

# Preventing Crime Through Social Development

BULLETIN NO. 4, 2000

## Developing a crime prevention “tool kit” for communities

This issue of *Preventing Crime through Social Development* takes a look at ongoing efforts to foster the development, collection and sharing of effective tools for preventing crime in Canada.

The National Crime Prevention Centre (NCPC) has naturally taken a keen interest in the wide variety of innovative measures developed by Canadians to meet the particular needs of their communities. Creating a toolbox for communities – a common resource base showcasing successful approaches to crime prevention – fits the NCPC’s mandate of helping to foster a more proactive approach to preventing crime. “Good ideas and useful tools are not lacking, and the National Crime Prevention Centre can help people who want to contribute to the safety of their communities by collecting and sharing information,” says Francine Charlebois, Director of the Crime Prevention Partnership Program of the NCPC.

Over the past two years, a variety of projects have produced effective tools to help communities take action to protect children, youth, Aboriginal communities and women. These projects have been developed both through the Crime Prevention Partnership Program (CPPP) and through projects funded under the Community Mobilization Program and Investment Fund. Recently, the CPPP launched a call for proposals for tools to improve the personal security of women and girls. “The same proactive, directed approach is also being applied to achieve the goal of multi-disciplinary sharing of tools at the local and regional levels,” says Charlebois.

To this end, the Canadian Criminal Justice Association (CCJA) has received funding from the NCPC to facilitate the exchange of ideas on effective solutions to

crime and victimization. The primary objective of the project is to strengthen community capacity to develop and implement crime prevention activities across Canada. The project will consist initially of six regional forums, bringing together a cross-section of about 100 people within each of the host communities.

At each forum, community members, non-governmental organizations and government representatives will share information on developing community-based solutions to problems that contribute to crime and victimization. Key partners will include criminal justice associations, municipalities, police organizations, youth organizations such as the National Youth in Care Network and YouCAN!, Aboriginal friendship centres, and social development organizations.

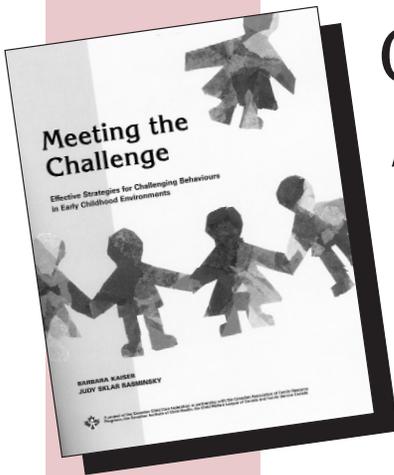
Information gathered at the regional forums will be used to develop a tool kit focused on innovative solutions and supports to promote community safety. The tool kit will be structured to actively promote local crime prevention activities across Canada, showcasing model approaches.

“When this project has been completed, communities across Canada should have at their disposal more information and effective tools to help them mobilize their citizens, together with national, regional and local NGOs and community partners, in finding practical ways of reducing crime and victimization. In order for the tool kit to be effective, it must be developed at the community level, and be supported by the resources and expertise of partner NGOs who share the same concerns about the need to broaden public understanding about the benefits of preventative approaches,” says Gaston St-Jean, Executive Director of the CCJA.



*The crime prevention tools we highlight in this edition of the Bulletin were developed with funding assistance from the NCPC.*

# Challenging Childhood Behaviours: A gram of prevention



“When you were training to work with young children, you probably learned that if you planned appropriate and interesting activities and responded warmly and consistently to the children, you would capture their hearts and minds.

But once in a while a child appears who turns your world upside down.” These words, which will no doubt strike a familiar chord with many childcare workers, are taken from the introduction to *Meeting the Challenge: Effective Strategies for Challenging Behaviours in Early Childhood Environments*, produced by the Canadian Child Care Federation (CCCF) with funding from the National Crime Prevention Centre, among others. This smart-looking, user-friendly manual is making waves – and moving off CCCF shelves faster than copies can be stacked.

