

preventing crime ←

→ THROUGH SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

focus on Manitoba & Saskatchewan

Beyond Law and Order

Walk down the main streets of Saskatoon and you'll see graffiti with messages like "my club rise above Crips and Bloods." It's a sign of the changing times in this quiet prairie city, afflicted by a rising tide of youth gangs which are expanding from the traditionally tougher centres of Winnipeg and Regina.

The statistics are alarming. According to a recent police report, Saskatchewan has had the country's highest crime rate since 1997. While the crime rate fell across most of Canada over the last decade, it increased by more than 12% in Saskatoon.

A scene at Saskatoon youth court is telling: a young Aboriginal man stands impassive as the judge orders him transferred to the adult correctional facility. The day before, he attacked staff at the youth facility – and Constables Lisa Lafreniere and Cam Dreaver, who handle his case with the Serious Habitual Offender Comprehensive Action Program (SHOCAP), agree that he probably did so to obtain the transfer. "It's a big status symbol – you have to do time in the federal penitentiaries to move up in the gangs," says Dreaver.

"It's a big status symbol – you have to do time in the federal penitentiaries to move up in the gangs..."

With the leaders of street gangs coming from the correctional institutions, even lawyers, judges and police



Constable Mike Orvath of the Saskatchewan Police Services School Liaison program, with a student at Opening Doors.

judges and the police services are also trying to find a way to make the new Youth Criminal Justice Act live up to its commitment to address the underlying causes of youth crime.

By contrast, most community organizations we spoke with in Winnipeg seemed to have a chilly relationship with the justice system. They are, however, collaborating with the business sector and developing effective techniques to prevent gang involvement (see *Thinking Outside the Hood*) and to help people exit gangs (see *When the Party's Over*). Both cities offer original models of alternative education (see *Quick Studies*) and supportive housing (see *A Place to Call Home*), which help youth make the transition from crisis to opportunity.



services are looking outside the justice system for solutions. Increasingly, they are focusing on the social problems which underlie criminal activity, especially in the Aboriginal community: a rapidly growing youth population; poor, unstable, and fragmented families; difficult transitions from rural to urban realities; the legacy of residential schools; and a social environment that often seems hostile or downright racist.

In a city infamous for its strained relations between the Aboriginal community and the police, it's encouraging to see police constables working closely with community workers on award-winning social development projects such as Operation Help and the Absentee Assessment Team (AAT) (see *Where's Jane?*), which draw on Aboriginal traditions. Saskatoon lawyers,



From left to right: Probation Officer Cheryl Vermette and Constables Lisa Lafreniere and Cam Dreaver of SHOCAP.

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Thinking Outside the Hood



Children and young adolescents participating in Boys and Girls Club activities.

At the Freight House Boys and Girls Club in Winnipeg's tough north end, a strange scenario unfolded one afternoon in 1999. A boy ran into the club, gathered some boys from inside, then they all ran out together. Moments later, a young man lay dead – guilty of wearing the wrong colours in this gang-infested neighbourhood.

"That's when kids got scared and started wanting to get out," says Michael Owen, Executive Director of the Winnipeg Boys and Girls Clubs.

Community organizations were ready. Back in 1995, a drive-by shooting outside Rossbrook House, an inner-city drop-in centre, shocked youth workers and brought them together, says Owen. He located an expert on youth gangs from the Boys and Girls Clubs of America, and the group obtained United Way funding to bring him in to talk. The Coalition of Community-Based Youth Serving Agencies was born and "things just fell into place after that," says Owen.

Soon after, the Rotary Club approached them to "design something for gang prevention" and the coalition developed the "Rotary Leadership Circle," a summer program for youth aged 10 to 15. It gives them employment experience doing community service, for which they are rewarded at the end of the summer with a supervised shopping spree worth up to \$200. Recreational activities round out the program.

To keep youth out of gangs, "you need to develop positive relationships with them, show a real interest in them, and help instil a sense of belonging and hope for the future," says Owen.

Owen adds that most other employment training programs start too late to prevent the culture shock that so many Aboriginal youth experience when they move to Winnipeg.

