

Preventing Crime Through Social Development

BULLETIN NO. 2, 1999

Building Safer Communities

In this issue, we focus on ways that social agencies and other organizations can work together to assess and improve the safety of their communities. This focus was inspired by a workshop on “Community Safety Diagnosis: A Partnership Tool for Effective Crime Prevention” that was organized last spring by the International Centre for the Prevention of Crime (ICPC). At the workshop, crime prevention experts from Canada and other Western countries shared their ideas about community safety audits.

The idea of conducting such audits or diagnoses emerged in the 1980s, when criminologists began to question how they could marry statistics on criminal activities being gathered by the police with social statistics such as welfare caseloads and the use and location of social services. They were interested in determining which statistics and what types of data – both qualitative and quantitative – would be most useful in providing a picture of the safety level of any given community.

As ICPC’s Daniel Sansfaçon noted at the workshop, “Criminologists are still struggling to make sense of the different kinds of data that can be collected and the ways to use these data effectively.” According to Sansfaçon, the first task of community safety auditors is to figure out why certain crimes are occurring in particular areas so that the best ways of responding can be developed. At the same time, he and other criminologists want to develop a new awareness among social actors, including service providers and program and policy developers, of the potential role of community safety audits in designing coordinated services and practices. One example cited was a questionnaire asking residents to identify the reasons why they feel safe – or unsafe – in their communities.

Rick Linden, a well-known Canadian expert, explained why community safety diagnoses are so vital. Successful planning requires specific and timely information. Research suggests that crime is concentrated in a small number of locations, and that most crimes are committed by a small percentage of the population. Crime reduction and prevention programs must therefore be carefully targeted in order to be successful.

Linden’s own work in developing planning tools at the national and community levels is well known. He helped prepare *Building a Safer Canada: A Community-based Crime Prevention Manual*. Another document, entitled *Step by Step: Evaluating Your Community Crime Prevention Efforts*, was a guide prepared by the Federal-Provincial-Territorial Working Group on Community Safety and Crime Prevention that built upon the ideas in Linden’s manual. The former National Crime Prevention Council also published a similar planning tool, called *Evaluating community-based crime prevention projects: A checklist of approaches and options*. It is available on the NCP website at www.crime-prevention.org.



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Progress Report on the NCPC Community Mobilization Fund

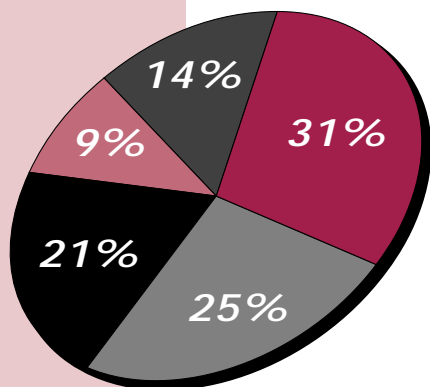
The Community Mobilization Fund distributes \$17 million annually with the goal of helping communities to develop approaches to crime prevention. In the first year of operation, an attempt has been made to connect the traditional crime prevention players with other groups concerned with broader issues, such as Neighbourhood Watch activities or early intervention work to build resiliency in children.

By March 31, 1999, over 1,000 requests for funding had been received, and 402 had been approved. Projects approved for 1998/99 included 31% aimed at young persons and

families, 25% focussed on crime prevention and Aboriginal communities, 21% on community safety activities (which tend to be more traditional programs), 9% for projects dealing with children and families, and the balance going to criminal justice and women's issues.

Because there was no delivery network in place when the initiative began, the NCPC is establishing one for its funding program. The country has been divided among staff responsible for the following regions: British Columbia and the Yukon Territory, Alberta and the Northwest Territories, Saskatchewan and Manitoba, Northern Ontario and Nunavut, the balance of Ontario, Quebec, and two staff members for Atlantic Canada.

For more information, contact the National Crime Prevention Centre, Toll-free: 1-877-302-NCPC; tel: (613) 941-9306; fax: (613) 952-3515; e-mail: ncpc@web.net; website: <http://www.crime-prevention.org>



1998/99 PROJECTS APPROVED BY THE COMMUNITY MOBILIZATION FUND

- Young persons & families
- Crime prevention & Aboriginal communities
- Community safety activities
- Children & families
- Criminal justice & women's issues

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BC group develops community manual for crime reduction

The BC Coalition for Safer Communities has developed a manual for communities to help map the relationship between social factors and crime. The manual was developed by Coalition members who were working with isolated communities in northern British Columbia, where certain segments of the population were living in conditions likened to those in developing countries.

Patti Pearcey, Executive Director of the Coalition, says that her organization of community agencies and activists developed *The Crime and Social Factor Mapping Manual* so that communities could see more clearly the relationships between social issues and factors that contribute to crime. The manual helps community members to develop long-term preventative measures to address the larger social conditions that lead to crime.

Pearcey reports that working on grassroots community safety plans has helped community members to make the causal connections between social conditions and crime – a key step in developing an effective community safety strategy.

“When they work with the manual, communities can see that conditions such as unemployment, a lack of adequate housing, problems with substance abuse, sexual abuse, inequality, poverty, blocked educational opportunities, illiteracy, and racism are all connected to crime,” says Pearcey.

“We began to develop the manual for a 1993 conference held in northern BC. We felt that by identifying and analyzing the relationships between demographic information and crime data specific to the community would help these communities to create a clearer picture of these relationships. A community map would provide the citizens with the information they needed to understand what was at the root of their problems and to plan effectively for solutions,” says Pearcey.

