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Prevention



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Safer communities: Everybody's responsibility

In this Issue

cover page

Esgenoopetitj Youth Culture Camps

One on One: Interview with Holly Johnson

page 2

Letter from the Editors

page 3

Perspectives — Reducing Family Violence

page 7

Profile: Constable Max Morin

page 8

Federal Crime Prevention Effort Gets Boost

page 9

Fetal Alcohol Syndrome

page 11

From Our Readers

By the Numbers

page 12

Calendar of Events

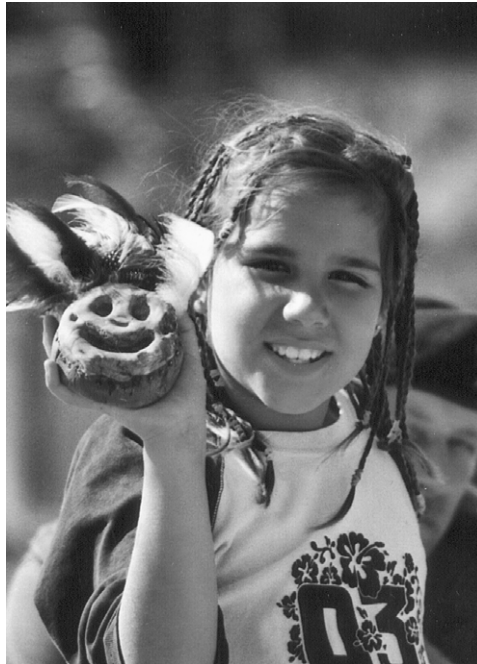
Esgenoopetitj — In the Ways of the Ancestors

By Melony McCarthy

BURNT CHURCH — “Jail is not like camp. Not at all...”

These few words, softly spoken, bring to a stop the lively banter about the second-hand stories of bravado heard from young men who returned to this community after serving time at the New Brunswick Youth Centre (NBYC), a correctional facility in nearby Miramichi, New Brunswick.

“These stories of ‘camp’ from young offenders come from their mouths, not from their hearts,” Vincent continues.



Others begin to nod in agreement, in understanding. Perhaps better than many people, the people of Burnt Church know that the stories we hear about places we have not been can sometimes cloud or hide the truths.

Vincent is a middle-aged man who is respected as a resource to the Esgenoopetitj (Burnt Church) community because of his knowledge of the traditional Mi'kmaq language and his life experiences.

He has been speaking in Mi'kmaq, sharing a joke with the person beside him until he hears the discussion of the campfire tales from NBYC. He switches to English and joins in, his tone becoming serious.

Vincent has seen the world from both sides of the prison fence, and his words underscore his conviction that keeping young people on the right track in their own communities is a crucial issue — especially now.

Fortunately, he is not alone in this thinking. Dealing with the challenges facing young people in Burnt Church has become a focus of much energy and attention.

About a dozen youth, camp organizers and counsellors, mothers, and community members gathered at Lucy's Truck Stop one recent afternoon to talk about how the Burnt Church Youth Culture Camps served as a catalyst for creating widespread community support for youth.

Each of them shared their stories of the culture camp experiences, and their tales of struggle, strength, and resiliency in a community facing significant internal and external challenges.

continued page 4



One on One

Holly Johnson is Chief of Research for the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics (CCJS) and a world-recognized expert on violence against women. Here she discusses the work of the CCJS, especially in the area of family violence.

Q What is the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics?

A The Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics (CCJS) is part of Statistics Canada and is responsible for the collection, analysis and dissemination of data describing the civil and criminal justice systems in Canada. It is, as well, the operational arm of the National Justice Statistics Initiative (NJSI), a partnership involving all federal/provincial/territorial government ministries with responsibility for the

continued page 6

Prevention

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Letter from the Editors

By all accounts, you like us.

In our last issue, we asked for your feedback and it has been trickling in ever since. It seems you like what we have to say and you like the way we look. But if we have in fact been blessed with laurels from our readers, we won't be resting on them.

From our perspective, *Prevention* is a work in progress. We want it to get better over time, and that is why we want to hear from you.

And we want to hear about the issues that concern you, issues like school violence, sexual abuse, and drug and alcohol addiction.

We've written about some of these issues in previous editions and you can be assured, we have every intention of covering others in the future.

Sadly, when it comes to crime and victimization, the list of possible subjects is endless. That said, we are also seeing that there is a growing body of community-based responses that seek to deal, in an early preventative way, with what are inherently difficult problems.

Another subject that you singled out as warranting attention is family violence. While this edition does not feature a theme as such, you will find several stories that touch on that very subject. It finds voice in our interview with Holly Johnson of the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, in Barbara Hall's *Perspectives* and in *By the Numbers*.

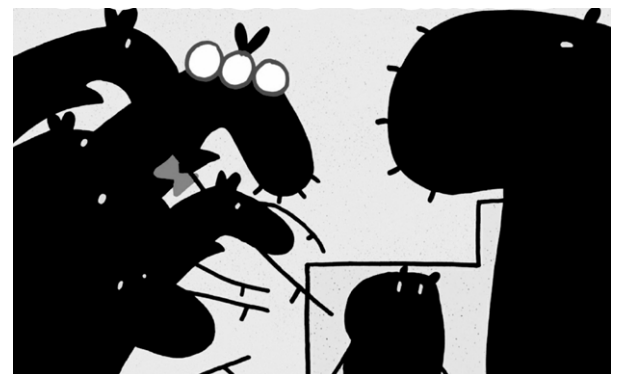
With these stories we are hoping to provide some food for thought on what is — like so many problems that are coloured by violence and aggression — a complex issue. For a fuller accounting, you might want to consider other sources of information on family violence, such as the Health Canada-led Family Violence Initiative (www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hppb/familyviolence/index.html), and the National Crime Prevention Centre (www.crime-prevention.org). In both, you will find a considerable number of links to other resources.

