

Ministry of Public Safety & Solicitor General

# Preventing Youth Involvement in Gangs



# What is a Gang?

- A gang is an organized group of three or more persons that plans and carries out crime for profit, often using severe violence
- Gang members may identify themselves using a common name, symbols, colours, signs, graffiti, clothing brands and possibly tattoos
- The majority of gang members are males and almost half of them are under the age of 18
- Gang members may come from any racial, cultural, or social-economic group
- Gang involvement exists on a continuum: organized crime groups, mid-level gangs and street gangs

# Addressing Gangs in B.C.

- In February 2009, Premier Campbell announced a comprehensive plan to support ongoing efforts to tackle gang crime that includes:
  - More police officers
  - More prosecutors
  - More jails and secure courts
  - Tougher laws
  - Crackdown on illegal guns
  - Outlawing armoured vehicles and body armour
  - Crime Stoppers text-tipping and rewards program
  - Youth gang prevention and education programs

# Provincial Prevention Strategy

- In 2006, the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General launched a \$2 million four-year strategy to deter youth from joining gangs. Funding was provided by the National Crime Prevention Centre
- In 2009, the Province received an additional \$1M through the Police Officer Recruitment Fund (PORF)
- These funds support:
  - Direct prevention and intervention strategies of 8 Community Action and Assessment Networks (CAANs) throughout B.C.
  - Development of educational resources, tools, research, and community outreach

# Provincial Strategy Goals & Community Selection

- Strategy goals:
  - Develop evidence-based, coordinated and integrated community plans through 8 Community Action & Assessment Networks (CAANs)
  - Encourage knowledge acquisition and identify effective practices for preventing youth gang violence
- CAANs were selected based on:
  - *Level of Need* - Communities that are “high-need” or are “hot spots” (where known, identified gang activity exists)
  - *Level of Risk* - Communities that are at high risk, or have great vulnerability due to risk factors
  - *Level of Readiness* – Communities that are able and willing to respond to the issues and build positive youth engagement

# Community Action & Assessment Networks

- The 8 Community Action & Assessment Networks (CAANs) are working with education, law enforcement, government, youth, and community partners to prevent and address gang violence in their communities:
  1. MOSAIC (in partnership with the South Asian Community Coalition Against Youth Violence)
  2. Surrey School District
  3. Kamloops School District
  4. Touchstone Family Association (Richmond)
  5. Vancouver Aboriginal Community Policing Centre Society
  6. Abbotsford Community Services
  7. Vancouver School District
  8. Prince George (in partnership with the Justice Education Society)

# MOSAIC (in partnership with the South Asian Community Coalition Against Youth Violence)

- **Key highlights:**
  - Held leadership training conferences and activities
  - Organized a youth-subcommittee that recruited other youth to join them in gang prevention and leadership activities
  - Created an information booklet for parents, highlighting key issues regarding youth gang violence in B.C.
  - Coordinated a network of culturally sensitive services for South Asian youth and their families

# Surrey School District

- **Key highlights:**

- Designed a risk assessment tool used to determine the best prevention program for each youth
- Held “Webinar” sessions that provided training to members of the community and CAAN members
- Launched a website for students, called Protecting Surrey Schools Together (PSST), where they can share experiences and connect in a safe environment
- Implemented a “Wrap-Around” program which coordinates services to support and help youth
- Developed the Newton Knights program which engages at-risk youth in social activities, such as basketball and hockey

# Kamloops School District

- **Key highlights:**

- Created an action plan to combat gang violence and support the needs of at-risk youth
- Held public forums to raise awareness about the importance of providing healthy and supportive environments for youth
- Working with local community groups and organizations to support youth
- Supporting pro-social and recreational activities for youth

# Touchstone Family Association (Richmond)

- **Key highlights:**

- Identify gang-related issues that affect youth in the area
- Created a service directory and a program to assess the needs of youth
- Planned and carried out activities for community workers to connect with youth
- Connecting youth to support services, job training and mentorship opportunities
- Educating youth, parents and the community on youth gang prevention

# Vancouver Aboriginal Community Policing Centre Society

## ■ Key highlights:

- Hosted a camp for Aboriginal youth and their families that included issues particular to their culture and community
- Engaging youth through recreation, forums and workshops
- Teaching youth cultural and spiritual knowledge, anti-gang strategies, conflict-resolution techniques, and employment skills

# Abbotsford Community Services

## ■ Key highlights:

- Helped develop inter-generational communication within the South Asian community
- Youth organized a march to promote the idea “Live Violence Free”
- Built relationships with hundreds of youth through weekly drop-in and intramural activities including a youth floor hockey league
- Held awareness and education sessions for parents and grandparents on issues affecting the community
- Implementing a peer-to-peer mentoring program to help educate youth on gang prevention

# Vancouver School District

- **Key highlights:**

- Created a plan to connect youth with support services, education options and mentorship opportunities
- Hosting presentations and workshops to educate and train youth, parents, community members, and school personnel on youth gang prevention strategies
- Identifying and supporting vulnerable students transitioning from elementary to secondary school
- Seeking mentors from the YES Group, which will improve students' sense of belonging and connection to their school

# Prince George (in partnership with the Justice Education Society)

## ■ Key highlights:

- Established a Steering Committee to ensure that the community of Prince George and the surrounding areas have access to youth gang prevention programs and services
- Partnering with community members to increase their ability to respond to local youth gang issues
- Implementing a project called “Communities That Care” that focuses on helping Aboriginal youth involved in or at risk of becoming involved in gangs

## For more information contact:

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