

RCMP



ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE

Feature Focus: Youth Gangs and Guns

2006

**RCMP
Environmental
Scan**



Royal Canadian Mounted Police Gendarmerie royale du Canada

Canada 

Foreword

Thank you for taking the time to read the Royal Canadian Mounted Police's (RCMP) 2006 Feature Focus on the important issue of *youth gangs and guns* in Canada and across the Americas.

In determining the topic for the 2006 Feature Focus we looked at a number of key issues, but ultimately settled on youth gangs and guns for a number of reasons. Most importantly, this work will support the strategic priorities of the RCMP, as well as those of the larger Public Safety portfolio and the Government of Canada. It is also an area that has garnered a great deal of attention and is of great concern for families, citizens, policy makers, and the public safety and security community across the country.

As indicated in the title, particular emphasis is placed on the role of firearms in youth gang activities. While we fully acknowledge that youth gangs can and are violent/criminal without guns, we recognize that guns increase the lethality of gang-related violence; are indicative of an escalation of criminality; and, increase the likelihood that innocent bystanders will be affected. Research indicates that guns are a feature of youth gang-related activities and are likely to increase.

In examining the issues from the Canadian perspective, we found a distinct lack of research. To date, there has only been one national study on the numbers and the criminal/violent nature of youth gangs. Much of the rest of the existing Canadian-based research is based on case studies, small samples, and/or self-reporting by gang members. This lack of research makes it difficult to identify national trends. Given the importance of this issue however, there is a need to understand more about the individuals joining youth gangs, the triggers for violent and/or criminal gang activity and effective responses and promising practices.

Readers of this document will notice that we have defined "youth" in broad terms as individuals 30 years of age and under. This definition does not correspond to the traditional law enforcement or Criminal Code definition (i.e. under 18 years of age), but it does reflect the publicly available research on this subject and the varying definitions of youth within Canada and abroad.

The RCMP is a strong proponent of environmental scanning (e-scanning) as we understand the necessity of being aware of the range of challenges and opportunities facing the organization now and those that may arise in the future. This e-scanning document offers a synthesis of macro-level information identified through an extensive review of *publicly available* material on youth gangs and guns.

The format used in producing this document is intended to promote easy reading. The layout is in the form of information bullets, quotes (white boxes), statistics/quick facts (red boxes) and blue boxes which highlight the impacts of some of the key trends.

As always, we welcome all comments and suggestions, on both the format and content of this document. An evaluation form can be found at the end of the document for this purpose.

Keith Clark
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Strategic Policy and Planning Directorate

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- Canada Border Services Agency
- Correctional Service Canada
- National Crime Prevention Centre
- National Parole Board

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Feature Focus: Youth Gangs & Guns

Summary

North and South America are experiencing an increase in the number and size of youth gangs. Once a problem for large metropolitan cities, youth gangs are now active in urban, rural, and suburban communities alike. Research indicates that these trends are likely to continue.

Males continue to dominate youth gangs, but female participation is increasing with female-only gangs emerging as a trend in the US and South America. In addition, youth gang membership increasingly cuts across all ethnic, cultural and religious communities.

The scope and nature of activities of youth gangs vary within and between communities. Research indicates that some youth gangs are involved in low-level criminal activity, while others pose a significant criminal and/or violent threat.

Some youth gangs are involved in graffiti and vandalism, while others are involved in drug trafficking, robbery, extortion, prostitution, money laundering and vandalism. Smuggling people and weapons are emerging trends in some areas.

Gangs rely on a range of tactics and weapons to protect themselves/members, turf, status and profit-making enterprises. Threats, intimidation, assaults and homicides are widely reported. In carrying out these criminal activities, gang members will utilize knives, machetes, hammers, etc. Firearms are considered a weapon of choice for many gangs in the US and South America. In Canada, the use of firearms among youth is generally becoming more prevalent and is especially acute in larger urban areas such as Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal.

