

Preventing Crime Through Social Development

BULLETIN NO. 1, 1999

Welcome to the first issue

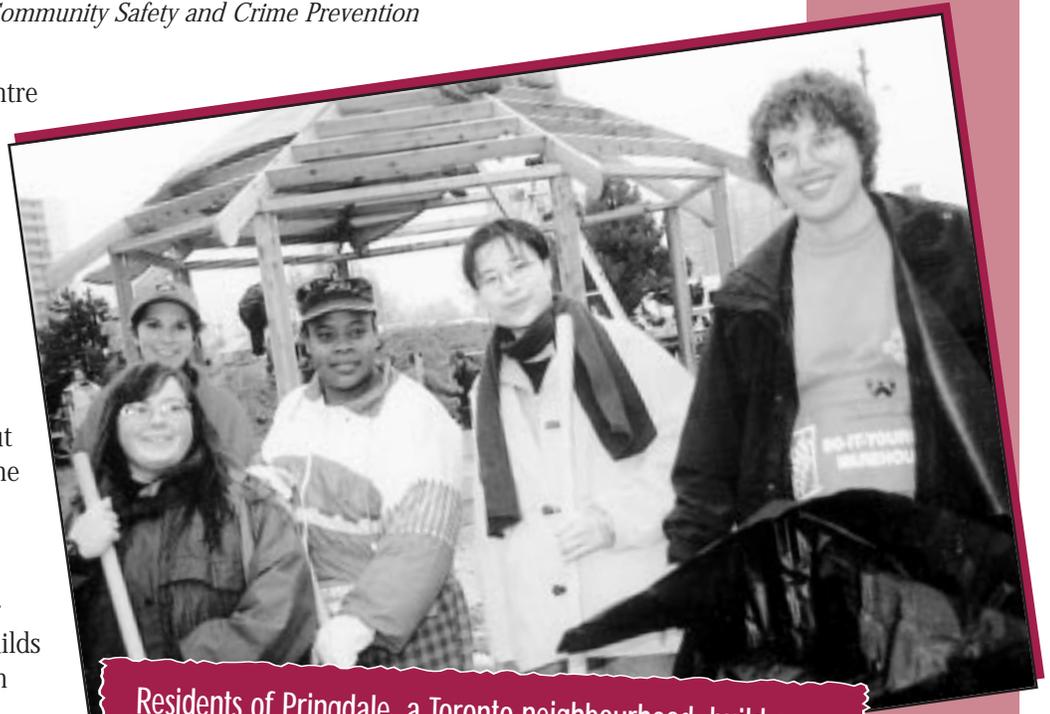
*A message from Barbara Hall
National Chair, National Strategy on Community Safety and Crime Prevention*

The National Crime Prevention Centre is pleased to help support this new publication under Phase II of the National Strategy on Community Safety and Crime Prevention. The Canadian Council on Social Development will be producing this *Bulletin* twice a year for the next two years.

I am pleased to tell you a little about the implementation of Phase II of the National Strategy since it was launched in June 1998 by the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada and the Solicitor General of Canada. The Strategy builds on cooperation and discussions with the provinces and territories, with other federal departments, as well as consultations with various national organizations and local crime prevention groups, police services and municipalities.

We know that certain groups in society are particularly vulnerable to victimization and crime. This initiative, therefore, gives particular priority to children, youth, women, and Aboriginal peoples. We are also working with vulnerable groups such as seniors, persons with disabilities, and ethnic and other minority communities on these issues.

The goal of the initiative is to help communities develop the means to stop crime well before it occurs. Research has shown that this can best be achieved by preventing the development of



Residents of Pringdale, a Toronto neighbourhood, build a play structure for children – one of many initiatives that make communities safer.

criminal behaviour. We will work with a whole network of partners to help ensure that children and young people can develop to their full potential. Not only will this include early intervention and support to families and children, but also fostering caring communities and making homes and public places safer. Examples of projects supported under the National Strategy will be featured regularly in *Bulletin* issues.