Other subjects that you raised in your feedback were bullying, fear of crime, international practices, the role of voluntary-public sector partnerships, and, more than anything else, youth crime, youth violence and youth crime prevention.

These subjects are close to our heart and we will deal with them on our pages in due course. In fact, the insert to this issue is a poster on bullying. We hope and believe, that you'll be able to put it to good use. It's the product of a partnership between the Canada Safety Council, the National Film Board, the *National Strategy on Community Safety and Crime Prevention*, along with Kids Help Phone and the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police. Part of National School Safety Week, it was sent to every Grade Four student in the country and their teachers, to build awareness of the strategies and tools that exist to reduce bullying. (To obtain a poster, send a self-addressed 9" x 12" envelope with 94¢ postage to the Canada Safety Council, 1020 Thomas Spratt Place, Ottawa, Ontario K1G 5L5.)

If you would like more information on any of our articles, or the subjects we've covered, by all means let us know (by which ever form you prefer). This issue, as with the others before it, offers but a glimpse of some of the interesting steps Canadians are taking to build stronger communities.

As always, we look forward to featuring the words and views of others, much like this edition's *From our Readers*, which offers a compelling and very human take on the insidious nature of drug and alcohol addiction. Keep these stories coming; if there is an initiative or an issue that is close to your heart, we invite you to share it with us. 🍷



These images were taken from the enclosed bullying poster.

Perspectives – Reducing Family Violence

By Barbara Hall

It is an enormous irony, and an even greater tragedy, that the home, which should be a place of refuge and safety, is often where women experience physical, sexual, or psychological harm.

For too long, such domestic violence against women and children, occurring behind closed doors, was considered a private matter and left to the victims to face on their own. In Canada, that is no longer the case: domestic violence is a crime and is dealt with accordingly. However, as with all types of criminal activity, the best solution is prevention.

It is exciting to know that across this country, many governments, community groups, and individuals are working hard, building new relationships to reduce family violence and protect victims and survivors. I have been fortunate to meet many such groups and am pleased to be able to tell you about a few of them.

There is a growing awareness that children who witness family violence experience severe emotional and behavioral problems. As they grow older, male children are at risk of perpetuating abuse and female children of experiencing abuse in their relationships. In an attempt to break that cycle of violence, many prevention strategies are designed to help children better deal with their experiences. One such initiative is the project from the Family Service Centre of Ottawa-Carleton and the John Howard Society of Ottawa-Carleton titled, simply, for Children who Witness Violence.

The project brings a range of community services into play, supporting children with safety and protection skills, knowledge of abuse issues, self-esteem and coping skills.

This project is also providing supports to mothers who have experienced violence and may need assistance in parenting. Special attention is being paid to the needs of children and mothers from under-served immigrant and visible minority communities.

Volunteers will be recruited from these communities and trained to help deliver the program.

In the multi-racial, multi-ethnic community of Parkdale, in Toronto, St. Joseph's Women's Health Centre is mobilizing to intervene in the cycle of violence. It strives to bring women and children who are grappling with the aftermath of domestic violence into contact with the services they need most. The project, tellingly titled, *I Thought it Would be Better by Now: Parenting After Violence*, recognizes that the chain is long and complex, as violence is transmitted from father to mother, from mother to child, from child to mother, and from child to community.

In the Boundary Region of the Southern interior of British Columbia, the New Rural Partnerships Project has brought together representatives from local governments, schools, churches, local

options in times of crisis, to trust their own judgment, and to make positive, safe decisions for themselves (see *From Crisis to Comfort*, Prevention, Issue # 3).

In Shediac, New Brunswick, committed community members recognized the special needs of women experiencing violence who live in small and rural communities. Because they understand the complexity of effectively responding to and preventing such violence, they have established the Beauséjour Family Crisis Resource Centre. Families, both adults and children, are being supported in breaking that cycle of violence.

Many communities recognize that in order to eliminate violence against women, equal and

healthy relationships among boys and girls must be promoted from an early age.

On Saltspring Island, off the coast of British Columbia, a community-school partnership has helped youth acquire the skills they need to work with their peers on healthy, violence-free relationships. Youth are concerned about these issues and want to be involved and take responsibility for helping to find the ways to eliminate violence and fear.

In Ontario, many groups have come together to develop a curriculum for youth that includes the messages in the film, "A LOVE THAT KILLS." This powerful documentary tells the tragic story of Monica, a 19-year

old woman who was murdered by her former boyfriend. It helps youth develop the knowledge, insights, and skills they need to build healthy relationships.

Each of these communities has adopted slightly different ways of addressing a major social issue: the prevention of domestic violence in Canadian families. All of them recognize the complexity of the task.

At the National Strategy, we have made the personal security of women a priority, so it is encouraging to see the passion and commitment of so many Canadians who share our goal. 🍁

Barbara Hall is Chair of the National Strategy on Community Safety and Crime Prevention.



businesses and unions, RCMP, and local health and social service organizations to develop an action plan to deal with family violence and other safety issues. The whole community is taking responsibility for creating a safer and healthier region.

Likewise, in Durham, Ontario, the Women's Rights Action Coalition has brought together many groups to focus on building and promoting partnerships to develop community-wide strategies to ensure that women and children are able to live free from violence and abuse.

In the Yukon, the Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre is dealing with violence against women through friendship, sharing and learning. Its Women's Advocate helps women to assess their

Esgenoopetitj from cover

The three, one-week camps were held during July and August. In each camp, 15 to 20 youth from Burnt Church and the surrounding area were brought together with Elders, police officers and visitors to take part in traditional Aboriginal gatherings and teachings.

The camp schedule incorporated physical and mental learning activities, while providing enough options for the young people to work alone or in groups on the things that interested them most. Each day began with the smudging of the breakfast, followed by physical activities, then cultural teachings. Afternoons were filled with crafts and more activities, followed by drumming and singing. After the evening meal, the days ended with campfires and storytelling.