The bilingual book – which takes the idea of crime prevention all the way back to first principles – is designed to give caregivers a set of clear, simple tools for heading off “challenging” behaviour when it first occurs in young children. Challenging behaviour is any behaviour that interferes with a child’s learning, development and success at play, or that is harmful to the child, other children or adults. Most importantly

from a crime prevention perspective, the term also covers behaviour that puts the child at a high risk for later school failure or social problems, including crime and victimization.

The authors of the report, Barbara Kaiser and Judy Sklar Rasminsky, have obviously tapped into a keenly felt need: the resource book has been selling at a phenomenal rate since its initial distribution of 18,000 copies, including a surprising 100,000 copies of an English-only version shipped to the United States. Says CCCF Director of Information Services Anne Maxwell with a laugh, “It’s nice to be an exporter, rather than an importer.” Canadian orders have accounted for another 20,000 copies sold, including several orders from colleges that are using the manual as a course textbook.

Underlying the easy-to-use, common sense format of *Meeting the Challenge* is a wealth of scientific research. The information was compiled through extensive national consultations with experts in neuroscience, psychology, psychiatry, special education and social skills, as well as with frontline childcare personnel. Ms. Maxwell stresses that a practical tool ready for immediate frontline use is

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particularly important because training standards across the country are not consistent. "People needed a tool that was clear, comprehensible and immediately useful to staff at any level of experience." The importance the authors place on immediacy is understandable. As Maxwell points out, "Research shows that early intervention is the key when it comes to children with challenging behaviour."

Originally conceived of as a tool for childcare workers, the manual has also found a ready audience among parents, many of whom are desperate for quality information on how to deal with children's behaviours that seem to come "out of the blue." Accordingly, a one-page Resource Sheet for parents has also been designed.

*To order copies of Meeting the Challenge (@ \$10), or for further information, contact the Canadian Child Care Federation at 1-800-858-1412, ext. 236, or by e-mail at [cccf@sympatico.ca](mailto:cccf@sympatico.ca)*

## Everyday Heroes: Crime prevention through comics



Forget the caped crime fighters of the golden age of pulp fiction. A new kind of crime fighting has arrived in the comic book universe, according to Jacques Yamdjie. Mr. Yamdjie is the

Director of Canadiens et Canadiennes d'origine africaine, antillaise et asiatique (CANORA), a visible-minority community group in Toronto.

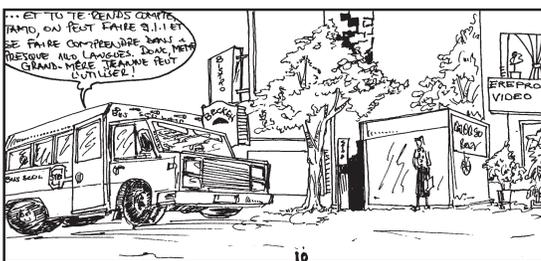
Some time ago, CANORA took stock of the risks to visible-minority youth in the Toronto area. "Our research showed that minority Canadian youth were at considerably greater risk in terms of crime," says Mr. Yamdjie. Leaders in the organization felt there was a need not only to prevent crime and victimization among black youth, including young offenders, but also to inform the general community about issues related to crime and the law. "We consulted with youth and decided to incorporate basic crime prevention ideas into comic-book-type stories," says Mr. Yamdjie.

