged 13-24. Forty-five youths had an opportunity to experience a cultural and recreational camp in a natural outdoor environment with elders providing guidance and traditional knowledge.

As part of the cultural camp pilot project, an eight-week leadership training skills and outdoor education program supported by Edmonton Parks and Recreation and by Alberta Community Development was offered to 25 Aboriginal youth 16-18 years of age. These youth were involved in the cultural camps as group leaders. They received a weekly stipend with a bonus upon completion of the project.

**ii) Emotional Support and Guidance**

YOUTH ASSISTING YOUTH, Toronto, Ontario

*Background*

In 1974, in response to a dramatic rise in juvenile delinquency statistics in large metropolitan areas, the Ontario Ministry of Correctional Services invited proposals from local communities for delinquency-prevention programs. In 1975-76 a committee of concerned citizens, teachers, police and social workers in Scarborough submitted to the ministry a proposal based on the Big Brothers/Big Sisters model.

Initial Y.A.Y. caseloads were transferred from the Junior Big Brothers of Metropolitan Toronto. In 1983, the Parent Support Program was launched. Its mandate was to resolve conflicts which could arise between the volunteer and the junior's parents.

*Description*

Youth Assisting Youth (YAY) is a community-based program that matches youth volunteers, aged 16-24, in a one-to-one relationship with "at risk" children aged 6-15. The children are experiencing social, emotional, behavioral or cultural adjustment problems. The goal of the organization is to provide a positive role model through a "special friend" relationship.

The program provides on-going support for the volunteers and the parents of children involved in the program. Through regular contact, the Coordinator and the Parent Support Worker help resolve issues which affect the youth/child match. Workshops on issues such as self esteem, drug awareness, parenting, multiculturalism and sexual abuse provide important information for volunteers and parents.

Children are referred to Y.A.Y. from community resources such as schools, social workers, doctors, community groups and child protection agencies. They come to Y.A.Y. with a wide variety of social, family and community problems. A home assessment is completed for each referral received to determine the needs of the child and family in order to find an appropriate volunteer.

Youth volunteers are recruited from high schools, colleges, universities, churches and the work place. After an initial application, orientation and training sessions are held. An in-depth interview by an Area Coordinator, followed by thorough reference and police checks, complete the application process.

Matches are made according to common interests, needs and geographic location. When a suitable volunteer is found for a child, arrangements are made for the child, family and volunteer to meet. The match continues with monthly supervision by Coordinators and the Parent Support Worker. Consultations with other agencies and professionals are arranged where necessary.

Funding is provided by a broad range of corporations, foundations, service clubs, federal, provincial and municipal government departments, churches and school boards.

#### *Accomplishments*

Since 1976, Y.A.Y.'s unique service has served more than 5,900 children and youth.

A study done in cooperation with the Ontario Probation and Community Services in 1985 concluded that "Youth Assisting Youth has been cost-effective in keeping children out of the criminal justice system."

"Since 1976, less than 2 percent of Y.A.Y. children and youth needed probation care, and then only **after** their involvement with Y.A.Y. ended."<sup>19</sup>

### **iii) Counselling and Treatment**

ADOLESCENTS AT RISK PROGRAM, Misericordia Hospital, Edmonton, Alberta

#### *Description*

The "Adolescents at Risk" program treats adolescents who are experiencing a variety of problems, including physical and sexual abuse, depression, family dysfunction, legal problems and drug and alcohol dependency. The program is dedicated to

teaching and learning through service and partnership. The Program attempts to emphasize the **capacities** of the young people and families with whom they interact, not with their **deficits**. The staff includes three full-time staff, and four part-time associates, including two physicians. It is located in the Misericordia Hospital in Edmonton.