Statistics kept by the club showed that at the beginning of the year 2000, 112 members were identified as at-risk for involvement in gang activity. By 2001, 62 of those members no longer demonstrated those signs.

Another indicator of program success, says Owen, is change in "socially withdrawn behaviour." In 2000, the club recorded 117 members who displayed socially withdrawn behaviour; a year later, of the 74 who still attended the club, 50 no longer presented as anti-social.

"Each year, the Rotary Leadership Circle program has been evaluated and from what we have seen, it has been very effective," says Owen.

Thirteen youth-oriented organizations now offer the Rotary Leadership Circle program and many supplement it with their own programs.

One partner conspicuously absent from these prevention programs is the justice system. Owen says that Justice Department representatives did approach his club to collaborate on a gang-prevention program in the schools, but did not maintain the contact. "I don't get the impression that our services are highly regarded by the justice system," he says.

For employment programs in Winnipeg aimed at gang prevention, see more of this article on the crime prevention subsite at www.ccsd.ca.

See also Winnipeg Boys and Girls Clubs at www.wbgc.mb.ca/; Rossbrook House, www.wpgfdn.org/dyk/dyk_show.php?dykpage=dyk30.php, and www.unitedwaywinnipeg.mb.ca/campaign/magen-stories.html.

where's Jane?



Joceline Schriemer, who helped initiate and run the Absentee Assessment Team, outside a controversial Saskatoon community policing station.

Each school day, about 1,000 Saskatoon students skip class to spend time on the street, according to the city's Kids Not In School Committee. Experts agree that youth who are not in school are much more likely to be involved in criminal activity – and for girls, that often means one thing.

"We've noted a connection in the inner-city schools between the girls who are truant and those victimized by child prostitution," says Constable Joceline Schriemer. When she compared school board files of truant girls with the local youth centre's list of young prostitutes, she found a 56% overlap. She helped initiate the Absentee Assessment Team (AAT) in 1999 to address the twin problems of truancy and youth criminality.

Finding these "hidden youth" posed serious problems in a city where the teen population is highly mobile. "I can run a Vehicle Identification Number and find out the license plate, model and colour of a car, even its previous owner – but there were no provincial records for children attending school," says Schriemer.

The schools themselves take little responsibility for pursuing truants. "There is no mandate to ensure that kids go to school. It hasn't been used since 1956," says Sergeant Bob Peters, the school liaison for the Saskatoon Police Service. Social service agencies that work with youth "do not see truancy as a protection issue," he says.

To address these gaps, the AAT asked the provincial government to create a school attendance tracking system and met with representatives of the school boards. In the meantime, the search continued whenever and wherever possible. "We'd find five or 10 kids playing Nintendo together in someone's home," says Lori Pulai, who coordinated the AAT.

The AAT worked with other community groups to get the children reconnected back into the school system, says Pulai. "These kids have unique needs – some have Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, for example – so we had to find or create programs tailored specifically to their needs."

They helped get schools opened at drop-in centres and convinced the provincial government to give educational credits for apprenticeships and parenting programs. They encouraged the development of onsite daycares at some of the high schools so that young parents could continue their schooling (see Quick Studies).

But finding these young people and creating more appropriate school programs for them was still not enough in communities where social problems ran deep. So they adopted an approach called Wraparound, inspired by Aboriginal traditions, to work with families and neighbourhoods as well as the youth.

Wraparound facilitators work with families to assemble a support team of extended family members, friends and neighbours who are willing to help. They also involve professionals from a number of different social services – "in most cases, families had not been aware of the services available," says Pulai. After identifying the strengths, needs and goals of the family, the team puts together a plan to help them get where they want to go.

The wraparound process yielded some impressive results. By its second year, there were long waiting lists to participate. An independent assessment of the project garnered favourable comments such as "families realize they have assets, which increases their self-confidence and chances of success," and "the holistic way of working with the family is much more effective than the band-aid approach of working with the child alone."

