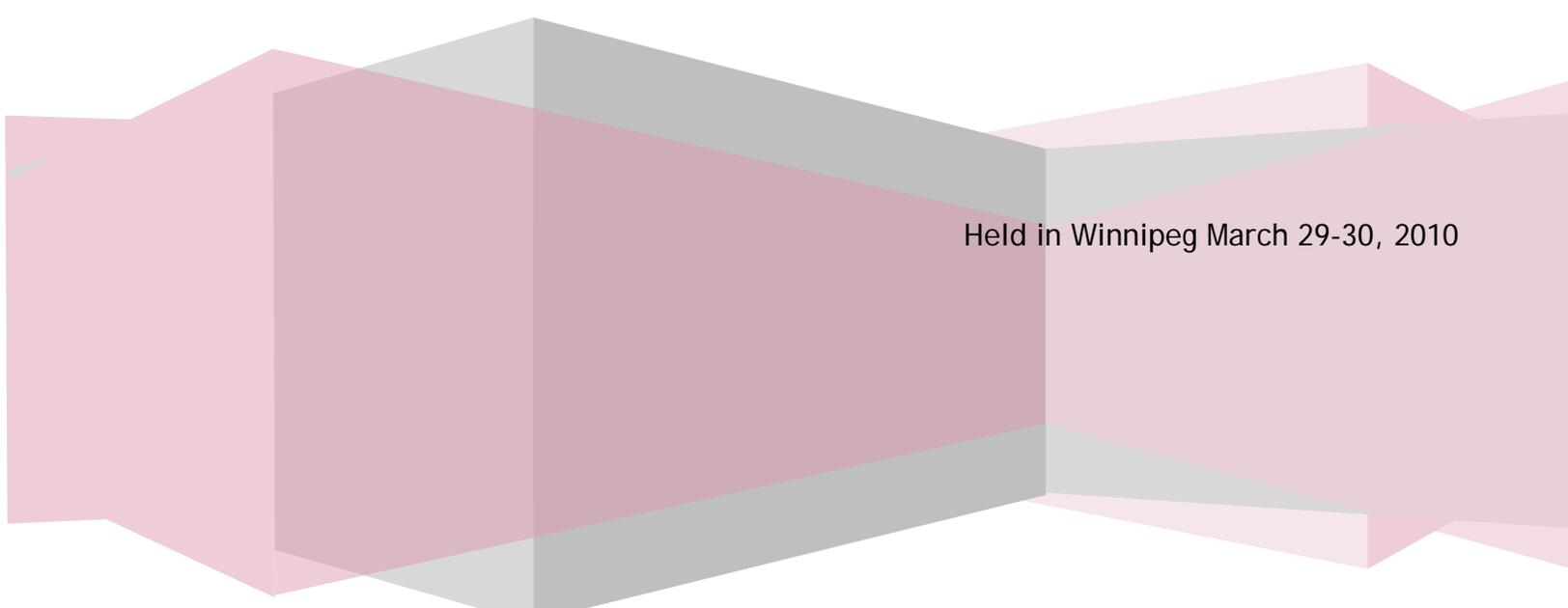


The John Howard Society presents:

Communities

Responding to GANGS

An Exploration of Best Practices and Solutions



Held in Winnipeg March 29-30, 2010

Communities Responding to Gangs

An Exploration of Best Practices and Solutions

This two day conference, funded by the Department of Justice - Youth Justice Fund, was held to bring together grassroots organizations, researchers, service providers, community members, representatives from Correctional Service Canada, and policy and law makers to explore community based approaches to violence and crime linked to gangs. The conference provided an opportunity to highlight these community level solutions and explore how and why they work. The goal of the conference was to create a strategy that would allow participants to disseminate and replicate successful solutions in other communities and concentrate on a system that values and promotes prevention rather than suppression.

[John Hutton](#), Executive Director of the John Howard Society of Manitoba, opened the conference by welcoming everyone and affirming that “the community itself has an important role in creating safer, stronger communities.” He thanked everyone for coming to the event and bringing their ideas and approaches to the discussion.

Greetings also came from [Jeffrey Schnoor](#) of Manitoba Justice. Mr. Schnoor declared that supporting prevention does not mean being soft on crime, and acknowledged that support for young parents, strategies to keep kids in school and local recreational opportunities go a long way in our shared goal of creating stronger, safer communities for all Manitobans.

[Craig Jones](#), Executive Director of The John Howard Society of Canada, also welcomed participants and encouraged connecting and networking throughout and after the event. He stated that a large part of how the John Howard Society of Canada can help support solutions is to advocate for policies that strengthen practices that work in the community in meaningful ways, and that prison is a misguided approach to making our communities safer.

Next, [Catherine Latimer](#) of Justice Canada spoke about Youth Justice, acknowledging that there is still a lot of learning happening in the area of gang involvement and that community members may be closer to working solutions than anyone. She welcomed the opportunity to get advice and expertise from the participants throughout the forum.