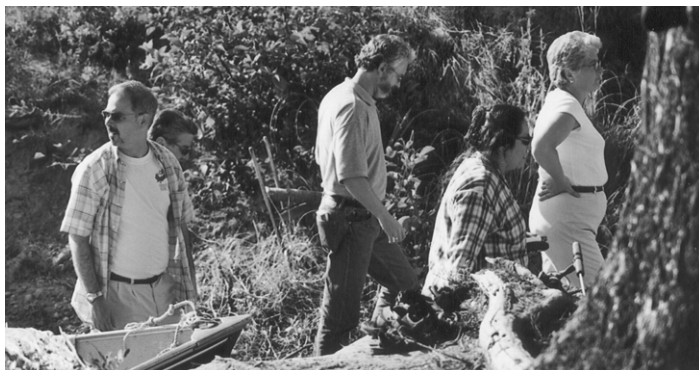
Burnt Church has become something of a household name in Canada through coverage of the ongoing conflict surrounding its claim regarding Aboriginal fishing rights.

Early in the planning, many people were concerned that the project might become politicized in the Burnt Church community, as the camps would take place during a local election campaign, and just prior to the opening of the August lobster season.

But community members at all levels agreed to leave their personal opinions and politics at home when they went to participate in the camps.

The people quoted here are identified only by their first names to help ensure that the story is not overshadowed by politics.

This rural First Nations community of about 1300 people is dealing with issues that are common to other Native and non-Native rural communities, including widespread unemployment, poverty and a lack of opportunities and recreational facilities for young people.



David Gates, Executive Director of the National Crime Prevention Centre (NCPC), Bob Stranach, NCPC Co-ordinator in New Brunswick and Barbara Hall (far right), Chair of the National Strategy, all went for an overnight visit at the camps during the final week. In the photo, Jeannie, camp co-ordinator, accompanies them on a site visit.

But Burnt Church is also dealing with political uncertainties, and social isolation from surrounding communities and traditional culture. Over the years, the combination and persistence of these factors has led to a weakening of the bonds of community and clan, and of the web of family and community support for individuals.

The controversy surrounding the fishery and the resultant media scrutiny compounded the existing pressures in the community. As one woman described it, "the struggles among the different leaders feel like abuse in the community. It's like living in a house where people are fighting so much that nobody has time to take care of each other... and the kids bear the brunt of it."

"Too often," adds Jeannie, a camp organizer, counsellor and mother, "young people are left dealing with adult problems and situations that they just can't handle."

She relates situations where children — especially boys — become old before their time, feeling obliged to assume adult responsibilities before they have matured physically, socially and emotionally. These young people can come to feel as though they are responsible for taking care of their family's needs, putting on a tough exterior.

"These are hurt, angry kids... they talk to each other and try to support each other, but they just don't have the resources to help each other. When they keep all that bottled up inside, sooner or later it all comes out."

The result can be substance abuse, violence and aggression, low self-esteem, depression, and even suicide. Communities across Canada are struggling to deal with these problems. In Burnt Church, the community decided to try Youth Culture Camps as a way to build support networks for their young people, connecting them to their peers, adults and elders, and their culture.

The young people were given an opportunity to learn about the strength and wisdom of their culture's traditional teachings, and to experience what life was like for their ancestors. In a safe, fun, and supportive environment, they made personal connections and learned traditional, everyday activities that are embedded with deep cultural meaning.

For the majority of campers — and counsellors — going into the bush and living in nature was a brand new experience. The culture camps provided not just something to do, but an



The first week of camp began with campers and staff working alongside military personnel to erect the army tents that were loaned to the camp by Department of National Defence.

opportunity to experience a different way of being. While they were learning the traditional activities, they were also learning about traditional spirituality and their deep connection with the Earth.

"For our people, the traditional spirituality is not about going to church on Sunday," explains Jeannie. "It's the way we live, something we practice in all of our activities and relations all day, every day."

The campers learned things like drumming, chanting, clay work, canoeing, traditional grooming, and making dream catchers, chokers and beadwork, as ways to express themselves and channel their energies in positive directions.

On the few occasions that campers' behaviour was unacceptable, counsellors would take them over to the Camp Guidelines (listed below) to talk about what happened, understand what went wrong, and reflect upon how the young person could use the teachings to do things differently. The Camp Guidelines, posted at the entrance to the site, were based on traditional teachings that suggest a framework for campers — and visitors — to guide their behaviour and actions.

The Camp Guidelines

- Respect all your relations
- Open your heart and soul to the great spirit
- Take from the earth what is needed and nothing more
- All life is sacred. Treat all beings with respect
- Do what needs to be done for the good of all
- Give constant thanks to the great spirit for each new day
- Speak the truth but only of the good in others
- Follow the rhythm of nature — Rise and retire with the sun

continued on next page

The camp theme, "Following in Our Ancestors Footsteps," took on a special, tangible meaning right from the start.

On one of the first days of camp, some of the young people who were exploring the shoreline discovered clay on the banks. They brought some back to camp, showed others where they found it, and clay-making became a favourite activity from then on.

"It's 99.9% certain that our ancestors actually camped in this same area, making objects with the clay from these river banks. Finding that clay and using it in the ways of the ancestors was powerful for the kids, for all of us really," says Millie, who was involved from the beginning, providing energy, encouragement, and lending her knowledge of government programs to help prepare the funding applications.

The three, one-week culture camps began as a shared dream of a few determined women, and ended up providing an eye-opening opportunity for more than 50 youth, plus camp staff, families and community members at Esgenoopetitj.

The positive feelings also touched some members of the surrounding communities, and Government of Canada officials who supported, visited and camped out at the culture camps.