The program's Director insists on an approach which treats the whole person. He points out that:

"Physical, mental, sexual, social, emotional and spiritual health are inseparable. Treatment must address all of these components."<sup>20</sup>

The program also tries to address the roots of the problems that lead to the symptoms that bring young people to the clinic. The clinic staff recognizes that many adolescent problems are rooted in dysfunctional family situations. Therefore, the program includes family-therapy sessions and parent-support groups.

In addition to treating young people at risk, the program staff are involved in a variety of other initiatives that develop programs for young people and their parents. The program puts an emphasis on the need for the parents and the adolescents to be involved for the program to work. The Director, Dr. Dibden, encourages families and community members to share responsibility for the young people who run into trouble.

"The whole notion that kids are a terrible, tedious, burdensome bunch is a travesty," he says, "Those who do run into difficulties are often using what we see as inappropriate behaviour as a

<sup>19</sup> This quote was taken, as was the description of the program from promotional material supplied by Y.A.Y.

<sup>20</sup> This quote and most of the program description are taken from an article previously published earlier this year in the C.M.C. "Bear Bulletin".

solution to a problem. We need to recognize that children are a reflection of the adults they see around them....of society as a whole."<sup>21</sup>

#### *Accomplishments*

- The program currently has 620 files.
- Program staff network actively with other organizations and sit on interdisciplinary committees concerned with youth.

HEY-WAY'-NOQU' HEALING CIRCLE FOR ADDICTIONS SOCIETY, Vancouver, B.C.

#### *Description*

Hey-way'-noqu' Healing Circle helps urban Native and Métis families work through issues around addiction and the results of addiction experienced by families. Using the Medicine Wheel, the Circle can help an individual:

- gain knowledge and balance in all four areas of life — physical, mental, emotional and spiritual;
- examine attitudes about self and others;
- reconstruct behaviours to reflect a healthy attitude towards life; and
- feel better about themselves.

The program is based on the premise that addictions are treatable, not curable. The program emphasizes not only sobriety but abstinence and commitment to a wellness plan for the Board of Directors, staff and clients.

The services provided through this program include:

- out-patient counselling for Native and Métis men, women, youth and children, whether addicted or co-dependent (with an emphasis on families and couples);
- an educational support group which

provides the opportunity to share with, be supported by, and give support to others;

- children's counselling for children three years of age and over, in sessions held during the adult group sessions;
- culturally-based educational and therapeutic groups are held to focus on family violence, parents in crisis, inner child issues, sexual abuse, co-dependence, talking circles, cultural groups and sexual offenders. These groups have been specifically and separately designed for men, women, youth and children;
- outreach services and educational workshops; and, finally
- pre-care, assessment and referral, follow-up and after-care services, including out-patient family counselling and support during residential treatment of a family member.

#### ***iv) Education and Training Programs***

THE AMBASSADOR PROGRAM

#### *Background*

In 1991, nine inner-city youth-serving agencies in Toronto formed the Ambassador Partnership to address needs identified by street youth. The impetus for the program came from a research project done by street youth on the nature and extent of problems related to substance abuse among their peers.

#### *Description*

The partnership deals directly with youth who have experienced the negative impact of substance abuse and school dropout. The program retrieves street youth, supports clean and sober behaviour, and models an alternative to continuing abuse. It provides

<sup>21</sup> *ibid.*

financial, emotional and psychological support to street youth and similarly disadvantaged youth while they return to formal education. The program puts a strong value on the expertise of these young people about the process of leaving school, being on the street and leaving the street.

Sixteen "Ambassadors" are selected from among the Partnership groups' clients. They attend a classroom located at Frontier College for two hours each morning for academic credit. Each afternoon, they work for pay and cooperative education credits as peer-educators for their host agencies. The Ambassadors speak in schools and other youth-serving programs about their life experience related to leaving/staying in school. The objective is to reach those students who may be at risk of dropping out of school. Teams of three Ambassadors visit a school. Two Ambassadors speak for about 10 minutes each and then answer questions from the students. The third Ambassador acts as a back-up speaker and also administers a short questionnaire to measure satisfaction.