Catherine Latimer and Craig Jones

Ms. Latimer’s presentation included information about how the Youth Criminal Justice Act can work with those who may be gang involved. Though prevention is always a focus, there are parameters to work for youth-specific justice, including distinctions such as the presumption of diminished moral culpability, keeping it separate from the adult system and offenders, enhanced privacy and procedural protections. The YCJA also allows for an open-minded approach when responding to youth including service referrals, extrajudicial measures and sentencing flexibility.

Manitoba Justice is supportive of events like this where people can build on what has been working in their communities and has funded community initiatives such as skill development opportunities, mentoring/support projects and spiritual/cultural programming. These are the types of approaches they are interested in funding in the future, as more is learned on how to approach gang involvement. Manitoba Justice looks forward to the evaluations of the projects they fund so as to learn about and build on what has been effective.

Ms. Latimer wrapped up by saying that the best practices generally are those which work with all available partners to create a community based and collaborative approach. She looked forward to getting advice and expertise from the participants in attendance.

Next, spoke [Strini Reddy](#), an educator in rural Manitoba for 42 years, and is now an active volunteer with Community School Investigators (CSI) in his retirement. Mr. Reddy immediately expressed gratitude for those who rather than blame and attack, stand up and ask what they can do to make it better.

Mr. Reddy spoke of the discussion contained in the report for the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives 'If You Want to Change Violence in the Hood, You Have to Change the Hood' by Comack, Deane, Morrissette, Silver. He spoke of the courageousness of the researchers to have heard the voices of the gang involved participants. Too often, their voices go unheard but when we listen, we see that people do want alternatives and opportunities. We need programming to be funded to reach more of these people. School based programming is very important, but Mr. Reddy reminded the group of the importance of the pre-birth to age 6 developmental stages. He pointed to it as a critically important window when we can focus



Strini Reddy

on prevention activities that ensure that children grow up safely and are raised supportively. He pointed to the cost disparity of supporting early childhood development programming and that of incarcerating/hospitalizing/treating/rehabilitating.

Mr. Reddy quoted Dorothy Roight's of the Women's Guild words on the importance of the state of children's lives in the wellness of a community: *There shall be peace on earth, but not until all children daily eat their fill, go warmly clad against the winter wind, and learn their lessons with a tranquil mind. And then, released from hunger, fear and need regardless of their color, race or creed look upward*

smiling to their skies, their faith in life reflected in their eyes." This reinforces the need for programming that will level the playing field for all children despite of their personal challenges.

Mr. Reddy pointed to the importance of just physically getting kids in the classroom in order for them to succeed in school. He stated that half the battle is won when a student just makes it to class. He emphasised that we need to be creative and thoughtful to meet this objective. He cited alarm clocks, wake up calls, bus fare, breakfast programs, open gym periods, afterschool homework and recreational programming as tools that work to achieve this end. He mentioned that a holistic solution would include early childhood supports, after school programming, initiatives for students that have dropped out and supports for parents and caregivers. If investment in these initiatives doesn't happen now, he warned, communities will end up paying ten times more down the road.

Mr. Reddy concluded by emphasising that we all must work together to give all of our children every chance in life.

The next speakers to address the group were Wanda Einarson, Jim Silver and Melissa Omelan. These three individuals all work directly with children at risk both in Thompson and Winnipeg.

[Wanda Einarson](#) is the Vice Principal at Wapinuk School in Thompson, MB. The focus on their community school is family engagement and a celebration of learning with opportunities for extracurricular and afterschool programming. She shared about their successful initiatives such as a Lego club, square dancing lessons, beading instruction and a FAST program (Families and Students Together.) Wapinuk also offers a School's Cool pre-school program and a full day kindergarten for younger children.

Within the Wapinuk school day there are various cultural programs, a DARE program with a RCMP liaison for the school, an anti-bullying program, counselling services, emotional behavioural programming and a clinic in the school. Wapinuk recognizes the importance of support outside school hours and offers a breakfast program five days a week, programming during summer vacation and spring break. Ms. Einarson pointed to the collaborative approach taken to provide such inclusive support from students, agencies, police, community members, and family members. She ended by saying that 'We strive to build community, to build inclusion, and celebrate diversity' and that because parents are the first educators, we need to support them, as well. She praised the team approach and was pleased to see it be the focus of this forum.

Next, [Jim Silver](#) spoke on the importance of addressing poverty in order to address gang involvement, and on the contents and research conducted for 'If You Want to Change Violence in the Hood, You Have to Change the Hood.'

www.policyalternatives.ca/publications/reports/if-you-want-change-violence-hood-you-have-change-hood

Mr. Silver commented that there are many reactions to poverty. A will to change can lead to growth and success but too often, too many who live in poverty feel hopeless and turn to drug use and street gang involvement. He stated that if we think of poverty as a machine, and we neglect to address this, the machine of poverty will continue to churn out street gangs.

He spoke of how the gang involved interviewees who contributed to the contents of the report recognized that poverty is deep and complex and leads to people getting involved in gangs. Mr. Silver also pointed out that the government's abandonment and the lack of jobs contribute to this cycle and thus to the creation of gang presence.

