

# Preventing Crime Through Social Development

BULLETIN NO. 3, 2000

## Facing the Child Sex Trade: Out from the Shadows and Into the Light

The *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child* is the most widely accepted human rights document in history. It states that every child has the right to a life with dignity, which includes freedom from exploitation and abuse. It affirms that children's rights require special protection and calls for continuous improvements in the situation of all children.

Almost all countries in the world have ratified this international Convention, and it serves as the basis for programs and strategies around the world. Yet the commercial sex trade is exploiting young people at an ever-increasing rate, perpetuating cycles of violence, shame, disease and death in the lives of countless vulnerable and marginalized youth.

According to Jannit Rabinovitch, co-ordinator of a B.C. based project called *Out from the Shadows and Into the Light*, Canada has a sex trade problem. Rabinovitch says her consultations with police, public health workers and even primary school teachers across the country have revealed that children are being bought and sold for sex. "A child sex trade exists everywhere in Canada, from large cities to remote logging camps. It happens in places that are too small to even have a name."

From April 1, 1997 to March 31, 1998, 192 charges were laid against adults for sex-related offences involving children. But experts say the true number is much higher. In Vancouver

alone, an estimated 100 offences occur every day. Although Rabinovitch does not believe that Canada has a reputation for the sex trade like Thailand and the Philippines, she does believe that we are definitely on the map, and that the situation will continue to get worse if we don't act. According to the RCMP, information about Canadian "kiddie stroll" districts – places where young people can be found for sex – is available on the Internet, complete with prices.

Rabinovitch believes the prevention and protection of children and youth from commercial exploitation is everyone's business and requires a commitment from all levels – communities, governments, service agencies and each one of us. Key to the success is listening to the voices of those children and youth in order to develop strategies that will address and curtail this problem.



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*Out from the Shadows and Into the Light* is a project sponsored by Save the Children Canada and supported by the National Strategy on Community Safety and Crime Prevention Partnership Program and other partners to help protect our young population from this form of exploitation. Arising from the vision of Senator Landon Pearson, Advisor on Children's Rights to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Cherry Kinglsey, a survivor of child sexual exploitation, this program allows the voices of sexually exploited youth to come forward.

The project uses a community-driven approach and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child as its framework. Over the next three years, the program aims to:

- raise awareness about the sexual exploitation of children and youth in Canada;
- change public attitudes about the sex trade of children and youth;
- increase the sensitivity of people who work with youth;
- provide assistance to agencies;
- develop a long-term vision and strategic plan to deter children from the sex trade and help them to escape from it;
- ultimately, decrease the market for sex with children.

The main components of the project include the following activities:

## National workshops and speakers

*Out from the Shadows and Into the Light* has a network of powerful and experienced individuals who are available as speakers or to lead sessions at conferences, forums and workshops, and to plan specialized sessions focused on this issue.

## National youth network of sexually exploited youth

Project organizers can link youth who are experienced with the sex trade with other youth, organizations or social agencies. The initiative, entitled *Sexually Exploited Youth Speak Out* (SEYSO), provides an opportunity for youth to share their knowledge and experiences of being in the sex trade. SEYSO's goals are to begin the process of education within their communities; provide links with existing programs and strategies to address the issue; enable mentoring relationships; and provide information on building partnerships, principles of participation, health education, and prevention. Currently 17 youth in 10 communities across Canada are part of the network. As funding improves and opportunities arise, this initiative will continue to expand.

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## Aboriginal youth consultations

Aboriginal children and youth in Canada are disproportionately represented among young people who are commercially sexually exploited. Between February and May 2000, consultations will be held in 21 communities across Canada. Discussions will focus on harm reduction, exiting the sex trade, healing, public attitudes, advocacy, and youth participation. The goal is to develop a better understanding of the services, supports and exiting mechanisms required to enable *Out from the Shadows* to act on behalf of these young people's needs.

## Leaving the Streets: Youth forum to address the commercial exploitation of children and youth

This national forum was held March 6<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup>, 2000, in Vancouver, during "Stop the Sexual Exploitation of Children and Youth Week." It was designed and run entirely by youth experienced in the child sex trade, to provide these and other youth with the opportunity to express their needs. The forum also allowed community groups to gain more insight into this problem and gave the groups an opportunity to work collaboratively with youth to eliminate sexual exploitation. *Out from the Shadows* will help plan similar forums in other communities across the country.