The actual campsite was simply a recently bulldozed strip of land, in the bush, alongside a river.

"We had no camping equipment of our own, and not even things like dishpans, tables and chairs.

Our band office was burned down there last year, so we couldn't borrow the tables and chairs from there. And there was no money in the budget to buy this stuff!" Jeannie recalled.

She marvels at the way that government partners, like Justice Canada's Aboriginal Justice Learning Network (AJLN), Department of National Defence (DND), and Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, and local businesses rallied to help out, to make the dream of the culture camps come to life.

The first week of camp began with campers and staff working alongside military personnel to erect the army tents that were loaned to the camp by DND, which also loaned cots, plates, utensils, dishpans, sacks, fire prevention equipment and training. A local business covered the cost of renting tables and chairs.

During the planning and set up, there was little support and involvement by local community members but once the camp was up and running, parents, Elders, community leaders and other community members began to help out. People began to give their time and energy, share their own experiences, help out on site, and bring things to leave at the camp.

"When this started, nobody believed it was going to happen because they have been disappointed in the past. So no community volunteers came out at first," explained Millie. "As soon as word of the good things happening got out, out came the people with water, wood, food... anything they thought we might need!"

Millie hopes this experience will be a model for how the federal government can support Aboriginal people and communities in their social development efforts.

"Aboriginal people are skeptical of programs designed to help them. The idea of culture camps came about because that is what the grassroots people at Burnt Church wanted for their children. Government departments listened to their ideas, and found ways to support them."

The presence and participation of Native and non-Native adults also allowed ample opportunities for positive role models to develop. "In our traditional ways, children learned how to do things and how to behave by playing alongside adults in the community. When a mother was making bread, the six-year old child would be playing at making bread, learning how it is done, picking up ideas about good nutrition and valuing shared meals," Jeannie explained.

"One big problem why our children don't do so well in schools today, is that the way they are being taught things does not match with the way we are familiar with learning."

As adults worked with campers and each other, they shared their knowledge and skills and began to break down intergenerational and intercultural barriers. Everybody quickly recognized that something as simple as working and playing together, and sharing stories and meals, can sow understanding where hours or years of education, sensitivity training, or good intentions might not.



For kids who are used to seeing gunfire over Miramichi Bay, or feeling fear as helicopters fly overhead, working side by side with military personnel and talking with an RCMP officer about how he got his job can help make things seem a lot less scary.

Playing in the water with Barbara Hall, Chair of the *National Strategy on Community Safety and Crime Prevention*, helps to show how a grown up lady from the Big City is really just another person who likes to have fun cooling off on a hot day.

Explains Jeannie: "The Medicine Wheel talks about the four colours of man, and how we can learn from each other. We each carry a gift from the Creator. Once we learn that we can offer things and learn from each other, then we become strong. When we start to respect and honour each other, we become a stronger Nation."

The dream that was born with the Burnt Church Youth Culture Camps will continue to live with each person who was touched by the experience — young and old, Native and non-Native. 🍪

Melony McCarthy is a Regional Communications Officer for the National Crime Prevention Centre, based in New Brunswick.

One on one from cover

administration of justice in Canada. This group helps us set priorities concerning the direction our surveys, and special studies will take.

Q What is your role with the Centre?

A I am the Chief of Research at CCJS. We conduct special studies and detailed analyses of Statistics

Canada surveys for criminal justice researchers and policy makers. We determine our priorities in consultation with a wide variety of clients, including members of the NJSI, the police community, federal government colleagues, academics and other experts, as well as through ongoing reviews of the research literature.

Q What do the recent studies undertaken by CCJS say about the issue of family violence in general terms and what, if any, trends are you seeing?

A We have been focusing on improving the quality and availability of statistical information on family violence since the early 1990s. We have managed to expand our knowledge about the prevalence, nature and severity of spousal violence, the impact of violence on victims and their reactions to violence, the frequency and other aspects of family homicides, children witnessing family violence, and shelters for abused women.



In terms of trends, or highlights, I can tell you that homicides among spouses, both men and women, have shown an overall decline in the last decade. Also, in 1999, the rate of children and youth killed by family members fell to its lowest level in 26 years.

With the results of two victimization surveys in 1993 and 1999, we can see that there was a decline in that period in rates of spousal violence against women. In 1999, 8% of women said they had been victims of spousal violence in the five years prior to the survey, compared to 12% in 1993.

It's interesting to note that marital separation does not necessarily mark the end of a violent relationship. According to the 1999 General Social Survey on Victimization done by Statistics Canada, 37% of women and men reported that the violence continued after the separation among couples who separated from a violent relationship.

Q What are the challenges in compiling and collecting this data?

A The fact is that family violence remains hidden and victims are often reluctant to talk about it. The information we are seeking is very sensitive and we must devise wording on our surveys that is sensitive and non-offensive, yet will result in valid estimates of violence. Then we must train our interviewers to approach these questions in a sensitive manner, always mindful

that we are asking people to disclose some of the most personal details of their lives to a stranger over the telephone. We always must be aware of the difficulties respondents may have responding to questions about violence, especially when they are still living with the person who has been violent toward them. It is an ethical responsibility of survey researchers to consider these factors in all aspects of our work.

Q What has been the impact of your work on federal and provincial policy?

A Our work has directly helped to increase public awareness and knowledge of the nature and extent of family violence, of children who are exposed to violence, and of situations that lead to serious violence or death. This has helped policy makers to develop

protocols, guidelines and training for criminal justice personnel and others who are in a position to help victims of violence and their families.

For example, our research shows that in about one third of cases where women and men have left violent partners, the violence has continued after the separation. Separation also raises the risk of homicide for women (but not men), especially very young women. The assumption has long been that if the woman would just leave him the violence would stop and she would be safe. Our work has helped demonstrate that this isn't so, and police need to take it seriously when women say they fear for their lives, especially when they are trying to leave. Police need to be trained to work with shelters and other community services to help ensure the safety of these women.