Mr. Silver pointed to the two main solutions to the situation that we are facing: jobs and education. He cited the Build Program as an example of what can help address the need for programs that support employment. He stated that if we design the right projects, people will move off the street and into work. As for education, it is our responsibility, he stated, to design educational strategies that work for the people who are being left out. Both of these approaches require funding boosts and may also require an increase in taxes, but highlighted the transformative process that are anti-poverty strategies and the need to seriously invest in them to enhance the well being of the entire community: "Taxes are the price we pay for a civilized society."

Mr. Silver ended by noting that the established gang members are going to be a challenge to transform, and that the records of success are not great, but now the key in prevention is to target poverty and to reach the children and youth, and to push for political commitment to fund programs that achieve these aims.

[Melissa Omelan](#) is the Coordinator with Turning the Tides, a program funded by the National Crime Prevention Centre, for gang involved youth from 14-19 years old. They provide employment programming to youth, who often have not had any 9-5 work exposure, by matching them with mentors who have lived the lifestyle in some way and can give intense mentoring and support to those who are entering the workforce.

Turning the Tides provides access to job training and act as a bridge to connect the youth with programs that exist in their community. Ms. Omelan stated that these youth do have employable skills and that the job of Turning the Tides is to help youth realize they can transfer those skills into persisting with their education and/or maintaining work.

This program partners with community businesses on a case by case basis, building on the strengths of each of the participants to ensure the right connections and the right level of support. She confirmed that they see less street involvement in participants once employment is gained.

Questions and Comments

The participants had questions about funding for these programs and pointed out that the government is quick to provide funding to prison expansion, but that it often is difficult to maintain funding for programs in the community. We, as a community, have the right to keep the government accountable and ensure they continue funding the programs that are working in the community.

One participant reinforced Jim Silver's idea of higher taxes, and asserted: "I would be willing to pay more taxes to fund positive programming."

Others commented on the difficulty of the application processes for funding opportunities and that this presents a real barrier for effective programming initiatives. A suggestion was made that application processes be made easier and assistance given to applicants during submission periods. Accessibility is as important as accountability to the government and community relationship.

[Just TV Project](#)

[Laura Johnson](#) presented the Just TV Program funded by the National Crime Prevention Centre and run out of the Broadway Community Centre in Winnipeg. This program is for youth 16-24 years old and offers pro-social activities as well as an opportunity to share their life stories and a piece of work that encourages other youth to live a pro-social lifestyle.

Participants take part in life skills programming, mentoring and can learn applied technical skills and various forms of creative expression in a positive, supportive environment. They build relationships with staff and other youth and build self-esteem through their gained skills and creative work. Two film fests are held annually to showcase their music videos, documentaries and other projects to friends, family, and the community. They also produce DVDs to distribute to other programs as well as posting their work on YouTube for the online community.

For a description of Just TV and a sample video that was shown during the forum please visit:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=noH9Ryu60Ug>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IPBVN3byqzM&feature=related>

Kearney Healy

Kearney Healy, a defence lawyer with Legal Aid in Saskatchewan, gave a very comprehensive overview of the realities of our youth in custody in Canada. He summed up multiple studies and statistics that detailed how youth in custody in Canada are far behind in school, often live in poverty, have a lack of family support (many come from foster care backgrounds), Aboriginals are over represented, have inconsistent housing patterns, and have mental health issues so present psychological and psychiatric challenges. He emphasized that having one or two of these challenges does not necessarily translate into 'failure', but that youth in the system often struggle with multiple barriers.

This, he continued, points to a failure within the community and a call for a community response to address it. As Socrates would have pointed out (and did, through Kearney): "A society that does not support its youth surrenders its right to exist." Mr. Healy offered Confucius' suggestion to support the youth and create more supportive/positive/ powerful rituals and interactions with youth and to provide an educational framework that offers strength/ability/creativity to young people in order to restore their value and contribution to society as a whole.

Mr. Healy ended by reminding us of our collective responsibility as a society. We have the ability and the potential to create change and if we fail to act then we will be to blame and our children will continue to pay a tragic price.

Break Off Workshop Session #1

Workshop sessions were held on the following themes:

1. Keeping Kids in School - discussion with Warren Goulet and Margo Butler
2. After School Programs - discussion with Cam Forbes, Ricky Ryan and Ian Gerbrand
3. Employment Programs - discussion with Lynn Solve, Kim Hickes and Larry Morissette
4. Strengthening Families / Communities - discussion with Wanda Einarson

Summaries shared during wrap up:

Keeping Kids in School:

Youth who end up dropping out of school certainly have the ability to learn, but there are often barriers within the public system that lead to their leaving. Alternative education programs for these youth can provide a safe, supportive opportunity. They offer the same curriculum but with different structures that may include meal programs, transportation, informal dialogue with families, a celebration of achievements and healthy choices, cultural components and life skills programming. Helping to meet these needs on an individual level help youth to continue in school. Offering programming for youth in the 'off hours' was also mentioned as having a noticeable effect on continued participation. Challenges for these programs are in more funding resources and also finding funding for students to pursue post secondary opportunities.