- youth is broadly defined as individuals 30 years of age and younger
- lack of consensus on definition of youth gang
- youth join gangs for power, money, respect, status and sense of belonging
- in 2002, 434 youth gangs reportedly active across Canada with approximately 7,000 members – 0.02% of total population
- youth gangs reportedly active in large and small Canadian jurisdictions
- illicit drug distribution is most prominent financial drive for youth gangs
- 71 homicides in Canada in 2004 determined to be “gang-related” (e.g., street gang, youth gang, organized crime); 50 involved a firearm
- no specific Canadian statistics on use of guns by youth gangs
- in 2004, approximately 24,000 gangs active in US (760,000 members; 29,000 jurisdictions) – 0.26% of total population
- effective responses to address youth gangs rely on a combination of prevention, intervention and suppression programs
- overall lack of information on Canadian youth gangs and the range of criminal and violent activities

No single, standard operational definition of “youth gang”

lack of widely-agreed upon definition within academic and research, government, practitioner and law enforcement communities

definition varies among communities, regions and countries

youth gang terminology a catch-all phrase to describe situations such as groups of youth hanging out, to troublesome high school students, to highly organized criminal and violent groups of youth

- lack of a commonly-understood definition inhibits establishment of local, regional and national data sets

most cited definition (M.W. Klein, 1971) of gangs – any group of “youngsters” who:

- are generally perceived as a distinct aggregation by others
- self-identify as group (i.e. group name)
- are involved in a sufficient number of delinquent incidents producing consistent negative response from community and/or law enforcement agencies



Graffiti in a Toronto alley

Substantial discourse on the distinction/division between youth gangs and street gangs:

- research attributes similar characteristics to both types of gangs
- instances of law enforcement and researchers using youth gang and street gang terms interchangeably
- research differs in the classification of specific gangs (e.g. some classify MS-13 as street gang, while for others it is a youth gang)

Further complicating the issue:

- involvement of youth in street gangs, organized crime groups and other types of gangs
- varying definitions of youth

The lack of a universal definition for youth gangs impacts whether youth gangs are correctly identified and understood, and how community and law enforcement strategies are designed and implemented.



Significant variations among youth gangs across North and South America

gangs differ in size, structure, sophistication, age range, racial and ethnic diversity, gender composition, permanency, and range and level of criminal activities and violence

characteristics of individual gangs reflective of local cultural, demographic, economic and political realities/circumstances

typical age range for gang members is 11-25 years old, with 17 the average age

- evidence of members as young as seven in Central America; some "core" members remain affiliated with gangs into their forties

gangs attract youth from a variety of economic, social, cultural and racial backgrounds

- attracting wealthy, educated youth from varying ethno-cultural backgrounds
- gangs are increasingly multi-ethnic/multi-racial

female participation increasing in some male youth gangs

- recent trend of female-only gangs being established in US and South America

youth gangs once primarily found in large urban areas are now seen in rural and suburban areas and small cities

majority of youth gangs can be classified as either "traditional" or "hybrid"

traditional gangs – inner-city; large; ethnically homogenous membership; male dominated with high degree of loyalty; highly territorial and organized with concentrated leadership; defined modes of communication/identity (tattoos, hand signs, colours); highly violent (visible displays of violence to intimidate others; violent entry and exit rites); multi-generational

hybrid – urban, suburban and areas with high concentration of youth; multi-ethnic, no distinct mode of communication (e.g. distinct colours, hand signs, etc.); less territorial; fluid gang affiliation; less reliance on rites and rituals (e.g. "jumping in" entry); single generational composition; considered violent and dangerous

some youth groups do not exhibit significant violent and/or criminal behaviour

tagger crews – loose affiliations of youth, principal activity is graffiti; may occasionally become competitive or confrontational

party crews – evolve around social functions; boisterous and disturbing, but do not usually escalate towards confrontation or significant criminality

gang membership seen as gradual, not abrupt

drawn to gangs through acquaintances with ties to gangs

little empirical evidence to support notion that youth transition from petty crime gangs to criminal-type gangs