In 2001, the AAT won a Community Policing Award from the International Chiefs of Police Association, and the province's Special Committee to Prevent the Abuse and Exploitation of Children Through the Sex Trade recommended that funding to the project be expanded. Schriemer won the Educator of Distinction Award from the Saskatoon Preschool Foundation. Sadly, however, the AAT project was challenged by funding issues and by difficulties in bringing together different service agencies. A decision was made to close the program at the end of 2002.

"As a way of working, the AAT and its wraparound process threatened institutional interests too much," says Denis Chubb, Coordinator of the Regional Intersectoral Committee (RIC) which helped bring the project partners together.

"There is no mandate to ensure that kids go to school. It hasn't been used since 1956."

Nonetheless, the project has made lasting and positive changes in the community, according to Chubb. He reports that the Saskatchewan Department of Education has finally set up a shared database for children's school attendance and the human social service departments are exploring a working relationship at the provincial level. He is hopeful that recommendations from *Schools Plus*, a 2001 report which encouraged schools to take on a broader mandate, will finally be implemented. The Kids Not In School Committee continues to develop alternative schooling sites and programs to encourage kids to stay in school.

Deputy Police Chief Dan Wiks wishes that programs like the AAT could be integrated into institutional structures – and funded accordingly. "If it isn't embedded, it's destined for failure," he says.

For those working on the ground, the pace of institutional change seems glacially slow. "How often must we have this same conversation?" asks Schriemer. "We know that children not in school are a huge indicator. We need more than seed money, more than short-term projects. I've known some kids for seven years and now they're dead – or giving blow jobs for \$25."



Students at Opening Doors school, where Schriemer brought some of the hidden youth she found while working with the Absentee Assessment Team.

operation HELP

An evening with Saskatoon's Vice Squad brings home the grim realities of the old ways of dealing with prostitution. Three unmarked squad cars circle the downtown core, looking for a "target." Within minutes, the constables spot four or five women plying their trade, despite the frigid temperatures and blowing snow.

They zero in on one woman who climbs into the car with the "fake John." Constables in other cars listen attentively through their sound systems for the negotiation of a fee. Once the "communication for the purpose of prostitution" has been established, they signal a waiting police car to move in and proceed with the arrest. The woman, in her early twenties, briefly protests her innocence, but the uniformed officer handcuffs her and leads her away.

In the past, this scenario has been repeated endlessly, but with no discernable effect on the sex trade or the lives of individual sex-trade workers, says Constable Randy Huisman of the Saskatoon Police Service Vice Unit. "They would pay the fines by turning tricks. They might go to the correctional centre for a few months, then go right back into the sex trade. We weren't getting anyone off the street."

Street outreach worker Beth Woroniuk puts it more strongly: "They were revictimizing the victim." Identifying sex-trade workers as vulnerable and in need of support, the Egadz Youth Centre provides them with condoms, clothes, warm beverages – and a Violent Offender Sheet which provides descriptions of men who have hurt or harassed the street workers.

Five years ago, when Constables Randy Huisman, Tim Korchinski and Grant Obst joined the Vice Unit, Egadz had a very tense relationship with the police, recalls Egadz Executive Director Bill Thibodeau. "The new guys came in to ask us if we would collaborate on a John school," says Thibodeau. "We said, 'why not a Jane school? How about treating these women with some consideration and respect?' It was a shouting match at first."

Nonetheless, the new Vice Unit constables started meeting regularly over coffee with Don Meikle, Egadz's Outreach Coordinator. Meikle finally challenged them to review their files to see if anything had ever changed using their old ways of operating – and they conceded that trying to change prostitutes by arresting them had not worked. Over the next few months, they sketched out plans for Operation Help on table napkins during their coffee meetings.

Huisman, Korchinski and Obst knew their idea would be a hard sell to the police service and potential funders, but finally in April 2001, they received funding for the program from Saskatchewan's Department of Justice and Social Services.

The Vice Squad still conducts "stings" to pick up sex-trade workers, but now they bring the women – usually girls in their teens, often Aboriginal – into a circle of support at the police station. The circle includes a First Nations Elder, a volunteer legal counsel, a representative from Social Services, and a representative from Egadz. The women are given the choice of being charged or of using the support of Circle members to quit the sex trade. Almost all agree to co-operate. The same night, they begin to sketch out exit plans.