Each partner agency designates a staff person to supervise the Ambassadors in their co-operative education work and to provide or arrange for the emotional and psychological supports necessary for a successful outcome. A Program Coordinator, who reports to the Managers' Committee, is responsible for organizing and delivering Program interventions in the school system and larger community. Weekly ongoing training is provided to enhance the quality of the presentations given by the Ambassadors.

Until 1994, the Ambassador Program was funded through the CEIC Stay in School Fund. In December 1994, the Ambassador School became a program of Frontier College. It now relies on federal government grants, student welfare payments and private or corporate donations.

#### *Accomplishments*

- During the 1992/93 school year, 12-15 presentations per month were made, reaching 3600 Toronto students during the school year and an additional 1000 students during the summer.
- An outside evaluation presented in June 1993, showed that students, teachers and public health nurses were profoundly impacted by what the Ambassadors had to say, and that the impact continued over time.
- A number of schools have requested that the Ambassadors return and engage in less formal discussion with their students, to help the students access the supports they need in order to stay in school and/or stop abusing drugs.

KYTES (KENSINGTON YOUTH THEATRE AND EMPLOYMENT SKILLS, Toronto, Ontario)

#### *Description*

KYTES is a non-profit organization which provides five-month, full-time comprehensive programs which bring together high school upgrading, theatre and counselling to help street youth deal with the many issues they face as they head in a new direction.

Youth work on high school credits, with the assistance of a teacher, in a small and supportive setting. The Issues and Barriers Program focuses on concerns of interest to youth, using community members and organizations as guest speakers. Specific job skills training is part of the school curriculum, including resumé writing, job search and computer skills.

The theatre program develops the youths' creativity and life skills while addressing issues of school drop-out, family conflicts, racism, sexism, homophobia, violence, and barriers to employment. The productions develop from a focus on the youths' concerns and experiences.



A counsellor works actively with the youth throughout the program.

The program is funded through corporate, foundation, service club and private donations, and municipal government grants.

#### *Accomplishments*

- For most troupe members, the KYTES program is the first thing they have ever completed successfully.
- Each troupe member gains between three and five high school credits while at KYTES.
- While at KYTES all troupe members are assisted in securing stable housing.
- Troupe members gain specific marketable skills, including word processing and a variety of technical skills.

THE BEN CALF ROBE SOCIETY, Edmonton, Alberta

#### *Description*

This program is an alternate school experience aimed at meeting more effectively the educational needs of Native students, and broadening awareness of non-Aboriginal community members about Aboriginal Albertans.

The Ben Calf Robe Program helps students at the elementary and junior high school levels. The program has Native people involved at all instructional levels. It provides cultural awareness instruction, standard Alberta educational curricula, counselling and liaison with other schools, and in-service teacher-training opportunities to raise understanding of spiritual, historical and political aspects of Native life.

#### **v) Job Readiness, Job Creation and Job Location Programs**

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT STRATEGY, Vancouver, B.C.

#### *Description*

The Youth Employment Strategy program assists youth between the ages of 15 and 24 who are:

- receiving welfare benefits;
- Youth in Care;
- youth who are in the Home of a Relative program; or
- youth who receive benefits for a disability.

The objective of the project is to encourage these participants to achieve independence by providing programs to address their educational, training and employment needs and so help them obtain further education or available employment.

The program is committed to providing clients with work assessment and skills testing, practical life skills, job-readiness training, vocational and support counselling, and placement into employment or skills training. The program also encourages the setting of long-term goals and provides guidance to attain them. This approach is intended to give the young person a work ethic that will assist him or her to attain long-term goals.

The program includes a three week classroom session with a three-week maximum directed job search. There is an additional three-month follow-up after the client is placed in employment following the skills training. Those clients who are assessed as needing only employment guidance are placed immediately into Directed Job Search with the requisite support, resumé, etc. When necessary, clothing and transportation are provided.