Employment Programs:

Employment programming for those who are at risk or have past gang involvement allow participants the opportunity to not only gain work experience and employment, but also a sense of identity and self-awareness. Effective practices have also included field trips, nutrition classes, computer classes, and other life skills opportunities. Also reported back was that participants and service providers are beginning to realize: "If I am not well, I cannot take care of my family." Proper emphasis on the need for self-care may help participants make healthier choices, and service providers recharge and offer effective care.

After School Programs:

The after schools programs that shared their practices found that keys to their success include: youth advisory boards, expanded hours and mentor components with current and past participants. Offering food, recreational opportunities, arts and culture and self-esteem building were also cited as critical to student participation. A community service component has also encouraged youth to become involved and start to take responsibility for their role in the community and to build pride. Partnering with other programs helps build on strengths available in the community. Funding barriers were identified as a barrier to staying open as long as necessary, and to offering all the resources to fill the needs identified by youth.

Strengthening Families and Communities

Programming discussed was available for varying age groups and work with youth, family and the community. Programming in priority neighbourhoods and with youth with multiple risks factors are the focus of this programming. The goals include early childhood development programming that includes parents and caregivers, recreational/social activities, and re-engaging youth in work or school. In northern communities, bilingual programming has been key to family participation.

Leslie McRae

Leslie presented a comprehensive report from the Canadian Research Institute for Law and the Family entitled: [A Study of Youth Offending Patterns, Serious Habitual Offenders and System Response in Calgary](http://people.ucalgary.ca/~criif/publications/Final_Youth_Reoffending_Report_April_2009.pdf) available at http://people.ucalgary.ca/~criif/publications/Final_Youth_Reoffending_Report_April_2009.pdf

Findings showed that though a small proportion of youth were committing crime, it was happening Monday to Friday during and after school hours and that the peak age for youth, habitual offenders and otherwise, becoming involved in criminal activity was 14 years old.

The report also contains other very interesting statistics on the lives, experiences and backgrounds of youth involved in crime in Calgary.

This research led to initiatives such as the Calgary After School Program, MASST: Multi Agency School Support Team, Youth at Risk development programming, and initiatives to respectfully re-engage academically disconnected youth.



Leslie McRae

Day two of the forum was opened by [Bruce Alexander](#), a professor at Simon Fraser University, and author of *The Globalization of Addiction: A Study in the Poverty of the Spirit*.

Mr. Alexander spoke about the broad conclusions he has come to on the nature of addictions and their important connections to the study of gangs.

Mr. Alenxander related a personal story of how he

learned just how powerful an effect gangs have emotionally through experiences in his own youth, and how his experiences related to identity and powerlessness. The same issues participants had heard echoed throughout the previous day.



Bruce Alexander

Mr. Alexander spoke of working as a psychologist in the downtown east side of Vancouver, where there exists not only drug addiction, but almost every other addiction. He admitted that addiction is still a big mystery but that we are gaining insight into its complexities. He spoke of the 'old' explanation of addiction (drug + person = drug addict) that spread from the top of society down. Slowly, though, evolving into a bottom up view that recognizes many more influencing factors, including the effects of a increasingly fragmented society and mass dislocation.

Dynamics of a fragmented and dislocated community lead to what he refers to in his book as the poverty of the spirit. Often people self-medicate through addictions that can range from drugs, to shopping, to video games, to joining a gang to create connection. Gang friends are indeed real friends who care and can help someone create an identity when they feel they haven't got much of one on their own. Gangs are therefore not only a concern for those who are materially poor, but more so for those who are suffering from this poverty of spirit.

From this perspective then, what is needed to address the issue of addiction and gang involvement? Jim Silver suggested raising taxes and supporting more programming, Mr. Alexander would support this action. Kearney Healy pushed the importance of voting and Mr. Alexander agreed. But more impactful and lasting would be the rediscovery of the importance of social and cultural life in our society. The market and trade ideology has led to a loss in this important aspect of keeping society healthy.

There are people doing excellent work from the bottom up; the social workers, the teachers the addictions counsellors. However, more work needs to be done by all stakeholders in this issue. We need to speak more forcefully on what is really wrong. Change will happen only when people are not deceived and/or silenced by the official story.

He ended by affirming that he is confident this renaissance will happen, and that there is a future worth the very hard work it will take to achieve.

Break Off Workshop Session #2

Workshop sessions were held on the following themes:

1. Keeping Kids in School - discussion with Cathleen Kelson and Ian Gerbrand
2. After School Programs - discussion with Kevin chief and Richard Kennett
3. Employment Programs - discussion with Melissa Omelan and Kenneth Eidse
4. Strengthening Families / Communities - discussion with Lionel Houston and Jim Silver

Summaries shared during wrap up:

Keeping Kids in School:

Themes in this workshop included intensive/individualized support for students and programming outside of school hours. Success has been found in working with students, parents, family members and the community to make sure that youth are attending school. There is also a push to actively seek out and remain or build a connection with those who have a poor attendance record. Summer learning loss can be addressed through programs that run during vacation periods, and that include academic, recreational, and cultural aspects through interactive learning models in and outside of the classroom. Partnering students with older more connected students has also produced positive effects.