Significant variations...

numerous 'reasons' for joining/forming youth gangs

researchers blame failures in welfare, immigration settlement, education, judiciary for increased youth gang membership

- US research suggests that youth gangs flourish in areas where resources, opportunities and support are limited

however, no exact set of risk factors can definitely predict gang membership



Incarcerated gang member

PUSH/PULL FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO GANG INVOLVEMENT

Individual/Family Factors

- early substance abuse
- antisocial/hostile/aggressive behaviour
- social deprivation or isolation
- family history of gang involvement
- parental neglect/family structure
- low academic achievement/school dropout or truancy
- unemployed/underemployed/few employment prospects

Economic/Societal/Community Factors

- social upheaval
- poverty, income inequality
- racism/xenophobia
- proliferation of gang culture

Pop culture and media significantly impacts public perception of youth gangs and gun violence:

- glorifies gang lifestyle
- contributes to the adoption of linguistic codes and dress styles associated with American gangs
- heightens public perceptions of gang activity in their communities
- all gang members presented in the same light, without recognizing diversity of membership and activities
- focus on violent actions of gang-members



Stereotypes and myths 'inform' the youth gang debate

perspectives of gangs and gang members often dominated by myths and stereotypical images

Myth #1 – youth gangs are an exclusively male phenomenon

role of females in gangs is evolving – moving into active roles

females increasingly involved in leadership and criminal activities

- drug offences, property crimes most common activity
- rising number of females participating in violent youth gang crime

Myth #2 – youth gangs are only an urban problem

law enforcement agencies identify growing youth gang presence in rural areas, small cities and suburban environments

- 4% of rural communities and 10% of small cities in US report persistent gang problems
- 37% of rural communities and 44% of small cities in US report variable gang problems

Myth #3 – gang members have no intelligence and no sense of initiative

majority of members are intelligent and able to develop and carry out creative tasks

vast majority are energetic and want the same things the majority of citizens want

capitalism/entrepreneurship adopted by gangs

Youth, street and organized crime gangs may not be mutually exclusive. Groups are distinguished by degree of sophistication and entrenchment in criminal activity.

Myth #4 – youth gangs frequently associate with terrorist/organized crime groups

links to international terrorism described speculatively by researchers/experts

- 5.4% of law enforcement agencies in the US report gang associations with terrorist organizations
- large majority of these agencies report that these links are to domestic extremist and hate groups (e.g. Hammerskins, Ku Klux Klan, Neo-Nazi groups)
- media reports linking MS-13 and al-Qa'ida had "no basis in fact" according to FBI

evidence suggests that there are specific linkages between organized crime groups and youth gangs

- organized crime groups hire youth gangs to participate in illicit drug debt or gambling collection, undertake violent acts and intimidation
- collaboration is highest with respect to drug trafficking and intimidation/extortion, followed closely by automotive theft
- youth gangs act to insulate the more sophisticated criminal organizations from their criminal rivals and law enforcement

Although evidence suggests that links between youth gangs and terrorism are limited, there remains the potential for such associations to form.



Youth gangs exhibit varying levels of criminality and violence

different members within a youth gang exhibit differing patterns of criminality and violence

'core' members are significantly more prone to criminal activity than 'peripheral' members

- core gang members show a higher propensity towards committing gun crimes
- research reveals a 'hardening' effect – higher degrees of commitment to youth gangs and longer involvement increase risk of gun crime

gangs act as profit-making enterprises

revenue from gang-related criminal activities directed towards sustaining gang activities and personal profit

drug-related activities most common criminal act

violence is often retaliatory in response to disagreements or protection of profit/territory

youth violence viewed as more vicious today than in the past

number of factors contributing to violent behaviour:

- peer pressure; group dynamic; gang mentality; availability of weapons; alcohol/drug abuse; exposure to violence, etc.

gangs rely on range of weapons to carry out criminal and/or violent activity

utilize knives, bats, machetes, hammers, etc.