The Vice Unit jokingly claims that the women then leave the sex trade, return to school, go to university, obtain a medical or law degree, and open a practice on the west side of Saskatoon.

"Actually," says Huisman, "small successes are what we look for." He says about half a dozen women have gone back to school and obtained their Grade 12. Others have received help for substance abuse and medical



Constables Randy Huisman, Tim Korchinski, and Grant Obst of Operation Help.

problems, and gotten connected with appropriate social service agencies and decent housing. Most importantly, some have been able to get away from abusive pimps – and see them locked up.

"Based on information from a circle one night, we went out and arrested a pimp who had thrown this woman out a window," says Huisman. With police protection, women previously too terrified to testify are now stepping forward.

"Police are now able to charge and convict people of procuring, or of having sex with underage women," confirms Thibodeau.

Operation Help was "a leap of faith for everyone," says Thibodeau. At first, Egadz lost

some of the trust it had built up on the street, but this problem vanished as sex-trade workers began to see the police as their protectors, rather than their persecutors. Several sex-trade workers have now joined the program on their own initiative.

Organizers of the program estimate that it saves the government millions of dollars. The program received an Honourable Mention for the National Youth Justice Policing Award and an award from the International Association of Downtown Business Associations.

Not surprisingly, police services from across Canada and the United States regularly ask the Saskatoon Vice Squad for help in setting up similar programs in their areas. The Saskatoon Police give them all the information they can, says Huisman, and to date, several pilot projects have been established – but as far as he knows, no one has been able to reproduce Operation Help as an ongoing program.

To find out more about the Egadz Youth Centre, go to www.egadz.ca/.

For information on Saskatoon Police Service's Operation Help, see <http://canada.justice.gc.ca/en/ps/yj/awards/hko.html> and www.city.saskatoon.sk.ca/police/administration/annual01.asp.



STREET OUTREACH PROGRAM



Kearny Healy greets his clients in an office overflowing with foliage and children's drawings.

Youth Criminal Justice Act

There are, however, fans of the new approach. "The first step is always to reject the wrong solution," says Kearny Healy, Saskatoon's best-known legal aid lawyer. In a recently released book called *Tough on Kids*, he argues that most contacts with the legal system simply push youth towards greater criminality. According to Healy, what is needed instead are "caring, compassionate, competent and consistent" supports to enable youth to become productive members of society.

The new Youth Criminal Justice Act came into effect quietly on April 1st, 2003, but it is echoing loudly in Saskatoon, where the population aged 15 to 24 grew by 12% between 1992 and 2002.

The legislation was meant to address circumstances underlying youth crime: rehabilitation through community programs was to take priority over jail sentences. But realities on the ground are not so rosy.

"We have been frustrated since April 1st," says Tim Velecotte, a social worker with the Egadz youth centre's back-to-school program. "Some people have been inundated with caseloads, but with nothing to help the youth. Others have seen a decrease in their caseloads because youth are no longer required to follow their programs."

Police representatives concur. "The goal of the Act is admirable," says Saskatoon Police Service Deputy Chief Don McEwan, "but no infrastructure has been set in place to make it happen. Kids are being returned to undesirable environments without any sanctions."

The Act requires police to administer a caution or refer youth to an appropriate community program before charging them or referring them to extrajudicial sanctions. The problem with that, says Police Superintendent Gary Broste, is that "we're not intake specialists." According to him, it can take up to 18 months just to get a needs assessment – a far cry from the Act's commitment to "timely intervention."

"It's a painful process to get to the next step, which is a social development step," says Healy. "But Saskatoon needs to know how to get Aboriginal youth involved in economic and social opportunities."

Provincial court Judge Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond has been pushing towards that next step. When social service workers told the judge that they could not find appropriate resources to address the underlying causes of a charged youth's criminality, the workers were ordered to return to court in a few weeks time with an appropriate referral – or she would subpoena their managers. It's an unusual case of the justice system calling the social service system to task.