We welcome inquiries about the National Strategy on Community Safety and Crime Prevention and we encourage you to visit our website at the address shown on page 2.

Strengthening the links between social development and crime prevention

*A message from David P. Ross
Executive Director, Canadian Council on Social Development*

The CCSD's focus in recent years has been on investigating the main causes of social and economic insecurity in Canada. We have examined changes in the profile of poverty, the labour market, and the delivery of social programs – especially those that affect children and families. We have also been developing social indicators to help assess how well Canadians are faring, particularly our children and youth.

The CCSD's mission, which I believe is shared by many others in the social development field, is to promote social policies and programs that advance economic security and ensure that *all* Canadians have an adequate standard of living. The CCSD's membership of more than 800 individuals and organizations largely represent those at the front lines of the social sector – people delivering services, or planning and developing them at the local and provincial levels.

Although many of us who work in the social development field may not see the primary role of our work as crime prevention, in fact, it is

one of the extremely important results of good social programs and policies. Our hope, in starting this publication and undertaking other activities in collaboration with the National Crime Prevention Centre under the National Strategy on Community Safety and Crime Prevention, is to open up communications and encourage members of the social development community to consider ways in which their activities can tie in more directly with crime prevention.

This publication will share information about innovative social investment programs supported by the National Strategy in different parts of the country to reduce crime and victimization. By providing a forum to highlight efforts at promoting crime prevention through social development, we hope to help facilitate the exchange of knowledge among those who plan and deliver social programs and crime prevention practitioners.

We welcome your comments and suggestions for future articles.

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Youth crime: The challenge for prevention

by Philip Hepworth

It has been estimated that 80 to 90 per cent of young people commit at least one criminal act at some point in their youth. This estimate may seem to undermine the view that a good family life is a protective factor against committing crime. But as Professor Tony Doob and others have commented, society “cannot easily be divided into two groups: criminals and non-criminals.”

We all know that young people tend to be high-spirited and behave in ways that are sometimes viewed by the public and the law as delinquent. But such youngsters are not necessarily serious criminals, nor will they become serious criminals. For example, in 1996, youth aged 12 to 17 comprised one-third of persons charged with mischief, with the most common targets of mischief being motor vehicles.

Between 1995 and 1996, the rate for youth charged with Criminal Code offences fell by seven per cent, continuing a decline since 1991. This drop was due to a large decrease in the rate for youth charged with property crimes (down 12 per cent), while the rate for youth charged with violent offences also declined (down two per cent) for the second year in a row.

Some studies suggest that as many as half of all youth offences are the work of five to 10 per cent of offenders. In 1994-95, more than 40 per cent of the cases against youth that ended with a conviction involved repeat offenders. About one-quarter of the repeat offenders were persistent re-offenders with three or more prior convictions. Young men are more likely to be repeat offenders than young women, and they are twice as likely to become persistent offenders.

Over the last 10 years, the number of homicides committed by youth has remained relatively stable, while the number committed by adults has been decreasing. From 1987 to 1996, an average of 50 youth per year were accused of homicide, accounting for nine per cent of persons accused of such crimes – a figure



roughly proportional to the number of youth in the population. In 1997, 56 youth were accused of homicide. Between 1987 and 1996, almost 300 youth aged 12 to 17 were victims of homicide, accounting for four per cent of all such victims. A review of solved cases indicates that one-fifth of youth convicted of homicide had killed another youth.

These data on youth raise questions about how we define crime and its real seriousness. Misbehaviour may be widespread at certain ages, but not all of it is serious. And while the commission of crimes by young people will never be completely prevented, there is justification for focussing more of our attention on high-risk children and young people. The benefits of early intervention and prevention are long-term, and they increase over time. That is why an approach that emphasizes preventing crime through social development measures is needed.

Philip Hepworth is a social worker and policy analyst with many years of experience in the social policy and criminal justice fields.