The program continues to provide support for three months after graduation, including resumé assistance, job-search assistance, next-step planning and assistance with job maintenance.

**vi) Holistic Programs that Help Young People Make and Maintain Positive Life Changes**

BENT ARROW, Edmonton, Alberta

*Description*

Bent Arrow is a 16-week program that involves 25 First Nations people between the ages of 16 and 24. The program is intended for unemployed young people who are not in school or in a training situation. It is designed to develop the skills and knowledge necessary to make and maintain positive lifestyle changes using the guidance and teachings of Native Elders and The Medicine Wheel. Participants are eligible to receive a training allowance in order to help them participate in the program.

Participants attend the program from 9:00 a.m. till 4:00 p.m. Monday to Friday. It focusses on:

- life-management skills for five weeks, including anger and stress management, personal and family relationships, self-esteem and motivation to succeed in courses;
- career development, job search and interview skills and techniques for the next six weeks; and
- a work placement experience for the remaining five weeks.

In addition, three hours of each week are devoted to educational preparation.

**D. Focussed Programs that Provide Preventive Intervention with Young People who Have Been in Trouble with the Law**

**i) Programs to Prevent Vandalism and Theft**

PRO-SERVICE, Quebec City, Quebec

*Background*

This program represents a partnership involving community groups concerned with youth, the business community, young people and their neighbours. It has come about, "with a significant funding base from the corporate sector, because the business community has been educated to realize that the systemic impediments of the punitive adversarial criminal justice system do not serve the justice, crime prevention, public relations or economic business interests of the corporate world."<sup>22</sup>

*Description*

The purpose of this program is to create partnerships among young people, the victims of crime, their families and neighbours, and the community at large, in order to prevent crime, and specifically youth property crime. The clientele of the program includes all the individuals and groups noted above.

The program includes:

- a significant sensitization component which helps business people, service providers and community members see the benefits to them of dealing with minor property crimes in a community-based problem-solving way;
- situational crime prevention in the form of "courtesy" officers who are trained to pre-empt crime by youth in stores and other businesses;

<sup>22</sup> Quoted from a summary description of this program prepared by Lorraine Berzins, The Church Council on Justice and Corrections.

- In the event of crime, conflict resolution and reparation approaches to divert the offences from the criminal justice system and find solutions that address the harm done and the factors that contributed to the crime.

In addition, the program proactively developed a network of community support for youth, involving one adult and one youth volunteer for every twenty homes in a neighbourhood. This network provides information, support and discussion groups to help community members share in the responsibility for crime prevention.

## **ii) Programs to Prevent Youth Violence**

BREAKING THE CYCLE OF VIOLENCE TRAINING PROGRAM, Canadian Training Institute

### *Background*

This Program was developed by the Canadian Training Institute with YouthLink-Inner City Youth in Toronto, Ontario, in 1994. It was designed to reduce violent behaviour among young men, with a focus on young men who are street-involved. CTI hopes to revise the program, based on its experience in 1994, and start pilot programs in three locations in Canada.

### *Description*

The project had a number of components:

- a questionnaire developed with the help of focus groups involving young women, to assess what young men perceive to be violence toward women, generally, and toward their partners;
- focus groups of young men to explore their perceptions of what a healthy relationship might be, as well as their perceptions on whether violence within a relationship is justified; and

- the design of a "Breaking the Cycle of Violence" training program and the training of two staff from YouthLink-Inner City Youth in delivering the program. The five-day training program focused on self awareness, systemic roots of violence, and cognitive behavioural role-modelling.

### *Accomplishments*

The project team learned that many youths living on the streets who have a propensity for violence could benefit from an extended training program of this nature. All participants indicated that they had learned a great deal about themselves. Equally, all expressed a desire and a belief that they could have a relationship with a partner without resorting to violence. The team also learned that most of these individuals had never explored their own styles of anger, their methods for managing themselves in a conflict, and they had not been aware of the extent of the messages that reinforce violence as an appropriate expression. The young men did remind the team that much of the violence on the street is used in order to survive and therefore would not necessarily be reduced through greater understanding.