"Saskatoon needs to know how to get Aboriginal youth involved in economic and social opportunities."

Police and community services have been working towards a solution. In the early days of the Act, the police met with the John Howard Society and the Saskatoon Tribal Council to devise an assessment and referral process. But neither group had the resources to take on the project.

Ron Wilson, Justice Coordinator at the Saskatoon Tribal Council, is nonetheless pursuing the concept of a community clearinghouse. At a roundtable on these issues in November 2003, he concluded that "for the YCJA to work, we need to develop an assessment process, and identify all the resources and tools."

For a discussion of First Nations, the Youth Criminal Justice Act, and crime prevention issues, see the Roundtable Discussions for Winnipeg and Saskatchewan on the CCSD's crime prevention subsite at www.ccsd.ca.

See also Justice Canada, <http://canada.justice.gc.ca/en/dept/pub/ycja/youth.html>.

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Rachelle Richards with her son, Kael, at Ma Mawi's Adolescent Parent Support Centre.

A Place to Call Home

Building on Strengths in Winnipeg

Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata, the largest urban Aboriginal centre in Canada, has opened three specialized residential facilities and doubled its staff over the last two years.

Michelle Boivin, Director of Communications, says the secret to the Winnipeg centre's success is living by its motto: "we all work together to help one another." The centre helps participants identify their own capacities and community supports, and encourages them to give back their own time and energy to their community.

Ma Mawi's Adolescent Parent Support Centre is a shining example of this approach. It provides a supported living environment for mothers aged 14 to 17, who typically enter when they are three months pregnant and "graduate" when their child is three months old.

Studies show that community support for young mothers is crucial both for the teens and for their children, in order to ensure healthy development and avoid a drift towards illicit activities. In Manitoba, 80% of poverty is related to teen pregnancy, and more than half of teen mothers suffer from depression and low self-esteem. According to one American study, 90% of men in prison aged 19 to 35 were born to teenaged mothers.

At the centre, the teen's first step is planning a family group conference to bring together people she can call on for help through pregnancy and child-rearing. "A lot of these girls think they don't have anybody but when we talk, they start to realize that they do," says Boivin.

A facilitator convenes the family conference and helps participants identify what they are willing to do. Ideally, the fathers-to-be participate and to help them honour their commitments, Ma Mawi offers a 10-week parenting program for young fathers.

"Fear, not knowing what to do, how to bond, or the development stages are real barriers for these young men," says Denis Boulanger who developed and teaches the course. "They get excited when they start to understand." Boulanger proudly displays a letter from one of his graduates thanking him for his help.

"Gang offenders are particularly likely to have been raised by single moms," he says. "Now you see young guys pushing strollers."

At the residence, each of the mothers-to-be get their own self-contained apartment. For the first few months, they eat together every night and take turns preparing meals. After they graduate from that phase, they are given money for food and other essentials, and they prepare their own meals with menu planning help from the staff. As they approach the end of their stay, staff start working with them to locate affordable housing and plan their future lives.

Throughout the program, the young women must remember to hand in a mock rent cheque each month and do their laundry with an allowance they are given. They receive parenting classes and have access to round-the-clock support services.

Rachelle Richards, who entered the residence in September 2002 and graduated in July 2003, attributes her present success to Ma MaWi's program.

"When I told my dad I was going to have a baby, he said 'that's it; your life is over.' This program made me realize that even though I'm pregnant, or have a baby, it doesn't mean I can't do things. They pushed me to keep going to school, which was good – I needed to be pushed."



Michelle Boivin, Director of Communications at Ma Mawi Chi Itata.



Daycare at the Adolescent Parent Support Centre.

Now she is back in high school full time, and her son has a coveted spot in the school's daycare. Rachel still visits the residence often, and she's glad to know that she can call for help anytime.

For more information, see the Ma Mawi website at www.mamawi.com, or contact Michelle Boivin at mboivin@mamawi.com.

Also see the CCSD's crime prevention subsite (at www.ccsd.ca) for an article on a successful supported housing project in Saskatoon.