Employment Programs:

It was stated encouragingly that employers often don't find a criminal record as difficult a barrier as those who are seeking employment usually fear. Greater barriers are a lack of identification, bank accounts, trouble attaining a pardon, and housing difficulties. Programming currently available through programs like Opportunities for Employment are computer skills training, other employable skills training, resume and interview assistance, and help tailoring programs to fit with the clients' skills, experience, and individual difficulties in order to find employment quickly. These programs operate at an intervention level and not on a preventative model.

After School Programs:

After school programming (as well as during lunch hour and weekends) was mentioned continually throughout the conference. Sports and recreation play a big part in these programs. Building belonging outside of the classroom can transfer to identity and strength inside the classroom, as it builds on a sense of contribution, inclusion and generosity. Free programming that makes use of existing buildings and community resources ensures that all youth have access. Community steering committees have successfully been able to identify the needs of individual communities and can help guide the vision and delivery of programming.

Strengthening Families and Communities:

Programming exists in high poverty neighbourhoods focuses on the strengths of the community and an 'asset based' lens and approach. Tapping into the resources of strong community members is vital to helping initiatives for change such as community advisory

committees, resource centres, adult education centres and child centres. Culturally based programming for youth, young men in particular, are important aspects to strengthening high risk communities. Feedback and guidance by youth participants was also praised as helping to lead the vision for successful programming.

RAGS Regina Anti Gang Services

[Mike Gerrard](#) and [James Wasacase](#) are outreach workers with RAGS, a self referral gang intervention program open to all gang involved youth in Regina. They presented the basics of their program and their experiences as outreach workers.

The Regina Anti Gangs Services (RAGS) provides programming 24 hours a day, 365 days a year to high risk youth from 18-34 years of age. RAGS has been funded by the National Crime Prevention Centre as a four year program that is up for renewal in 2010.

Currently, eight staff who have experienced an aspect of the lifestyle currently work with 70 clients in total. Their objective is to develop trust and to build pro-social skills as well as assist in gang exit planning. The program also connects with supportive local police and community agencies to work with clients on an individual, needs based level.

RAGS provide transportation to clients, recreational opportunities like game nights, poker nights, sports like hockey and basketball and a safe space drop in. Both Mike and James identified the transportation aspect (giving rides) as a large part of their day, but also a time in which trust can be developed with clients and also in the community. They cited that their vehicles are seen as neutral gang territory and are a main point of access to their clients.

RAGS also runs a program called the COLORS (Changing Our Lives On Regina Streets) Program, which was designed by clients to meet their support needs and offer life skills programming.

The outreach workers identified that the real challenge to changing the lifestyle of their clients is to address the root issues of poverty, broken homes and addiction.

Questions and Comments

A question was raised about opportunities involving Elders in programming, and Mike and James confirmed that they are indeed involved in sweats, sundances and in conversation with participants. Depending on client circumstances, the program will also help to assist family on a peripheral basis, and have a few family members in appropriate programming.



Mike Gerrard and James Wasacase

There was praise from the group about the transportation “taxi” service, as a grassroots level service and helps initiatives gain ground and trust.

A question was posed about the initial stages of program proposals, planning and development, and the outreach workers confirmed that it was a long process in the making, and three years of planning before the program doors opened to participants.

Next, forum participants heard from two participants of the RAGS program who recounted a little of their history so as to share an understanding of how youth end up involved in gangs, and insight into the choice to exit and the path toward change. Both Darwin and Jeremy were articulate and captured the attention of all the conference participants.

[Darwin](#) shared his experiences and told of his “life of strife and struggling.” He battled addictions and acknowledged joining the gang in search of a sense of belonging.

He told how RAGS “stuck out” for him because he was finally able to talk about his thoughts and feelings. “I’m a real person. I have real thoughts.” RAGS gave (and continues to offer) him a chance to express and expand on the wisdom and skills he brings to the program. He has also lost gang involved friends and family in Regina and this programming gives him the opportunity and space to mourn these losses, and start to overcome his difficulties.

Darwin is still homeless but employed. He occasionally stays in the RAGS office, as it is one of his safe spaces aside from his mother’s house where he can rest. He is looking for housing for his young family, but admitted he is finding it challenging.

[Jeremy](#) also shared his experiences with being gang involved since he was eleven years old. When he was 15, he admitted to wanting out and attempted to exit, but told participants the story of having “just about paid for it with my life.”

He explained that the gang had acted as a family. It gave him worth and made him feel good, and defined gangs not just as a lifestyle, but a state of mind. He described how he has come to realize that thoughts turn to words, words turn to actions, actions turn to habits, until you are finally deep into a lifestyle that will take deliberate and persistent action to change. Jeremy also shared that it was helpful for his lifeskills coach to point out to him that there is the person who you really are under the persona you create. This reminds him that there are a lot of people out there with “separated minds and hearts.”