Q What research work related to family violence is on the horizon in the future?

A As part of the federal government's Family Violence Initiative, Statistics Canada undertakes activities on an ongoing basis to improve the availability of data on family violence. Victimization surveys have played a major role. We have twice interviewed large samples of women about their experiences of violence, in 1993 and again in 1999, and in 1999 we also interviewed men about spousal violence. We hope to repeat this again in 2004 to have comparable data every five years.

This will enable us to assess progress in reducing the level of spousal violence over time (something that is not reliable using police statistics since a majority of victims don't report spousal assaults to the police).

We will also be looking at improving data about stalking (criminal harassment), an issue that is of growing importance.

A real challenge is how to interview women and men who speak neither English nor French. These people have different experiences of violence and barriers to receiving help, yet interviewing them in the same way has some real challenges. We are looking into ways of addressing this problem.

Each year we publish a report on up-to-date data on family violence and we include a special theme. This year's theme is the impact of violence, which includes the extent of physical injury victims suffer, emotional consequences, use of medical services and hospitalization, lost productivity, as well as an in-depth look at family homicides. 



FYI

Children at risk — who grow up in families with low incomes, low parental educations, prenatal problems and single parents — have fewer behavioral problems when raised with positive and consistent parenting. Parenting style, particularly a hostile parenting style, has a more negative effect on behavioral problems than other factors such as income and family structure.

(Source: *The Daily*, October 28, 1998. Statistics Canada)

Profile: Constable Max Morin

Winner of the Minister of Justice National Youth Justice Policing Award

By Marc Gushue

As Max Morin drives his RCMP cruiser through the town of Ahousaht, British Columbia, the children often stop, turn, and wave.

Since being posted to the small community on the west coast of Vancouver Island, the constable has made a big impression on the people of Ahousaht — particularly on the kids.

"Max attracts the youth in a good, positive way," says Dave Frank, a counsellor at the Ahousaht Holistic Centre.

"He's highly visible and he's there for the youth. He does a lot of things at the school. He brings us in to give talks to the kids, to teach them about the consequences of their actions. That brings us back to the way we taught as First Nations people — we taught prevention, rather than intervention, and that has been Max's style."

Morin, a 21-year veteran of the RCMP, is this year's winner of the Minister of Justice National Youth Justice Policing Award.

The award, now in its second year, recognizes the efforts of police officers who work in a manner that promotes the goals of the federal government's Youth Justice Renewal Initiative. This year, the Department of Justice received thirty-three nominations from police services, community

groups, schools, and individuals across Canada.

Morin's win has delighted the people of Ahousaht.

"I nominated Max because he is a very sensitive person and he's approachable," says Marie Jessie Donahue, a Native Justice worker.

"One of our codes here is to create a relationship between the RCMP and our young people, and Max does that. He does not talk down to them, he talks with them. In the end, he maintains the law by using traditional values and beliefs and he'll also use and quote the Criminal Code, so that we know what we're dealing with. He uses that quite effectively."

Morin's traditional approach to crime reduction has endeared him to the community, and his respectful demeanour allows him to build trusting relationships with the young people who are getting into trouble with the law.



Constable Max Morin


grandmother — sometimes all of them — and it's the same with the offender.

"The circle only comes about if the offender takes responsibility for what he has done, admits that he did wrong, and shows remorse. It brings these two people closer together and they understand each other.

"Usually, everybody walks away happy; there's usually lots of hugs and I've also seen tears. People are showing each other love instead of being mad at each other. So far, the ones we've done have been 100% successful."

Constable Morin has also demonstrated imagination and leadership undertaking innovative youth projects, including educational field trips, encouraging careers in law enforcement, active participation in healing circles, and discussions involving young offenders, victims, and families.

Morin has also worked hard to raise the self-esteem of the young people in his community, through frequent visits to their homes and by making time for them whenever they drop by his office.

"My philosophy is to encourage young people to live a healthy lifestyle and to keep trying," explains Morin. "It isn't easy, nothing comes free, and the path we're walking is sometimes hard to stay on. If they do fall off, I let them know that everybody has a chance to get back on, and that sometimes, it takes hard work. Sometimes it's just a little bit of an adjustment in their lifestyle and they're back on track." 

This year's winner, as well as runners-up, were all present at the opening ceremonies of the Canadian Association of Chief of Police Conference to receive their awards from John Maloney, then Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice.



Back row left to right: Constable Randy Huisman, Constable Grant Obst, Constable Tim Korchinski, Detective Constable Grant Hamilton. Front row left to right: Sergeant Wade Blake, Constable John Kennedy, John Maloney, Catherine Latimer, General Counsel and Director General of Youth Justice, Constable Max Morin and Sergeant Dave Dort.

"Max can reach them at a level that other adults haven't been able to, just by the way he approaches them," notes Elected Chief Councillor Anne Atleo. "He treats people like people; he gives them the benefit of the doubt. He tries to understand their position and he's willing to hear people out. But he's also willing to call people on the rationality of their argument."

When crimes are committed, the officer once again relies on traditional forms of healing and restitution.

"One of the methods that I use and encourage is a talking circle," explains Morin. "That's a method we've been using for our restorative justice program.

"In a talking circle, the victim and the accused both sit in a circle facing each other, and the victim is there with support people, like parents, a brother, an uncle, a

The Minister of Justice National Youth Justice Policing Award is sponsored by the Department of Justice and the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police. Constable Morin was presented with the 2001 award in Saskatoon, in August.

Several factors are considered in selecting the winner, including: innovation and creativity, the use of community-based resources as alternatives to the formal court process, the effective use of police discretion, conferencing, community-based alternatives to custody, and rehabilitation and reintegration of youth through positive police-sponsored activities.