Quick Studies

In Saskatoon and Winnipeg, keeping youth in school is a major challenge. In response, community agencies have established classrooms in youth centres and downtown storefronts – places where teens naturally congregate. These programs are more responsive to the needs of youth and include supports such as daycare and counselling.

Since kids are much more likely to be involved in crime if they are not in school, these alternative schools, which are all overbooked, are highly effective crime prevention initiatives.

SASKATOON

White Buffalo Youth Lodge Elementary and Secondary School Classrooms

At the White Buffalo Youth Lodge, elementary and secondary students begin and end every week with a traditional Aboriginal circle ceremony. But these one-room schools are also organized around the chaotic realities of modern-day life: the dozen or so secondary students can obtain a full credit in just 22 days, giving students who move frequently the satisfaction of being able to finish what they start.

Youth often sign up for the school after becoming involved with sports and recreational activities at the centre. These include contemporary music, pow-wow singing and dancing, boxing and basketball, and debating. Students benefit from a well-staffed daycare, optional health and nutrition classes, and elders available for counselling. The expectation is that students will attend for a limited time, then move on to a regular program at one of the local schools.

For more information, see the Youth Lodge's website at www.sktc.sk.ca/whitebuffalo.htm.



An applicant for the Voices program at the Saskatchewan Native Theatre Company with Communications Director, Danny Fortier (on right).

Saskatchewan Native Theatre Company

The Saskatchewan Native Theatre Company, the only all-Aboriginal theatre in Canada, was started five years ago by well-known actors Gordon Tootoosis and Tantoo Cardinal. Its *Circle of Voices* program offers 15 at-risk youth mentorship in voice, drama, and the technical arts for theatre. Under the guidance of elders, the youth share their stories, and professional playwrights make a play out of them. Participants then mount the production. Some go on to pursue theatrical careers, most stay connected to the theatre as volunteers, and all receive a high school-level credit.

"The most important thing for the youth is to find a direction," says Danny Fortier, Communications and Marketing Coordinator for the theatre. The program's downside is that to be effective, it must stay small, and many appropriate applicants have to be turned away. "We'll probably have 450 applications for the 15 positions," says Fortier.

For more information, see the theatre's website at www.sntc.ca/index.htm.

Opening Doors

Students who are unable to fit in at regular high schools are finding new opportunities at a friendly little storefront school called Opening Doors. Operated by the Catholic School Board – but with no religious mandate – the school offers that most old-fashioned of formats: the one-room classroom. Fifteen students of various ages and grade levels work at their own pace under the caring but strict supervision of their teacher, Patti Sebestyen. They gather for a daily sharing circle and discussion of world affairs, and lunch. The students take turns preparing and serving the meal and taking care of the kitchen.

For more on this program, see web-only story on Opening Doors, at www.ccsd.ca, or visit their website at www.phoenix.bsd.sk.ca/sass/opening_doors.html.

Nutana Collegiate, a high school with numerous support programs, is also featured in a web-only article. See the crime prevention subsite at www.ccsd.ca.

WINNIPEG

Teen Stop Jeunesse

Pat Leblanc, who now runs Teen Stop Jeunesse, was one of the original graduates of the tutoring centre begun in the home of Father Léger, a Catholic priest in the traditionally French-speaking area of St. Boniface.



Pat Leblanc with students in the adult education class at Teen Stop Jeunesse.

Leblanc makes sure that the centre's adult school, which offers a one-year mature diploma program, maintains the "family-like atmosphere" advocated by Father Léger. He proudly reports that his school has the city's highest grades for adult education, and a considerable waiting list. The need is clear, says Leblanc: "32% of those living in the area have less than Grade 9 education."

The centre draws support from a computer business which is a tenant in the same building and is also on the centre's board of directors. Building on that base, Leblanc intends to expand the centre to include a job re-entry program and a resource centre for the homeless and those at risk of homelessness.

For more information, see www.unitedwaywinnipeg.mb.ca/programs/agencies/t.html.