Though he told of how difficult it is to get out because of so many connections through friends and family still in the gang lifestyle, he knows: “My heart has changed, that isn’t me anymore.” He talked about not seeing the light, but in reality seeing who he is and who he wants to be in the future even though living the good life is hard. He affirmed: “I’m gonna be good no matter what.”

He also said that he enjoyed coming to the RAGS program for the support and community there, because since exiting he has had to limit contact with the friends he used to have.

Questions and Comments:

A question was raised about the strong presence of gang culture once someone is involved, and how can service providers better assist those in making the decision and then taking the steps to exit.

Mike Gerrard suggested creating connections between supportive police officers and schools to provide positive role models for youth, and stressed contact with other positive role models in the community. Finding a 'hook' during free time such as sports and current youth activities are very important when battling something that can be as attractive as the friends and power gained in the gang life. Persistence, patience and one-on-one work were stressed as being helpful to the youth who are in the process of deciding to and exiting the lifestyle.



Tracee Smith

Tracee Smith then presented on her highly successful dance programming project **Outside Looking In**.

Outside Looking In began in 2007 and is a program where Tracee and other professional dancers travel to reserve communities to teach the students dance and creative expression, while at the same time promoting school attendance, participation and leadership. There is a homework program attached to the dance program. Students who want to participate in the annual performance at the end of the year must commit to the homework club, to attending school and to maintaining good academic standing.

Tracee stressed that though she and others travel to the community to instruct and provide on-going support, the program is born in the community, run by the community and involves teachers and school administrators to ensure success.

She spoke of starting out by coaching choreography and dance to students with the goal of a community dance show in mind. The results were so outstanding that she moved to expand it to a bigger urban centre, and now each year the students have the chance of a lifetime to travel to a professional theatre in Toronto and perform for thousands.

She has found that the program helps build a sense of responsibility and dedication, as well as confidence and pride for the participants who make it to Toronto. It also fosters accountability for their choices regarding attending and participating in class. She recounted how participants who have not completed the requirements often return the next year with revitalized dedication to achieving the goal that they didn't reach the year before.

She also spoke of the importance of the aspect of self expression, and this was echoed throughout the video clip that she brought for the group.

More information on the program and video media can be seen at www.olishow.net

Break Off Session #3

The last part of the forum was a break off session that was intended to help participants reflect on what they had heard during the previous day and a half, identify what strengths exists in their communities, and to recognize barriers or gaps that exist in order to help identify where to go from here. Three groups were created to reflect the needs of urban/inner-city communities, suburban communities, and rural/northern communities. Participants self divided and joined the group relating to the communities in which they work and could offer their feedback and insight.

The groups were asked to identify four main areas in their respective community:

1. Strengths, assets and existing programs in the community
2. Needs of the community
3. Existing barriers and gaps
4. Ideas for going forward

Each of these areas were discussed and recorded in three distinct frames of early childhood, school aged youth and adult programming characteristics.

The three different groups (urban/inner-city, urban/suburban, rural/northern) hosted lively and engaging discussions on the strengths, needs and barriers faced in their communities, and though there was limited time to wrap up and summarize their discussions comprehensively, the following tables will give others a glimpse into the discussions of each:

Urban/Inner-City Communities

What strengths and assets do we have in these communities?

Early childhood programming:

Licensed and subsidized daycares

Parent/pregnancy support programs

Free pre-school/nursery school

Large population of young children

Trained practitioners: midwives, mediators...

Fathering groups

Open gender programming

Healthy baby programs

Mobile library

School aged programming:

Strength of the children

Diversion programming

School resource rooms

Boys and Girls Clubs

Winnipeg Harvest breakfast and lunch programs

Thunderbird House

Welcome Place and IRCOM

Non threatening points of contact

Walking school bus

Community centres and free after school programs

Coalition of Youth Serving agencies

Alternative programs within the schools and offsite

FAST Families and Schools working Together

School resource officer program

Circle of Courage

Eagle Urban Transition Centre

Guidance counsellors

Committed teachers and volunteers

Urban art centres

Leadership programming

Bullying prevention

Respect Ed

Scouts Canada

Lighthouse Programs

Kanika Mamawi

Pow wow clubs

Adult programming:

Committed community members reclaiming the streets

Collectivist values and practices

Cultural diversity

Many social service agencies and resources

Vibrant arts community

Strong desire from the people

Talents and attitudes of people working in communities on these issues

United Way coordinating anti-poverty initiatives

Multi-year core funding

Urban/Inner-City Communities

What are the needs of the community?