## Educational materials

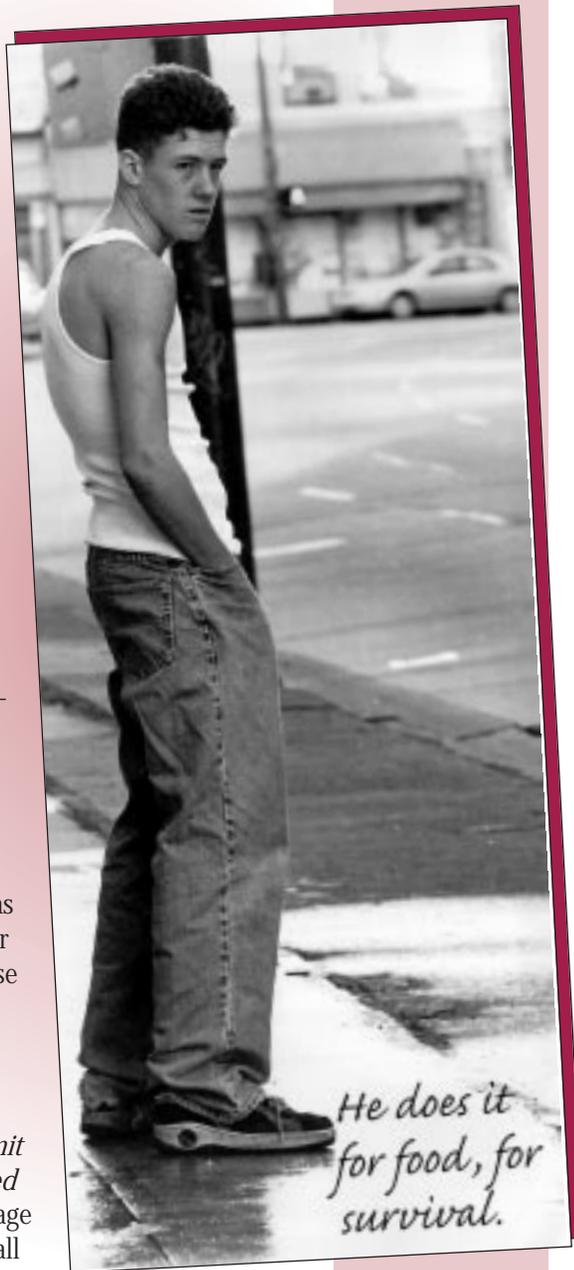
A variety of educational materials have been developed to help increase awareness about the problem of sexually exploited youth. These educational resources are available to service agencies, government and non-government organizations, educators, parents, and the general public, and they include the following:

- *Out from the Shadows and Into the Light* Project Brochure
- Declaration Booklet – the complete text of the Declaration and an Agenda for Action developed and ratified at the *Out from the Shadows Summit* (March 1998).
- Summit Video – A documentary of the *Out from the Shadows Summit* that puts the issue of sexual exploitation within the context of the *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child*.

- Video Guide – Part One of the Guide provides a framework for individuals, community groups and service agencies to explore specific issues affecting youth. Part Two outlines an effective consultation method used both nationally and internationally.
- Poster Series – Five different two-colour posters (12" x 20"), with powerful statements against child sexual exploitation.
- Declaration Poster – A point-form list of the seven declarations developed at the *Out from the Shadows Summit*, as well as several other key messages to raise awareness of the issues.
- Final Report – *Out from the Shadows: International Summit of Sexually Exploited Youth* – This 166-page document reviews all phases of the project and includes detailed appendices.

For more information on the *Out from the Shadows and Into the Light* project, to arrange for a workshop or keynote speaker, or to order educational materials, contact Save the Children Canada at 1-800-325-6873, or by e-mail [info@sccwest.org](mailto:info@sccwest.org), or visit their website at [www.savethechildren.ca](http://www.savethechildren.ca).

*Save the Children Canada is a non-political, non-sectarian organization that has spent 80 years working for the rights of children worldwide.*



# Immigrant Youth in Canada: A preview

The Canadian Council on Social Development (CCSD) is publishing a companion report to the 1999-2000 edition of their annual report, *The Progress of Canada's Children*. The new report, entitled *Immigrant Youth in Canada*, will provide a statistical profile of children and youth who have recently immigrated to Canada; describe the acculturation experiences of these young people; and detail the capacity of social service organizations to respond to the needs of immigrant children and youth.

Analysis in the report is based on data from the National Population Health Survey, the Longitudinal Immigrant Database from Citizenship and Immigration Canada, focus group discussions among recent immigrant children and youth, as well as a survey of organizations that serve immigrant families, children and youth.

## Findings at a glance

Each year, nearly 200,000 immigrants come to Canada, and since 1996, one-third of these new Canadians are under the age of 25. While most of these youth come to Canada with their families, others come to pursue an education.

Most of the youth appear to be integrating well in Canada and most are happy to be here. In fact, most have adapted more easily than their parents. They reported that learning the language – either French or English – was one of their greatest challenges and the English as a Second Language (ESL) programs offered at school were an important method of integration. Not only do these programs enable young people to learn the language, they also provide an opportunity to form friendships with other youth in similar situations.

“Freedom” and “opportunity” were identified most often by very recent immigrants as “the best things” about being in Canada. In many cases, this was the result of increased freedom

from their parents that they had gained by moving to

Canada's more permissive society.

In other cases, it was the result of having more human rights and freedom from state-sponsored oppression. Most youth believe that Canada offers greater economic opportunities than their countries of origin, with more access to jobs and post-secondary education.

The majority of respondents reported that the ability to maintain their culture, heritage and language was very important. Canada's focus on multiculturalism has made this possible for many immigrants. One participant stated, “When I want to be Indian, I can be Indian and when I want to be Canadian, I can be that too, but I don't feel like I have to be Canadian all the time.”

Unfortunately, racism and bigotry were experienced by most participants in the CCSD's focus groups, particularly by immigrant youth who are members of visible minority groups. For younger youth, the problem occurred mainly at school; for older youth, it was felt when looking for work. Very few individuals were overly concerned about this problem, because they recognized it as being part of human nature and an issue that is endured in all parts of the world.

As Canada explores the possibility of opening the doors to an increased number of immigrants in the coming years, the findings in this report will prove particularly useful and hopefully will help to improve the experiences for all new immigrants to the country. Look for more interesting findings within the report, which will be published by the CCSD this spring.

For ordering information, visit the CCSD website at [www.ccsd.ca](http://www.ccsd.ca) or call (613) 236-8977.