For more information on the Minister of Justice National Youth Justice Policing Award, visit the Youth Justice Web site at www.canada.justice.gc.ca/youth.

Marc Gushue is a Communications Officer for the National Crime Prevention Centre in Ottawa.

***National Strategy on Community Safety and Crime Prevention* Receives \$145 Million in Additional Funding**



Edmonton, July 5 — Justice Minister Anne McLellan was joined by Kim Sutherland, Executive Director of Street Culture Kidz, a Regina-based skill building initiative for youth, for the announcement of the government's investment of a further \$145 million, over four years, in the *National Strategy on Community Safety and Crime Prevention*.


"The *National Strategy* is at work in more than 500 communities across Canada, supporting over 1,900 projects that help Canadians identify the

root causes of crime; and through these projects, we've learned a great deal about how to reduce crime in our streets and in our communities," said McLellan, in announcing the new funding. "I am pleased that the reach of the *National Strategy* will be extended, and its impact on the lives of our communities spread even further."

Launched in 1998, the *National Strategy* has become an integral component of the government's multi-faceted public safety agenda, which

balances a vigorous response to crime with a determined attack on the root causes of crime.

Solicitor General Lawrence MacAulay, who joined in the announcement from Charlottetown, noted that "the best way to make Canadians safe is by making sure that all partners work together. And our *National Strategy* is an excellent example of the practical results that partnerships can achieve."

The \$145 million is in addition to the *National Strategy's* current annual budget of \$32 million. 

Asante Centre for Fetal Alcohol Syndrome

Leading the Charge for Change

By Marc Gushue

Walking through the front door for the first time is often the most difficult step at the Asante Centre for Fetal Alcohol Syndrome.

Mothers who are seeking help for their children must also confront the possibility that they have hurt their child.

"It is really difficult for parents to come in and often it takes several steps and a great amount of courage to walk through our door," says Audrey Salahub, coordinator of the Centre in Maple Ridge, British Columbia.

"It's a great honour for me when they do come through the door because I know it's been a great struggle for them to come to this point."

The Centre is devoted to caring for people who are affected by Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, by providing assessment and family support services and by advocating for their special needs.

A recent report by Correctional Service Canada noted that individuals with FAS are "definitely at increased risk for coming in contact with the criminal justice system."

For those who work in the area, these findings came as no surprise.

People born with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome frequently have poor learning skills, poor problem-solving ability, cognitive behaviour problems, no reaction to negative consequences, and low IQ — traits that have long been known to be risk factors that bring people into contact with the law.

Unfortunately, the criminal justice system has been slow to recognize the preponderance of people with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome who go through its doors.

Julianne Conry, a psychologist at the Centre, recalls the shocking study that brought Fetal Alcohol Syndrome into the public consciousness.

"In the early 1980s, we did a study in a Native community that was concerned about the large number of children with developmental handicaps. At that time, there wasn't a lot of knowledge about Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, nor was there any particular stigma. So if you were to ask a woman about her drinking, there wasn't the denial that we sometimes find now.

"When we did the survey, we examined all of the children and interviewed all of the mothers. In that community, we found that 20% of all the children — from birth to age eighteen — were alcohol-affected."

While that community had a higher incidence rate than most, the findings did prompt many other communities to take preventative action.

"Over time, some communities — Native communities in particular — have tried to stop the drinking and turn things around," says Conry.

"But some of them have been more successful than others. They might make a good effort over a period of a generation or a partial generation, but then you have the new young people growing up and now they're starting to drink.

continued page 10

What is Fetal Alcohol Syndrome?

When a woman drinks during pregnancy, the alcohol in her bloodstream circulates through the placenta into the bloodstream of the fetus — a process that can have devastating effects on the baby.

Children born with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome have permanent brain damage that leads to a number of health problems, including staggered gait, speech impediments, dental problems, vision problems, and hearing difficulties. The condition also produces erratic behaviour and learning deficits.

The 1992 report of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Health and Welfare, Social Affairs, Seniors and the Status of Women, "Fetal Alcohol Syndrome: A Preventable Tragedy," quoted the parent of a child who had FAS:

"By the time my son was three, he had had stitches three times. He was fearless and did not seem to learn from his falls. At age nineteen, he began working in construction but was often plagued with on-the-job accidents. Again, I suspect a lack of judgment. He fell off roofs, he put a nail through his hand with a nail gun. In 1990, he attended a friend's party in the suburbs where he lived. During the evening, he took four prescription pills that were being passed around. The other kids took two pills. My son didn't read the label because he couldn't read it. The pills were slow-acting morphine and he died of an accidental drug overdose. He was twenty-one years old."

The inability to learn from experiences, adapt behaviour, and anticipate the consequences of actions are common traits among those who are affected by Fetal Alcohol Syndrome. As another parent explained in the 1992 report:

"These kids have no fear of danger. I remember even when he was five years old, he would climb trees as high as they grow them in British Columbia without any fear at all of falling. They can never relate behaviour to consequences. If they suffer consequences in one situation, they cannot transfer that information to another situation. These kids need twenty-four-hour supervision. You'd think by the time they reached adolescence you could back off a bit, but it's exactly the opposite."

Given their propensity for erratic behaviour and learning problems, it should not be surprising that many people afflicted with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome find themselves in contact with the criminal justice system, as both victims and offenders.

Asante Centre for Fetal Alcohol Syndrome continued from page 9

"There has to be a sustained effort to keep Fetal Alcohol Syndrome at the forefront, because it isn't enough to just let people know about it and then just let it go. As each new generation comes along, we have to keep telling people."

FYI

Nearly 36% of children born when their mother was a teenager (14 to 19 years old) exhibited conduct disorder, compared with 20% of children whose mother was between 20 and 29, and 14% of those whose mother was at least 30 years old.