Early childhood programming:

Family group conferencing	Public education / advocacy	Addictions and treatment programs for both parents
More ethics in government	Role of EIA needs to change to include rate re-evaluation to address homelessness	Non-judgemental communication in accessing services
Exposure and access to information	More childcare in adult education programming	Affordable transportation
Restorative and preventative approaches	Proactive parenting education	Government funding and assistance with application processes
	Parenting programming provided in languages for newcomers and Aboriginals	

School aged programming:

Curriculum changes to reflect history of colonialization and realities of Indian Act	Rituals and rites of passage to celebrate and honour	Increased supervision and protection of youth
Increased consistency between school divisions	Community based remedial classes (away from school)	Cultural sensitivity training for teachers
Recognition of the whole child and all aspects of their life, within and outside of school	More qualitative academic focus rather than quantitative reports	Communication between schools and families
Alternatives to suspensions	Adaptation of methods to include various learning styles	Spiritual advisors
	More police officers to partner with schools	More youth councils and youth forums to voice their concerns, ideas and goals

Adult programming:

A comprehensive and balanced plan (like Sask)	Family treatment centres	Assessment and action for single men (to address lack of services)
Affordable housing	Opportunities for employment in the North End	Alternatives to incarceration for adults and referrals to these programs
	Safe house for gang involved to live while exiting	

Urban/Inner-City Communities

What barriers or gaps exist that make solutions difficult to achieve?

Early childhood programming:

Child care is not always available due to location and lack of space

Penalties at daycares for late pick up and drop off arrivals

Need for cross cultural awareness and bridging to connect groups of people

Lack of awareness for subsidized programs and claimable expenses, EIA workers not educating clients

Participants may not feel safe in inner-city, delaying access of services

Short term solutions do not allow for long range supports

Inner city parents not having a voice, and lacking political influence

Systematic discrimination for people with disabilities, gender, race and culture

Stigma and focus of media makes it harder to move toward a positive focus on a restorative solution

Poor housing conditions

Lack of life skills education

Lack of positive role models (especially but not exclusively males)

School aged programming:

Funding is segregated by sectors of health, education, children and family...
Need for partnership between these sectors

Lack of child care before and after school hours

Need for more authority to take action when bullying occurs in and out of school

Incarceration during the school year may mean that the child cannot re-enter classes

Shame can be a barrier inhibiting families to seek testing or access services

School fees and costs

Legalized paperwork between schools is costly and time consuming

Adult programming:

Less patience working with and supporting adults

Lack of empathy, resources and public understanding in regards to complex mental health needs

Urban/Suburban Communities

What strengths and assets do we have in these communities?

Early childhood programming:

More two parent families

More opportunities for parents to stay home and visit with children

Sense of security

Churches and religious opportunities

Higher income brackets

Greater access to necessities of life such as healthcare

Access to experts and current research

Access to day care

Schools tend to be newer

Transportation and access to extended family

Less exposure to drugs/alcohol

School aged programming:

Schools tend to be newer with access to newer equipment, after school activities, sports fields and opportunities

Schools and resources attract teachers

Higher level of safety in the neighbourhood

Greater access to necessities of life such as healthcare

Church, school and community programming

Greater green spaces

Adults willing to get involved (example) volunteers, scouts, coaches, mentors...

Access to more diverse and quality stores, improving nutritional opportunities

Adult programming:

Better health outcomes

Higher incomes

Higher levels of education

Access to information and communication

Reasonable public transportation

Talented pool of innovators

Urban/Suburban Communities

What are the needs of the community?

Early childhood programming:

Affordable childcare with available spaces	Supports for parents: emotional, mental, and psychological	Political will for long-term commitment to early childhood programming in policy changes and sustained funding
Alternative options to daycare which are not just custodial but provide quality early childhood education	Safe houses for men as well as women from domestic abuse	Early home visitation by trained nurses
	De-stigmatization and encouragement to access help	Community hubs
	High quality early childhood workers and decent pay	Access to healthy food to cut down on fat and salt

School aged programming:

School resource officer based on relationship building	Hockey rinks and facilities close to community members	Drug and gang awareness programming for parents
Counselling and resources to support students and families	Better planning of community common/open spaces	Addressing self esteem and bullying issues
Support for teachers	Political will for long-term commitment to early childhood programming in policy changes and sustained funding	Role models and mentoring
Affordable housing for families breaking up but who want to stay in the neighbourhood	Programming to address healthy relationships and sexuality (especially for boys)	Programming to include diverse voices
	Service providers who reflect the client base	Opportunities to meet other youth with different experiences and backgrounds in a non-competitive environment

Adult programming:

Political mobilization and political courage	Building stonger, healthier communities	More opportunities to hear from formerly involved gang members and to learn from them
Restorative justice approach	More balanced media coverage	
A collaborative approach from the community	Community leaders	Being willing and able to recognize our own gaps

Urban/Suburban Communities

What barriers or gaps exist that make solutions difficult to achieve?