firearms prominent feature of gang-related violence and criminal activity

usage of firearms varies across North and South America

- visible feature of gang violence in South America and US
- increasingly becoming a factor in Canada among all types of gangs (street, youth and organized crime)

indications that gun usage will increase

guns used by gang members for a variety of reasons:

- self-protection, demonstration, and/or enhancement of status, commission of crimes, intimidation, and/or to inflict violence on criminal peers, law enforcement community, general public

Accessing reliable statistical data is problematic:

- varying definitions/classifications of youth and youth gangs cause methodological problems in aggregating data
- over-reliance on self-identification by individuals involved in youth gangs
- communities may under-report gang-related violence to avoid stigma associated with gangs

GANG MENTALITY

- members demand respect
- disrespect for rivals commonplace
- retaliate for perceived wrongs
- negative consequences from actions considered a rite of passage
- disregard for the rights of non-members

Some youth gangs continue to use edge weapons, such as knives, to avoid publicity usually accompanying use of firearms.



Various responses to gangs

most effective strategies use multiple programs in combination – prevention, intervention and suppression approaches

anti-gang measures require ongoing effort, knowledge and innovation

Prevention

focus on preventing gangs from forming and individuals from joining gangs in the first place

- early identification of youth-at-risk is critical

Intervention

divert individuals involved in gangs through the use of programs that provide alternatives

- includes employment training and programming providing structure (e.g. recreational activities)

Suppression

suppress current gang problems through law enforcement and legislative action

- focuses on punishment and removal of gang members from a community
- includes creation of specialized gang units, prosecution efforts, legislation targeting gang activities, and the development and implementation of information systems to track gang members

communities can play an important role in the reduction of youth gang activity

- comprehensive community efforts have demonstrated measured success in addressing both emerging and chronic gang problems

SIGNS OF YOUTH GANG ACTIVITY IN THE COMMUNITY

- Increase in street and commercial robberies, assaults, vandalism, graffiti, stolen autos
- Increase in drug trafficking and drug use
- Youths commonly seen hanging out in groups, particularly at night
- Gang colours and dress worn on the streets and in schools
- Rumours of gang activity

Winnipeg Police Service , "Take Action in Schools – Gang Awareness"

It is necessary to research the nature, scale and scope of particular issues to foster effective responses to youth gangs. In addition, these responses are most effective when they involve a wide array of partners including law enforcement, corrections, social services, educators, provincial/municipal administrators, local media, families, citizens and youth.

Successful prevention programs have several key components:

- communities acknowledge gang problem
- strategies target medium to high-risk individuals with intensive, multifaceted approaches focusing on the development of social skills and addressing the values, beliefs and attitudes that reinforce antisocial behaviour
- offer alternatives to gang activities (e.g. recreational programs/after school programs)
- program goals are specific and culminate in some type of award for participants (i.e. certificate of participation)
- offer culturally sensitive programming

Colin Goff, "First Nations and Organized Crime", 2005



Youth gang activity particularly acute in the Americas

significant numbers of active gangs and gang members

US – 760,000 gang members; 24,000 gangs in 29,000 jurisdictions (2004)

- research shows scope of youth gang issues in US cities is generally greater than in other areas of the world

estimates of gang membership in Central America range from 100,000 – 300,000

- increasing since 1980s

most prevalent in urban environments; also proliferating in suburban and rural settings

current growth-trends of gangs and gang membership vary across the Americas

gang prevalence and membership in US appears to be stabilizing, but areas with long-standing youth gang activity generally report that local gang problems are “getting worse”

Central American gangs and gang membership continue to grow – research indicates that this growth is “exponential”

- gang membership increasingly driven by forced removals of incarcerated and gang-involved immigrants from the US to their countries of origin
- gang-involved deportees likely to join violent youth gangs upon return
- proliferation of MS-13 and Calle 18 in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras indicative of this trend



WHY FOCUS ON THE AMERICAS?