Rossbrook House

Rossbrook House has moved out of Sister Geraldine's basement, where it began 25 years ago, into a beautiful renovated church. But it still works on her principle that "no child who does not want to be alone should ever have to be," says Lloyd Michaud, one of the original participants in the centre and now its coordinator. Employment training programs are available, as are after-school recreational programs like movies, crafts, music and van rides around the neighbourhood.

The junior high's 24 students, who work at their own pace under the supervision of two teachers, an assistant and a full-time volunteer, tend to do very well academically. Sister Bernadette and Sister Leslie direct the centre, but it does not receive funding from the church nor does it offer religious instruction, except for Aboriginal smudge ceremonies every morning. There is a long waiting list for the school program.

For more information, see www.unitedwaywinnipeg.mb.ca/campaign/magen-stories.html.

Let us know about your projects on crime prevention through social development!

OUR NEW CRIME PREVENTION WEBSITE, to be launched in the fall of 2004 (see crime prevention subsite on www.ccsd.ca), will include a section devoted to projects across the country. Please send us a description of your project by **June 1st, 2004** and we will post it in the *Front Lines* section of the new site. What we need is:

- ✓ the name of your project
- ✓ a contact name & email address
- ✓ a brief description of the project (maximum length: 1,000 words)
- ✓ location and geographical range of your project
- ✓ links, if any, to more information about your project

ALSO please indicate which social factor(s) the project addresses – if possible, in order of priority:

- | | | | |
|--|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Early Childhood Education | <input type="checkbox"/> Housing | <input type="checkbox"/> Recreation | <input type="checkbox"/> Substance Abuse |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Employment | <input type="checkbox"/> Income | <input type="checkbox"/> Rehabilitation | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Exposure to Violence | <input type="checkbox"/> Neighbourhoods | <input type="checkbox"/> Secondary Education | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family Characteristics | <input type="checkbox"/> Parenting | <input type="checkbox"/> Special Needs | |

AND which demographic considerations it takes into account, if any:

- | | | | |
|------------------------------|--|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Age | <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal Status | <input type="checkbox"/> Ethnicity | <input type="checkbox"/> Gender |
|------------------------------|--|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|

Or other factor/consideration, please specify: _____

THIS FORM CAN BE ACCESSED ELECTRONICALLY at www.ccsd.ca/ProjectForm.pdf. Please send the information on your project by **June 1st, 2004** by **Email** to media@ccsd.ca **OR send it on disk** to Janet Creery, Canadian Council on Social Development, 309 Cooper Street, 5th Floor, Ottawa ON, K2P 0G5.



Troy Rupert (standing at back, on right) with staff and other participants in drumming circle at Thunderbird House.

When the Party's Over

"Most of our clients are young men who want to distance themselves from the gang lifestyle – but it's hard because that exciting party lifestyle meets a lot of needs," says Troy Rupert, coordinator of the Thunderbird House Aboriginal Centre.

Gangs satisfy not only material needs, but also deeper psychological needs for respect and belonging – crucial commodities for many young urban Aboriginals struggling with a legacy of broken homes, poverty, and cultural dislocation. "They have tough exteriors, but inside a lot of these guys are like marshmallows," says Rupert.

To build up that internal strength, elders conduct sweat lodges and drumming sessions, using traditional Aboriginal techniques of spiritual

healing and growth. Larry, one of those Elders, works with two medicine wheels developed specifically to deal with addictions. The centre's tattoo cover-up program addresses the external manifestations of gang affiliation.

Many of the staff at Thunderbird House used to be gang members themselves. "Their message to youth is about pain and consequences, about reality," says Rupert.

Many get out – but staying out is the toughest part. "Going legitimate means starting at zero and humbling themselves – accepting menial work," says Rupert.

Most of the men want to go back to school, but they can't find support to do so. Aboriginal bands are not taking the responsibility to fund their members' education, says Rupert: "About 50-60% of the time, they can't find funding to go to school, so they get frustrated and go back to their old lifestyles," he says.

To move the healing to a new level, Thunderbird House will soon open a residential "safe haven for men" called Paa Pii Wak.

To learn more about Thunderbird House, visit their website at www.thunderbirdhouse.mb.ca/about_us.asp.

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