Early childhood programming:

Abuse in the home is easy to hide and stigma reinforces this and keeps it hidden

Cost of food and diapers

Denial and continuance of idea that all is well in the suburban areas

Unwillingness to share resources

Price of daycare is a tax on the household income

Sprawl creates a need for a second vehicle to access programs and services

Political hostility toward research conclusions

Need for more parks and green space

Diversity of needs (newcomers with different needs and expectations)

Apathy about the barriers faced by community

Language barriers in newcomer households

School aged programming:

Lack of resource teachers who can recognize youth vulnerability and who can provide adequate resources

Costs and lack of funding

Religion and culture based censorship on curriculum

Zero tolerance policies do not work

Conflicts between parents and teachers

Junk science – policies and decisions driven by ideology, not evidence

Class sizes

Homophobia, racism

Teacher burn out

Unwillingness for school administration to speak openly about sexual abuse and exploitation

Fear to deconstruct patriarchy and misogyny

Adult programming:

Punitive approach as opposed to a restorative one

Political short term lens

Political opportunism

Rural/Northern Communities

What strengths and assets do we have in these communities?

Early childhood programming:

Existing formal and informal networks

Technology

Multi level support systems

Motivated community members

Young people: this is the fastest growing age group

Existing programs/investments (AHS, CAPC, CPNP, Baby First)

School aged programming:

Parents, elders and role models

Close to culture

Internet access

Community and recreation centres

School buildings to use for after hours activities

Existing recreational activities to build upon

Community sponsors

Volunteers

RCMP involvement

Donated services

Libraries

CSI programs

Adult programming:

Deferred due to insufficient time

Rural/Northern Communities

What are the needs of the community?

Early childhood programming:

More child care / daycare spaces	Public education / PR / marketing to bring awareness to the issues in the communities	Capacity building in the north
More parent education programming	Outreach to educate on available programming and services	Transportation to and from program sites for staff and participants
	Opportunities to train people from the community	Child support and respite workers
		Funding for program development and staffing

School aged programming:

Networking and communication	Good quality teachers on the reserves	Simplified processes to develop and implement after school programs
Affordable, quality housing	Professional development for teachers	Mentors
Jobs to provide economic stability for families and role models for kids	Other professional staff (medical, social workers, psychologists...) Hard to attract them to northern/rural areas	One-on-one attention for kids in schools
Culturally appropriate programming and experiential learning (example: land-based programs)	Resolving jurisdictional issues and gaps	Keep the focus on children: they need to be the number one priority, not internal problems
	More addictions awareness and treatment programs for adults and youth	Collaboration across sectors and organizations and collective responses

Adult programming:

Deferred due to insufficient time

Rural/Northern Communities

What barriers or gaps exist that make solutions difficult to achieve?

Early childhood programming:

Language and culture	Lack of identified priorities	Inter-jurisdictional issues
Racism	Higher costs of goods and transportation due to isolation	Lack of professional services in the community to address social problems (addictions, sniffing, etc)
More complex to secure supplies	Impact of unwell families	Lack of trust and accountability
	Funding processes not community friendly, one year funding, short timelines, focus on south, and urban centres	Lack of basic resources such as housing

School aged programming:

Lack of youth services and treatment in the north means kids are sent to Winnipeg for assessments and treatment	Inequality in school funding between First Nations and off reserve	Discrimination
Youth removed from their families and communities and then sent back and are expected to immediately re/integrate into school	Resolution of government jurisdictional issues	Teacher burn out
	Racism and lack of tolerance in the school system	Insufficient supports and resources for high needs kids
	Impact of bullying on diminished safety and school attendance	Need more EAs in the classroom
	Suspensions policies	Focus on internal issues and in-fighting and not enough focus on kids
	Underlying issues in homes	Lack of respect between staff within orgs and between orgs

Adult programming:

Deferred due to insufficient time

In closing, John Hutton, again thanked all the speakers, participants and organizers for coming together in such a spirit of generosity to share their experiences and ideas. The conference ended with the hope that the contacts made during the two day forum, and the discussions that were begun will continue to encourage and enhance existing programs and to inspire new ideas and initiatives to successfully address the issues surrounding gang involvement.

The following resource list contains the materials that were available during the forum as well as information on the organizations and agencies in attendance.

State of the Inner City 2009 "It Takes All Day To Be Poor"

<http://www.policyalternatives.ca/publications/reports/state-inner-city-2009>

If You Want to Change Violence in the Hood, You Have to Change the Hood

<http://www.policyalternatives.ca/publications/reports/if-you-want-change-violence-hood-you-have-change-hood>

Human Rights and Prisons: International Human Rights Standards for Prison Officials

<http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/training11en.pdf>

Department of Justice Canada: Youth Criminal Justice Act

<http://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/pi/yj-jj/ycja-lsjpa/ycja-lsjpa.html>

A Study of Youth Offending Patterns, Serious Habitual Offenders and System Response in Calgary

http://people.ucalgary.ca/~criif/publications/Final_Youth_Reoffending_Report_April_2009.pdf

The Globalization of Addiction: A Study in the Poverty of the Spirit by Bruce Alexander

<http://www.oup.com/us/catalog/general/subject/Psychology/Clinical/?view=usa&ci=9780199588718>

Free Press Article: Regina Gang Solution Touted

<http://www.winnipegfreepress.com/local/regina-gang-solution-touted-89582587.html>

Safer Communities Lighthouses

<http://www.gov.mb.ca/justice/safe/lighthouses/index.html>