Youth gangs are not unique to the Americas – activity is on the rise in various regions throughout the world. However, the violence and gun crime exhibited by youth gangs in North and South America are distinguishing features.

US gang culture strongly influences youth gangs across the region. Gangs in the Americas are known to be extremely violent, especially in Central America, where youth gang-related executions and brutal attacks on members of the public have been reported.

contemporary forms of youth gangs first emerged during 1970s and continue to evolve

evolution driven by increased mobility, access to increasingly lethal weaponry and proliferation of drug trade

Central America youth gang phenomenon emerged in 1980s in wake of civil wars and insurgencies in the region

- emerged as a public policy issue in 1990s as unrest in the region came to an end

majority of youth gang activities employ offensive and aggressive strategies

shifting away from defensive and territorial strategies

youth gang activity penetrating all aspects of society

youth gangs present in communities, schools and correctional facilities

Gang activity increased in the 1980s. At the beginning of the decade, gang problems were recognized in only a few large cities, particularly Chicago, Detroit and Los Angeles. But, by the end of the decade, gangs appeared in large and medium-sized cities as well as in many rural areas. The levels of violence were much higher than in any previous wave of gang problems, corresponding with even more widespread availability of automobiles and firearms.

Decker and Curry, "Gangs" in The Encyclopedia of Crime and Punishment, 2002

Forces of globalization increasingly influence proliferation of youth gangs

large numbers of undereducated youths in developing areas are at risk of gang membership

knowledge economy reduces demand and opportunity for unskilled labour

- few employment prospects for youth in urban areas

youth gangs increasingly influenced by movements of goods, people and cultures across borders

Hispanic gangs originating in Los Angeles (MS-13 and Calle 18) now prominent in Central America

global drug trade continues to fund and link youth gangs, especially at the distribution level

'gangsta' culture increasingly globalized due to rising influence and reach of western mass media

advances in telecommunications are increasingly exploited by youth gangs

youth gangs have kept pace with technological advancements to further goals

technological tools increasingly employed to improve communication, facilitate criminal activity and avoid detection by law enforcement agencies

- web-sites used to inform members of meetings, events and relevant information
- research in the US indicates that gangs are increasingly committing intellectual property crimes (e.g. DVD and CD pirating) for profit
- frequently use cellular phones with "push-to-talk" functions to facilitate quick communications

... study of gangs can no longer start and stop with local conditions, but must also be rooted in a global context. How else do we come to grips with Jamaican posses in Kansas... female Muslim gangs in Oslo, LA's MS-13 and 18th Street as the largest gangs in Honduras and El Salvador... Crips in the Netherlands... and other examples of a global web of gangs?

John Hagedorn, "The Global Impact of Gangs", 2005

NETBANGING

Gang members are increasingly taking their allegiances and feuds on-line. Netbanging refers to a wide variety of gang-related activity on the web including the communication of information among gang members, recruitment activities and provoking hostilities amongst rival gangs through derogatory posts.

Law enforcement officers are utilizing gang-related Internet activity in investigations. For example, detectives in Palm Beach, Florida, recently recovered 14 firearms in a search which was initiated after viewing on-line material.

Through the Internet, youth gangs can expand their reach across the globe.



Managua, Nicaragua

epicenter of crime in Nicaragua

experienced rising levels of violence and criminality throughout 1990s

40% of all crimes in Nicaragua committed in Managua – half of these reported crimes considered violent

- nature of violence and violent crime shifts from political violence and civil war to crime and delinquency

Pandillas – youth gangs – in Managua

now a prevalent and widespread phenomenon – growing rapidly

- currently more than 110 pandillas with approximately 8,000 members

concentrated in lower-class barrios – poverty and lack of opportunity drive membership

- territorially based in specific neighbourhoods
- defend territory as a source of identity and pride

Pandillas commit variety of crime, often employing firearms

responsible for disproportionate share of criminal activity

- commit 50% of all crimes in Nicaragua and 60% of all crimes in Managua

violence and gang warfare prevalent

robbery, mugging, pick-pocketing and involvement in drug trade among other criminal activities