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Youth crime: Developing solutions

The National Strategy on Community Safety and Crime Prevention is aimed at developing community-based responses to preventing crime. In Phase II of the National Strategy, the Safer Communities Initiative provides assistance to Canadians with crime prevention activities in their communities.

The Initiative has three elements: the Community Mobilization Program helps communities to develop sustainable approaches and partnerships to deal with the root causes of crime; the Crime Prevention Investment Fund supports innovative demonstration projects of crime prevention models, as well as research and evaluations of the costs, benefits and effectiveness of these efforts; and the Crime Prevention Partnership Program helps develop information, tools and resources to facilitate community participation in all phases of crime prevention.

In this issue of the crime prevention Bulletin, we highlight two programs supported by the Safer Communities Initiative that focus on youth.

THE OUTREACH WORKER PROJECT, WINNIPEG, MANITOBA



Outreach worker Rhena Kostyk networking with street person Don S.

In response to concerns from business people about the negative effects of street people and panhandling on their businesses, the Winnipeg Downtown Business Improvement Zone (BIZ) established an outreach worker program in 1998 as part of their Downtown Watch

program. The intent of the program is to help street people – mainly youth and Aboriginal people – find ways to leave the street. This project began as a summer activity, but funds from the Community Mobilization Program have enabled BIZ to employ two outreach workers throughout the year.

“I believe these people are more productive than any police officer. They helped me to get my life back together again which I never thought possible. I was amazed how they tried to help me as if I was an old friend,” wrote one appreciative client of the program.

Equally enthusiastic is Rick Joyal, program manager for Downtown Watch, which supervises the outreach workers. “They have been having a very positive impact – especially in providing assistance to street people who want to access recovery programs, and Aboriginal people requesting assistance for treatment on reserves. They have

also been instrumental in helping some of our young people find steady employment,” says Joyal.

“One of the main obstacles to overcome when dealing with young people living on the street is the lack of trust. In the past, just when the street people had become acquainted and comfortable with the outreach workers, and had started to open up to them, the program ended,” Joyal said. With funds from the National Strategy on Community Safety and Crime Prevention, the BIZ has been able to keep the program going for at least another year.

NATIONAL CONFERENCE FOR YOUTH AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

With funding from the Safer Communities Initiative, YouCAN assists youth in exploring the connection between conflict resolution and violence prevention. Using a network of peer mediators and youth peacemakers across the country, Senior Advisor Robert Paiment, says he wants YouCAN to take the lead in making communities and schools free from violence. “Our research showed that there were no nationally based conflict resolution organizations,” he says. “We want to be that first step.”

After seven years of promoting peer mediation and peaceful resolution of personal conflicts, YouCAN’s efforts are being felt nation-wide. From February 25-28, the organization held its first national conference on peace building and conflict resolution.

The conference, entitled RESOLVE IT!, included more than 20 professional skill-building workshops for youth to enhance individual peacemaking skills, youth issue analysis sessions, and regional action planning sessions. Each session was led by one of YouCAN’s trained youth facilitators. The conference goals were: to give youth agencies, and federal and provincial governments the opportunity to share conflict resolution practices; to promote conflict resolution among Canada’s youth; and to establish a network of youth peacemakers and peer mediators.

So far, YouCAN’s efforts have been paying off. Response to the conference was overwhelming, drawing over 350 participants from across Canada. As well, the organization has been actively involved with justice and legal organizations at the provincial and federal levels. But Paiment sees YouCAN having its biggest impact in the community.

For the Downtown Winnipeg BIZ, contact Rick Joyal, 101 - 426 Portage Ave., Winnipeg, MB R3C 0C9. Tel.: (204) 958-4640, fax: (204) 958-4630.

For information about YouCAN!, contact their National Office, 797 Somerset St. West, Suite 34, Ottawa, ON K1R 6R3. Tel.: (613) 230-1903; fax: (613) 233-3700; Internet: www.youcan.ca. Final conference report will be ready at the end of April.