With funding assistance from the NCP, Project Makumba was launched, to produce 12 stories that address the crime prevention concerns of the local community. The slender black-and-white books are



not your typical comic books. In fact, the word "comic" really doesn't apply. The topics are serious and they are presented in a remarkably straightforward, sometimes even stark, manner. The topics covered include:

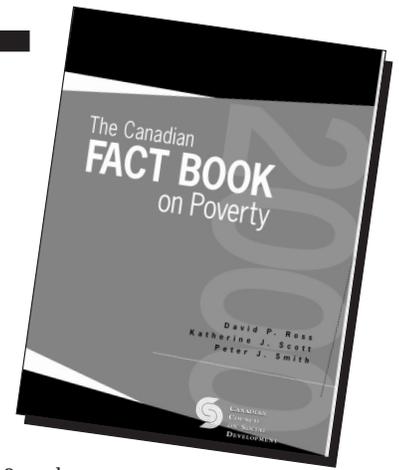
- Drinking and driving
- Family violence
- Youth crime
- Theft and vandalism
- Rights of victims and use of 911
- Violence against women
- Family law, legal aid, the criminal code
- What to do when victimized
- Crime prevention
- Fraud (Internet, mail, credit card, for example)
- Child abuse



So far, eight of the 12 books have been created with the help of local artists and caricaturists, and copies have been placed in locations frequented by youth and parents. The stories have also been printed in the community newspaper and according to Mr. Yamdjie, reactions have been very positive. Move over masked avengers!

*For more information or to order copies of CANORA comic books, call (416) 596-1587, or e-mail [canoraaa@on.aibn.com](mailto:canoraaa@on.aibn.com). Please note that the comic books are currently available in French only.*

# What are the links between child poverty and crime?



When most Canadians think of poverty, the image is of sickly children on the edge of starvation. In highly industrialized societies, however, this scene is not typical. What prevails instead is deprivation and need. The statistics are especially striking for children – a segment of the population that is unequipped to overcome poverty by any efforts of its own.

- Poor children are 1.9 times more likely to be living in neighbourhoods with problems such as fighting, drug dealing and vandalism than are children in middle-income families, and 2.4 times more likely than children in high-income families.
- Poor children are 1.4 times more likely to engage in aggressive behaviours than children in middle- or higher-income families.
- Poor children are 1.5 and 1.7 times more likely to be hyperactive than children in middle- and high-income families, respectively.
- Poor children are more likely to exhibit delinquent behaviours, compared to those in middle- and high-income families: 1.8 and 2.6 times, respectively.
- Children from poor families are 1.8 times more likely to be enrolled in special education classes than are children from middle- and high-income families. And children in special education classes are at a higher risk of falling behind in school and dropping out before completing high school.
- Older teens aged 16 to 19 are normally expected to be in school or in a job. However, poor teens are 2.5 and 4.4 times more likely to be engaged in neither activity compared to teens from middle- and higher-income families.
- Poor children are 1.3 times less likely to participate in organized sports than are children from middle-income families and 2.8 times less likely than children from high-income families. Almost three-quarters (72 per cent) of poor children do not participate, compared to only one-quarter of children from high-income families.
- Four- and five-year old children from poor families are 2.2 and 4.5 times more likely to exhibit delayed development on vocabulary tests than are the children from middle- and high-income families. In fact, over one-third (36 per cent) of poor children are judged to have delayed language development.
- Serious health problems that affect a child's functioning – such as their vision, hearing, speech, mobility and cognition – are 1.7 times more likely in poor children than in children from middle-income families and 2.6 times more likely than in children from high-income families.
- Poor children (in families with incomes less than \$20,000) are 1.3 times more likely to live in substandard housing than are children in middle-income families (with family incomes of \$45,000), and 2.4 times more likely than children from high-income families (with incomes above \$80,000).

Overall, children who grow up in low-income families are less healthy, have less access to skill-building activities, have more destructive habits and behaviours, live more stressful lives, and are subject to more humiliation than their better-off peers. As a result, they are less likely to be secure as adults.

A CCSD study of 27 living conditions and outcomes showed that a child's risk of poor outcomes dramatically diminishes as family income reaches \$30,000 and the risk diminishes further as family income reaches \$40,000.

*Sources: The Canadian Fact Book on Poverty 2000, by David P. Ross, Katherine Scott and Peter Smith, and Income and Child Well-being: A New Perspective on the Poverty Debate, by David Ross and Paul Roberts. Both books are published by the Canadian Council on Social Development.*