Lower class barrio in Managua



Crime and violence

rates of youth crime vary significantly across the Americas

in developing areas youth crime rates are rising, with increasing prevalence of violent crimes

- homicide rates rose by 44% between 1984 and 1994
- homicide rates in El Salvador – 50.2 homicides per youth 100,000 population – well above global rates

in developed areas youth crime rates appear to have stabilized

- youth arrest rates have generally returned to pre-1990s levels
- youth violent crime rates have also declined after sharp increases in the 1990s

youth gang members exhibit higher rates of criminality than non-gang involved youth

- survey research in Seattle, Denver and Rochester indicates that youth gang members involved in five to ten times as many drug sales as non-gang related youth
- gang members in Seattle (Washington), representing 15% of a survey sample, self-reported involvement in 85% of robberies, 54% of felony thefts and 59% of property offences committed
- gang members reported three to seven times as many violent acts as non-gang related youth

youth gangs involved in wide variety of criminal activities

majority of youth gangs engage in “cafeteria-style” criminality – no specialty in one specific area

drug usage, distribution and trafficking

- distribution most common criminal activity – lack organization and sophistication necessary for deeper involvement
 - marihuana and crack cocaine among the most common illegal drugs distributed

robbery, breaking and entering, theft, vandalism, extortion and intimidation

- large number of youth gangs participate in automobile theft

petty theft and mugging rampant amongst many youth gangs in developing areas of the Americas

graffiti a popular activity used to mark territory

victims of youth gang-related violent crime are most often other gang members

rivalries with other gangs and involvement in drug trade motivate majority of gang-related violent crime

- of 1,000 gang-related homicides (1987-1994) in Chicago, 75% were inter-gang, 11% were intra-gang and 14% involved non-gang victims

violence is a prominent feature of gang life

range from threats and intimidation (e.g. via Internet, phone), to swarming, assaults and homicide

Increased incarceration of youth gang members requires correctional strategies to ensure that prisons do not become criminal ‘finishing schools’.



Diversity of weapons employed in youth gang crimes and violence

knives most frequently reported weapon carried by gang-involved youth

bats, clubs, machetes and mace used among others

guns prevalent phenomenon in youth gang crime and violence

carried by significant number of youth gang members

- readily accessible in the region, particularly in Latin America
- firearms utilized in drug-related crime, violence, homicide and other criminal acts including theft, robbery and intimidation

fatal violent crimes involving youth gang members most often involve firearms

- firearms often elevate the severity of trivial disputes and minor confrontations
- youth gang-related incidents of gun violence increasingly identified as 'disrespect shootings'

firearm use by youth gangs more common in jurisdictions with long-standing gang problems

- urban areas are significantly more prone to violent gang activity involving guns
- jurisdictions in the US with early onset gang problems (pre-1985) experience elevated levels of gang-related gun crime
- in 2000, the US National Youth Gang Survey found that 84% of 'gang-problem' jurisdictions reported at least one occurrence of firearm use by gang members in an assault crime
- homicides from firearms are most common in Latin America and the Caribbean, with rates five times higher than the world average



SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC COSTS OF VIOLENT CRIME

Direct costs

- prevention, treatment of victims and apprehending and prosecuting perpetrators
 - calculated to cost El Salvador approximately 6.5% of GNP each year

Non-monetary costs

- increased morbidity rates, alcohol and drug abuse and depression etc.

Economic multiplier effects

- losses in human capital, decreased productivity, decreased foreign direct investment and savings and investment
 - violent crime in Columbia – losses in health – 5% of GDP – material losses – 8% of GDP

Social multiplier effects

- inter-generational transfer of violence, erosion of social capital, poor quality of life

Inter-American Development Bank, "Violence as an Obstacle to Development", 1999

In spite of vast media, government/policy and law enforcement attention to the issue of gangs and guns, there is a significant empirical research gap regarding the actual relationship between these two phenomena.