(Source: National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth, 1996. Statistics Canada)

In an effort to spread awareness, the Asante Centre has developed a series of workshops on FAS, which it is delivering to various communities. The workshops were supported by a grant from the *National Strategy on Community Safety and Crime Prevention*.

While most women now understand the harmful effects that alcohol has on a baby, sadly, the drinking continues. As Conry notes, the problem is much more complex than it appears.

"When we're dealing with women who have heavy addictions to alcohol, it isn't enough to say 'You're harming your baby,' because they don't want to harm their babies. It's the addiction, the poverty, and their whole life circumstances that are fueling the alcohol."

The Asante Centre currently averages just one diagnosis of FAS per week, as each examination often requires more than a full day to complete.

But each diagnosis touches the lives of more than just one individual.

Says Conry: "When we see a particular child, we're not seeing just this child; we're having a larger influence, like a ripple effect in a pond. The child is the stone, but then there's this ripple effect because the child comes with the mother."

"Now if we're able to find the mother when she's younger with a younger child, we may be able to help her not drink during another pregnancy. So then we've affected another child."

"Usually, the families come in with other people — it could be a social worker, a probation officer, or other adults. If, for example, someone brings a social worker, and she sees what this process is like, then she's better able to help other clients that she has. If she brings the child's teacher, then now this child's teacher has a better understanding of, not only what we do, but also how we look at the problems, and how she can help other children as well."

While the majority of the Centre's clients are referred by the Ministry of Children and Family Development, the staff have found an increase in court-ordered cases as well.

Typically, a judge will recommend that the charged person report to the Centre for an assessment, because he or she suspects that the person has FAS. In other cases, the referral will be made by a defence lawyer who suspects that his or her client has FAS but has no proof.

In order to meet the courts' increasing need for information, Conry and Diane Fast, a doctor who specializes in FAS, co-wrote *Fetal Alcohol Syndrome and the Criminal Justice System*.

The book explains the factors that place those with FAS at risk, and provides advice to parents, probation officers, lawyers and judges on the issues that arise when people with FAS get involved with the law.

The book has helped to spread awareness of FAS throughout the legal community and, on at least one occasion in particular, saved someone from being sentenced to jail.

"We had a situation where a father phoned and he was quite concerned," recalls Salahub. "His daughter, who had been diagnosed with partial FAS, had done some pretty serious crimes, and had a trial coming up. The father was worried that she was going to end up in jail, so he phoned us and asked us if we could help."

"I told him about our book and he immediately asked us to send it to him collect. He then gave it to the

lawyer, who absorbed it in a couple of days — we're talking TIGHT timelines! He then based his whole defence on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome because, all of a sudden, the girl's actions made sense. She had brain damage and could not understand the consequences of her actions."

"In the end, the judge chose not to send her to jail. Instead, he ordered house arrest and had a job set up for her. She came in to see us a few weeks after the incident and everything was going wonderfully well. Her whole life was turned around because of the book."

For more information on the Asante Centre for Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, phone (604) 467-7101 or email info@asantecentre.org.

Marc Gushue is a Communications Officer for the National Crime Prevention Centre in Ottawa.



From Our Readers

Somewhere Between Goodie-Goodie and Bad Girl

By Norma Block

There are some experiences in life that are so profound, they seem to be permanently etched in your mind.

One of those moments in my life occurred in a movie theater, over 20 years ago. I was just entering my teens when my friend and I watched the hit movie *Grease*. The movie was about a goodie-goodie named Sandra Dee and her transformation to the "bad girl," Sandy.



Norma Block

At the time, I saw myself as the goodie-goodie. I wore unfashionable clothes, no make-up and about the only

time a boy spoke to me was to ask me to pick something up, get out of the way or what the homework assignment was for the day. I was dull and clearly dull girls didn't get invited to parties or asked out on dates (or so I thought).

I hated dull and it was sitting in that theatre that I decided to throw in my goodie-goodie ways and become more like the leather clad 'bad girl', that had all the boys' attention and more party invitations than she could count (although not shown in the movie, I was sure she had hundreds of party invitations).

Know why they end movies at the "happily ever after" part? Because that's when the fantasy ends and real life begins — the real life I lived and the one that nearly killed me.

True to my convictions, I began to slowly give up things that I thought were goodie-goodie; I quit attending church, I started to act up in my classes and began skipping school on occasion. I asked my Mom for a pair of designer jeans — "Please

not the \$20 K-Mart jeans" I begged. "I need the \$60 jeans from the jean store." As money was usually tight, my Mom agreed to purchase the designer jeans once.

This slow transformation began towards the end of Grade Seven — although much of this transformation fooled my Mom into thinking it was normal teenage rebellion.

continued page 12

By the Numbers

- In an estimated 461,000 Canadian households, children heard or saw one parent assaulting the other. This represented 37% of all households with spousal violence.¹
- In a sample of federal inmates enrolled in a family violence program who had a history of family violence, more than half (56%) reported that they witnessed some form of violence as children.²
- Men who witnessed their mothers being physically abused by their father were three times as likely to be violent against their female partners than men who grew up in non-violent homes.³
- There were 508 shelters providing residential services to abused women in Canada in 2000. In a one-year period, a total of 57,182 women, along with 39,177 children, were admitted to 448 shelters.⁴
- The majority of children accompanying their mothers to shelters were very young: three-quarters were under 10 years of age.⁵
- The number of children under 12 whose parents separate or divorce has tripled over the last twenty years.⁶
- Young people under the age of 20 represented 26% of the population in 2000, compared to over 40% in the 1960s. By 2026, the total population under 20 is expected to be just 20% of the population. In Canada's three northern territories, however, 37% of the population was under 20 in 2000.⁷
- The birth rate among women aged 15 to 19, while rising through the early 1990s, is at historically low levels — as of 1997, it was 20 births per 1000 females, half the rate from the early 1970s and a third from the early 1960s.⁸
- In 1999, 18% of those aged 15 to 19 were out of work and looking, more than double the national unemployment rate.⁹

¹ Children Witnessing Family Violence, 2001. *Juristat*. Vol. 21, No 6. July 2001. Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics. Statistics Canada.