Collecting the data was much more difficult than anticipated. “Even if community members knew where to get the data, it was next to impossible to make any sense of them, since data were rarely collected in uniform ways in terms of geographical areas, time frames, and so on,” says Pearcey. The manual helps community

groups to identify useful types of data, such as demographic information and rates of unemployment, high school completion, literacy, poverty and teen pregnancy.

The ways in which data are collected and presented to communities are also very important, says Pearcey. If the data are presented to people with little discussion, they can seem to be “a frightening collection of statistical information.”

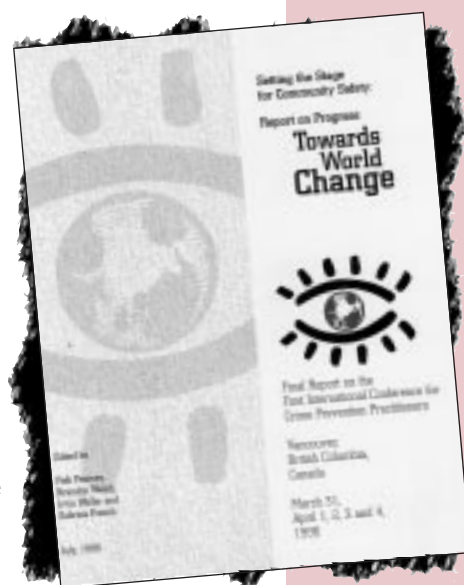
“We quickly learned that people can react defensively to the data if they appear to paint only a negative picture of their community, and if they are presented in a way that is overwhelming and intimidating. This is especially true for community members who have limited experience using statistics,” says Pearcey.

As a result of the Coalition’s early experiences, Pearcey says the challenge was to make the manual a friendly, effective and accessible tool for communities to use in mapping the crime and social factors.

“We believe that it is best to work *with* communities in *collaborative* mapping exercises using the tool to teach community members how to compile, map, and analyze key social information and crime data.”

“We need to find ways of being more sensitive about the denial that exists in many communities, so it is preferable to begin with something that is a little more manageable, like property crime, rather than violence against women. It has been our experience that once people begin to analyze the crime in terms of who, what, where, when, how and why, other issues will be raised, and other connections will be made,” says Pearcey.

For more information, contact Patti Pearcey, Executive Director, BC Coalition for Safer Communities, c/o The People’s Law School, #150-900 Howe Street, Vancouver, BC V6Z 2M4. Tel: (604) 669-2986; fax: (604) 689-2719; e-mail: bccsc@web.net; website: www.web.net/~bccsc



Building a Safe Haven: A dialogue with youth and elders for a crime-free community



A Nova Scotia project funded by the NCPC's Community Mobilization Fund has shown dramatic results in improving teens' academic performances and their behaviour, according to Barry Waldman, a member of one of the sponsoring groups. Safe Haven is a continuation of a highly successful program called the Peer Literacy Project

which began in Sydney in 1995 and continues to offer peer tutoring, cultural activities and sessions where youth and adults jointly explore perceptions of crime, safety, racism and community.

The project began when staff from four Peer Literacy Centres met for cultural sensitivity training. They then organized cultural activities which allowed youth to speak openly with other concerned community members and elders about unresolved community issues.

Soon, it evolved into cultural activities held one night each week in the Whitney Pier Black community and in the Mi'kmaq communities of Membertou and Eskasoni. About 55 young

people with literacy and behavioural problems also meet one-on-one with peer group tutors. Together with elders from two First Nations communities and a black community, the youth have explored perceptions of crime, safety, racism, community, and ways to build a safe haven in their Cape Breton communities.

One by-product of this project was a crime prevention workshop organized by project staff and facilitated by Peer Literacy students and tutors. The workshop brought together people working in social agencies, education and law enforcement, such as members of the Unamki Tribal Police, Mi'kmaq Young Offender Program and community members from Membertou to develop collective crime prevention strategies. As a direct result of this workshop, community justice committees were formed in both the Black and Mi'kmaq communities, with a mandate to transform their ideas into plans of action. Continuing work on this project will move Safe Haven beyond the discussion stage towards greater involvement of youth who are at-risk and an expanded support network to promote crime-free communities.

The six partners in this project include Island Alternative Measures, Educational Program Innovations Charity (EPIC), Black Educators Association, Cape Breton Victoria Regional School Board, Membertou Education, and Eskasoni School Board. EPIC plays an administrative role, and its directors include representatives from the First Nations, Black and White communities. Barry Waldman, Supervisor for EPIC says that, "almost 90% of the students in the first Safe Haven session have asked to come back again. White youth in other literacy centres have also asked to be included in the next Safe Haven project, and this should result in a student and tutor total of 200 youth."

For more information, contact Building a Safe Haven Project, Barry Waldman, Supervisor, Educational Program Innovations Charity (EPIC), 3644 Highway 4, East Bay, Nova Scotia. Tel: (902) 828-2692; fax: (902) 828-2692; e-mail: epic@ns.sympatico.ca

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In many countries today there is a determination to tackle crime at the community level and to do so by creating partnerships among groups that have sometimes had difficulty collaborating in the past. It is important to remember, however, that diagnosing the source of a community's crime problems is a first step and not an end in itself. Once the diagnosis has been done, a variety of short- and long-term solutions are needed to effectively reduce crime.

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