## **iii) Programs to Prevent Habitual Offending**

THE YOOT PROGRAM (YOUNG OFFENDER OBSERVATION TEAM PROGRAMS, Edmonton, Alberta

### *Background*

Two detectives and Staff Sergeant Dale Fenrich of the Youth Section of the Edmonton Police created this program. The program is based on their observation of a gap in the Youth Justice System. They felt that the Youth Justice System is dealing quite well with young people who have committed an offence for the first time and generally works well for young people

who commit serious, repeated offences. However, they felt that young people who are at risk of becoming habitual offenders are falling between the cracks of the system and are not being helped before they adopt a life of serious, habitual crime.

#### *Description*

The three police officers identified several hundred young people they thought were at risk of becoming habitual offenders. They sent this list out to their divisions and asked if anyone would be willing to “adopt” a youth; that is, establish rapport with the young person and establish a relationship with his or her family. When police officers offered to become part of this program, they were sent full profiles on their “adopted” youth including any conditions of their undertakings, how they are doing in school, their family background and their previous record.

The officers/mentors make sure their adopted youths are going to school and respecting their curfews and the conditions of their probation, if they are on probation. They do their best to deal with any problems as a mentor and friend rather than as a police officer. They try to offer support and guidance to parents as well. Therefore, if the young person skips school, the officer would not breach him or her unless the officer felt that the young person was “spinning out of control”, and it was not possible to deal with the problem in partnership with the young person’s school and family.

The officer/mentor works with a probation worker and with a detective. They make decisions jointly where necessary.

#### *Accomplishments*

While no firm evaluation figures are available for this program, participants at the consultation meetings said that parents and youth appreciate the one-on-one involvement and the interest that these

officers are showing in their “adopted” youth.

### **E. Programs Within the Justice System that Strengthen the Principles of Reintegration, Re-Education, Responsibility and Opportunity :**

#### **i) Reintegrative Bail Programs**

THE TORONTO BAIL PROGRAM, Toronto, Ontario

#### *Background*

This program was created to deal with the large number of young people who cannot raise bail and therefore are remanded in custody until their court date.

#### *Description*

The Toronto Bail Program employs three Jail Liaison Workers who are stationed in the three Metro Toronto Detention Centres. Potential clients are interviewed by Bail Program staff to gather information about their living arrangements, employment/educational status, contact with other community agencies, past performance while released to Bail Program, probation and/or parole criminal record — especially convictions for Fail to Appear and Fail to Comply, consumption of alcohol and/or drugs, psychological or psychiatric problems, and ties in the community. Most of this information is verified.

Based on this interview, a decision regarding the accused person’s suitability for community supervision is made. People considered for this program have been granted release conditions by the court, but have been unable to raise the cash or to satisfy surety bail requirements.

Once accepted and released to the Bail Program, the accused enters into a contract with the agency where he/she agrees to abide by the terms of his or her release, including reporting as often as directed by the court. Violation of release conditions

results in a Failure to Comply order being laid by the Bail Program supervisor.

The Bail Program provides people with the opportunity to enter rehabilitation programs and to obtain housing. The Program provides a network of support. They connect the accused to treatment programs, to social assistance programs, and help them return or stay in school, find jobs, etc.