² Children Witnessing Family Violence, 2001. *Juristat*. Vol. 21, No 6. July 2001. Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics. Statistics Canada.

³ Violence Against Women Survey, 1993. Statistics Canada

⁴ Children Witnessing Family Violence, 2001. *Juristat*. Vol. 21, No 6. July 2001. Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics. Statistics Canada.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ The Progress of Canada's Children, 1998. December 7, 1998. Canadian Council on Social Development.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*

FYI

There is a weak link at best between a family's income level and delinquency among children. Between 39% and 44% of children from all income groups reported being involved in some or a lot of aggressiveness.

(Source: National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth, 1996. Statistics Canada.)

From Our Readers

continued from page 11

Looking back, we both agree that there were warning signs that we ignored, mostly because neither of us knew any better. In Grade Eight, I started smoking cigarettes and a few of my friends and I would occasionally steal a beer or a little hard liquor from our parents' liquor cabinets.

By fifteen, I had acquired fake I.D. and became a regular in some of our local bars and started to play around with some lighter drugs like pot and hash.

At sixteen, I was using a wide variety of drugs and partying every weekend. I honestly believed I was in control the whole time — after all, I only got really high or really drunk on weekends. It's not like I *needed* drugs or alcohol, because I wasn't using during the week. Addicts *needed* to be drunk or stoned all the time, right? I wasn't addicted, right?

FYI

Children who were exposed to adults or teenagers fighting in the home were less likely to have positive relationships with their parents. They were more than twice as likely to be physically aggressive, have emotional disorders, and commit crimes against property as their peers who had not witnessed violence in the home.

(Source: Children Witnessing Family Violence, 2001. *Juristat*. Vol. 21, No 6)

For three more years I would continue my reign as Party Queen. I still considered myself a "week-end warrior." I went to college and worked full time and every spare cent I made went to pay for my partying. I reasoned with myself that I was due the weekend. I worked hard all week and I should be able to cut loose and get wasted. Right?

Around the age of nineteen, I began basing cocaine (a.k.a crack, rock, and other street names that individuals make up. I called it cake.) It was sometime in here where I changed from Party Queen to recluse (junkie).

I no longer wanted to get dressed up and go to parties. I didn't care what I wore, if my hair was brushed or even if I showered — all I thought of was a pipe filled with cocaine and where could I get more.

It was here that I hit rock bottom and lost everything — my college education, my car, my friends, and my job. I was homeless and living from place to place. The rock bottom stage is the way that most people think of addicts, but the truth is, I was an addict for many years before I hit this stage.

My Mom had announced that she would always love me and would be there for me if I wanted to clean up. However, until then, she would no longer have anything to do with me. It was the hardest thing she's done in her life. She did manage to sneak some flyers from Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous into my room.

I read those flyers shortly after, not because I was interested but because I was coming down from a high and I needed something — anything — to focus my mind on. As I flipped through the pages, I began to think that perhaps I had a bit of a problem and maybe I should try to slow down a bit. I went to sleep with that on my mind and awoke to take a rare shower.

As I was standing in the bathroom with the water running, I looked at some of the items laying around. There was my old makeup bag, my curling iron and a blow dryer but I couldn't remember the last time I used any of them. It was as though I was looking at the belongings of someone who had passed away. I expected these things to come to life any moment and speak of the girl who had once owned them.

For a moment in time, I stood as a living ghost looking at the remains of a girl that had been dead for a couple of years.

Soon after that day, I slowly began to reclaim my life. I used several times after reading those flyers, but not as often.

About a year later, a miracle happened. I became pregnant and from the second I conceived, I quit using drugs. No, this is not a miracle cure — there is no explanation for why I quit when I was pregnant. I personally know of many women who couldn't stop using drugs or alcohol during their pregnancies. I just got lucky.

I remained sober throughout my pregnancy and then three weeks after I gave birth, I fell off the wagon. I decided I was *owed* a good drunk. I drank after work and on weekends for about two more years and then I began a journey of self discovery which has kept me sober for almost ten years now.

Some where between 'goodie-goodie' and 'bad girl' is where I finally found myself. Funny, when I was in Grade Seven, it never occurred to me that there was a middle ground.

I am grateful every day that I am one of the lucky ones to have survived this disease — many of my old party friends have died, several are in jail, a couple have gone missing and now more and more that are still alive are being diagnosed with varying forms of Hepatitis (they'll be dead soon).

Addiction is a slow seduction. I call it the living dead disease, because that is exactly what it is... I was breathing but I was dead.

It's a devastating disease but it is a curable one.

This article was originally written for the Drayton Valley Western Review weekly newspaper in Alberta.

Norma Block was 12 years old when her story began. She is now 32, the owner of her own business, the mother of two and a member of a local parenting group — the Drayton Valley Parent to Parent Drug Awareness Group. 🍷

Events Calendar

May 2002

Célébration Jeunesse

May 2–5, 2002, in Montreal, Quebec
May 24–26, 2002, in Quebec, Quebec
Contact: Ève Hudon (514) 274-6124

Canada's Children... Canada's Future 2002

May 5–8, 2002, in Toronto, Ontario
Info: (416) 366-8115

Alberta Crime Prevention Symposium 2002

May 8–9, 2002, in Edmonton, Alberta
Contact: Eileen Bell (780) 423-2031, Ext. 102

Fear and Loathing — Symposium on Bullying

May 23–25, 2002, in Ottawa, Ontario
Contact: David Millen (613) 244-3803, Ext. 225

13th Annual People in Motion

May 31st–June 1st, 2002, in Toronto, Ontario
Info: 1-877-745-6555