#### *Accomplishments*

- In the past year, 1587 people were released to the Bail Program in Metro Toronto and York Region, as a result of 4,037 interviews done in the cells.
- On any given day, the Bail Program supervises between 650 and 700 accused persons, both adults and young offenders who would otherwise be detained in custody until their trial.
- The program costs \$3 a day per individual for supervision in the community. This compares to \$150 a day per individual to keep him or her in custody.
- Evaluations of the program done in 1992 and 1993, based on interviews with defence counsel, judges and justices of the peace were very positive. One of the comments was that "the Program's strength is its ability to provide 'common sense' guidance, personal support and motivation and rehabilitative aid."<sup>23</sup>

#### **ii) Youth Court Programs**

YOUTH/NEW CANADIAN COURTWORKER PROGRAM, North York, Ontario

##### *Background*

This program is a non-profit, private, community-based counselling service dedi-

cated to ensuring that youths, African and new Canadians have access to services and are provided with understanding and support. Courtworkers are not lawyers but are available to assist and support people who are in conflict with the law.

##### *Description*

Courtworkers help clients and families better understand the nature of their predicament and the complexities of the criminal legal system. The program provides personal and confidential family counselling and support before and after court. The program also promotes cultural awareness. Services are provided without cost. Courtworkers also act as a link to other social service agencies that may be able to help.

#### **F. Programs that Advance Partnerships Among Justice, Protective Services, Families and Community**

##### **i) Family Group Conferencing**

FAMILY GROUP DECISION MAKING IN NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

##### *Background*

The model of Family Group Conferencing was developed and legislated in New Zealand in response to concerns expressed by the indigenous people, the Maori, about white, expert-driven approaches eroding the strengths of their families and communities. In Newfoundland and Labrador, a partnership of community, university, and government was formed to adapt and test this model in three regions of the province: Nain (an Inuit settlement), the Port au Port Peninsula (a rural region), and St. John's (the capital city).

##### *Description*

Family Group Conferencing was used to deal with family violence, including child-

<sup>23</sup> p.7 David Scott and Neil Webster, "An Evaluation of The Toronto Bail Program Part One, Defense Counsels' Perceptions", January, 1992, Toronto, Ontario.

and women-abuse. This approach offers a way for the family and friends of people who have lived with family violence to help stop the violence and to address the problems that contributed to the violence. The immediate family, including the person or people who have been victimized, as well as the person or people who have abused them, meet with extended-family members and friends, to tell the story of the abuse, of the needs and hopes from all sides, and then together to plan ways to prevent future violence, and to resolve the wrong that has been done. Throughout this process, the family receives the support and protection of the referring agencies (e.g., child welfare, youth corrections, parole) and these agencies must approve the family's plan for it to go into effect and be resourced. A local coordinator organizes the conferences and is also responsible for ensuring that the plan includes specific protective and care measures as well as monitoring and evaluation of the plan. Where necessary, the family group is brought back together to review and reformulate the plan.

#### *Accomplishments*

This model has been well received in the three participating sites, where families, community organizations, and public authorities have given it a favourable evaluation. A one year follow-up study is being carried out by the principal investigators, Gale Burford and Joan Pennell, at Memorial University.

## **ii) Youth Justice Committees**

### ALBERTA YOUTH JUSTICE COMMITTEES

#### *Background*

"Youth Justice Committees to assist with the administration of the *Young Offenders Act* are facilitated by Section 69 of the *Act*.

The first Youth Justice Committee in Alberta was set up in the fall of 1990 in Fort Chipewyan when members of the local community and the criminal justice system grew concerned about community youth getting into trouble with the law...A second Committee in Alberta was developed in Wabasca a few months later."<sup>24</sup> Committees currently exist in about 22 Alberta communities.

In 1994, the Alberta Department of Justice developed guidelines by which Youth Justice Committees could become "designated" or sanctioned by the Department.

#### *Description*

Youth Justice Committees are based on four main principles:

- community ownership (i.e., to be effective, the committees must meet the needs of their communities and have the support of people working in the justice system, people working in treatment, counselling and training programs as well as the support of a large number of members. Without this support, meaningful and varied consequences will be impossible to put in place.);
- caring;
- informal social control (i.e. using pressure by the community to change behaviour); and
- holism (i.e., addressing the root causes of the problem behaviour, many of which may involve family and societal, not just individual issues).

Youth Justice Committees are a kind of community sentencing circle and operate as an extension of the court system. Young people are referred to the Committee by police or probation officers, by Crown

<sup>24</sup> p.8 of a document giving information on Youth Justice Committees provided by the Native Counselling Services of Alberta.

Attorneys or by other court officials. The role of the Committee is to determine a consequence that is appropriate and is consistent with the philosophy and principles of the *Young Offender's Act*. Committee members will first establish contact with the offender and his/her family and in most cases will meet with them. The Committee may also contact victims to hear their comments and concerns.

The terms and conditions of the Committee's decision must be clearly defined, set out in writing, read and explained to the participants before an agreement is signed. Youth Justice Committee members must be unpaid volunteers. The actual composition of the committee should reflect the composition of the community and, therefore, will differ from one community to another. A community facilitator is chosen to set up meetings, contact people and make suggestions about the process. Facilitators should know the community and the justice system well. Often facilitators work in the justice system as police officers, probation officers or judges.

Sometimes the consequences include community work orders. The consequences may include the involvement of other resources, such as counselling, treatment or training programs. The absence of such programs in many small communities places constraints on the possible approaches the Committee can recommend. The range of potential consequences is as varied as the communities that use this approach to reintegration of young people.

#### *Accomplishments*

- "Informal evidence from Wabasca and other communities suggests that there are very few people who re-offend after they go through the committees.

It is also important to note that the committees are well accepted by most non-Aboriginal members of the criminal justice system and the general community, as well as by most Aboriginal communities."<sup>25</sup>

### **iii) Other Reintegrative Community**

#### ***Approaches***

THE LENNOX ISLAND RESERVE JUSTICE COMMITTEE

#### *Description*

This project was set up four years ago for use with minor crimes involving young people. It uses the principles of reintegrative shaming and community involvement to keep young people from re-offending. When a young person commits a minor crime, he or she admits to having committed the crime and then meets with a local justice committee that includes an elder, a young person, someone from a single parent family and someone from a two-parent family. The committee members, together with the young person, decide what the penalty will be. Through the committee process the community becomes aware of the crime and is involved in the resolution. This program is rooted in the belief that positive shaming aimed at reintegrating young people with the community will keep the young person from re-offending.

YOUTH ACHIEVEMENT CENTRE, Whitehorse, Yukon

#### *Description*

This is a follow-up program for young people after they leave custody. It includes various supports for reintegrating into the community, including a range of training opportunities, such as:

- a cooking and nutrition course;

<sup>25</sup> p.7 from a document providing information on Youth Justice Committees provided by the Native Counselling Services of Alberta.

- an initiative reconnecting youth and elders;
- a course on First Nations Identity;
- a course intended to help young people make healthy choices regarding sexuality and human relationships;
- a stress- and anger-management course;
- a program on shoplifting prevention;
- another on vandalism prevention;
- an information course on young people and the law;
- a course on understanding self concept;
- a job readiness training program; and
- another on developing the life skills that will help young people live independently.

There are also various other courses intended to help young people make the transition from custody to the community.

Parents' referrals as well as self-referrals and program referrals are accepted.

## HOW CAN THE NATIONAL CRIME PREVENTION COUNCIL BEST PROMOTE NEEDED CHANGE?

The majority of participants felt that the independent and non-partisan nature of the Council, combined with the broad range of views, experience and expertise represented on the Council, as well as the direct voice Council members have to federal policy makers, all combine to give the National Crime Prevention Council a unique opportunity to influence political will and to promote needed change in our society's response to young people.

### **Participants Ideas for Central Contributions of the Council**

People who attended the consultations felt that the Council could best contribute to change in two ways.

#### 1. *Education and Sensitization*

Participants said that the Council members had a unique opportunity to design, promote and help deliver a broad-based education program focussed on:

- people providing services to young people;
- policy makers;
- young people; and
- the general public.

This education program would be:

- long-term;
- locally appropriate, yet delivered nationally;
- internally consistent;
- culturally sensitive;
- clear;
- relevant for people in rural and isolated areas, as well as for people in urban areas;
- accessible to people who are low literate; and
- accessible to people who have sight or hearing disabilities.



The program would encompass education and sensitization on:

- the importance of adopting a social development approach to crime prevention and a restorative, reintegrative approach to justice;
- the revised *Young Offenders Act*;
- the cost and administration of the Youth Justice System;
- the real story about youth crime;
- the realities of young people and their families;
- programs and services that exist across the country to help prevent crime and that provide support, treatment, education and training for young people;
- existing research on the roots of crime;
- existing research on “what works” to prevent youth crime and to make young people a positive and integrated part of communities;
- “good news” stories about young people;
- ideas on how individuals, families, neighbourhoods and larger communities can get involved in preventing youth crime; and
- promotion of an ideal constellation of community- and system-based programs modelled on the one outlined in the previous section of this report.

## 2. *Creating a Long-Term, Non-Partisan Vision*

Participants at the consultations also said that NCPC members have a special chance to create a blueprint for a 10-15 year non-partisan plan for crime prevention. They suggested that the current members use their mandate to create such a blueprint, submit it to politicians from all parties and use their influence to encourage all parties to endorse the plan.

### *What Else Did Participants Think Council Members Should Do?*

Participants suggested a number of additional roles for NCPC members. They proposed that NCPC members:

- encourage politicians to speak to young people directly;
- ensure that the realities of people in rural and isolated areas are part of all deliberations and initiatives of Council members;
- increase the representation on the Council of Aboriginal people and of people from minority cultures;
- expose youth prostitution not as a crime committed by young people but as a form of sexual exploitation against children and youth;
- promote a minimum standard of rights for young people;
- recommend the creation of a Ministry of Youth; and
- create a video for young people who come into conflict with the law showing the vital balance of rights, responsibilities and opportunities.

## CONCLUSIONS

The consultations organized by the Youth Justice Committee of the National Crime Prevention Council revealed clearly the shared desire for change in the Youth Justice System. This desire for change does not seek to undermine the *Young Offenders Act* or to overturn the Youth Justice System. Instead, there is a call for a strengthening of the principles of the *YOA*. There is a demand for clarity, for consistency and for shared accountability. There is a demand for collaboration to strengthen what different organizations and systems do best. There is a demand for increased family and community involvement in solving the problems that affect them.

The vision that people consulted share is one that rebalances the rights, responsibilities and opportunities of everyone whose lives are touched by youth crime and by the inequities, harms and problems that contribute to such crime. Most people agree that young people who commit crimes should take responsibility for their actions. They also agree that the Youth Justice System should take responsibility for administering laws in fair, clear and consistent ways, and for revamping laws and procedures that don't make sense or that create injustice.

However, most people consulted also want parents, other family members, neighbours, friends, and people providing programs for young people and their families to create the clear boundaries, the opportunities, the guidance and the support that young people need to live without resorting to crime. They want justice, social, education and health services to support, educate and intervene where necessary, but not to take over the roles and responsibilities of families and communities.

People who care for and about children and young people want to be part of the solution, to prevent youth crime and to make young people an integral part of our communities. Those who attended the consultations said clearly that we know "what works". What is needed now is the political will to put to work the knowledge, the passion for change and the energy of young people, their families, their neighbours and their advocates. As one of the consultation participants concluded:

"We are at a time when we have to dare to do things differently. For too long we've relied on official systems and mainly the justice system to solve our problems. This approach has left us quaking in our boots because we have forgotten how to deal with our own life problems. We have magnified even small problems into crimes that must be dealt with by experts. We must dare to challenge, trust and involve people. We must remember that people can solve many of their own problems. We must dare to expect the best from young people, from their families, from neighbours and community groups. Only then will we see the positive changes we need."