Diversity of weapons...

firearms are obtained through legal and illegal means

research indicates that majority are acquired by gangs through illegal avenues including theft and black market purchase

- some youth gang members are involved in the theft and re-sale of firearms

some gangs also accessing military weapons (e.g. fully automatic weapons, explosive devices and body armour)

- especially true in South America, with large numbers of military weapons present from recent internal conflicts
- reports from the US document gang members approaching military personnel with intent of acquiring military weaponry



13 year old gang member from Medellin, Colombia

Incarcerated gang-members in the US:

- 81% owned a revolver
- 75% owned automatic or semi-automatic handguns
- 84% had carried a handgun at least "now and then" in the 1 to 2 years before incarceration

*National Gang Crime Research Center ,
"Gangs and Guns Task Force Research Report" , 2001*

When we ask, "Why did you shoot this guy?" it's "He bumped in to me," "He looked at my girl the wrong way". It's not like they're riding around doing drive-by shootings. It's arguments – stupid arguments over stupid things.

*Police Commissioner Sylvester M. Johnson (Philadelphia)
quoted in "New York Times", "Violent Crime Rising Sharply in Some Cities",
February 12, 2006*



Replicas or Real?



FIREARMS IN THE AMERICAS

El Salvador

- estimated 250,000 to 400,000 firearms in circulation
- 6 out of 10 violent deaths in San Salvador involved firearms in 1998
- 7% of surveyed school children in San Salvador (age 13-19) admitted to taking a firearm to school

Guatemala

- number of firearms in circulation estimated from 910,000 to 2,000,000
- 70% of criminally violent deaths caused by firearm violence

Honduras

- National Congress estimates 400,000 to 500,000 illegal firearms in circulation
- 68% of deaths and injuries resulting from violent crime involved firearms
 - AK-47 could be purchased for \$20 USD in early 1990s

US

- estimated 200M firearms in circulation
- approximately 60% of all homicides committed with a firearm
 - 90% of all gang-related homicides in Chicago involve a firearm

Argentina

- estimated 1.4M firearms in circulation

Brazil

- estimate of up to 18M firearms in circulation
 - .38 revolver is most common
- 80% of homicides committed with firearms



Chicago, Illinois

third largest city in the US

population of 3M; 10M in Greater Metro Area

long-standing gang problem

"watershed" study of gangs in America undertaken in 1927

four major gangs; dozens of other multi-neighbourhood gangs

large number of youth are gang-involved

estimates of up to 68,000 gang members in Greater Metro Area

poor, marginalized and racialized neighbourhoods experience highest rates of criminality and violence

homicide rates of up to 60 per 100,000 population in poor and racialized neighbourhoods

youth gangs commit a disproportionate share of crime and violence

significant proportion of violent crime attributable to gang-involved youth – 50% of all homicides are gang-related

firearms are a prevalent characteristic of gang-related activity including violence and homicide

many gangs participate in drug distribution including marijuana and crack cocaine, violence and homicide, theft, robbery and intimidation

most violence related to turf battles between rival gangs

- homicide and assault common among rival gangs

BENEFITS OF GANG MEMBERSHIP – In Their Own Words...

"I like the respect. I like the power...Ya got status, you can swagger. People know you ain't no punk." (male 19 years)

"Nobody knew me before I got involved. Now I'm famous in my area. People know me now." (male 22 years)

*Scot Wortley and Julian Tanner (University of Toronto),
Metropolis Conference, 2005*



Latin American approaches to youth gang issues

many responses to youth gang problems are suppression heavy

Honduras government implemented a crack-down on gangs and gang activity, adopting the "mano dura" (heavy hand) approach

- gang membership is illegal and punishable by 6-12 years in prison resulting in overcrowding in prison system
- army deployed domestically to augment police presence

El Salvador adopted similar programs

Guatemala, Panama and Nicaragua have implemented prevention programs along with law enforcement

evidence suggests suppression-heavy programs are not effective

gang activity in prisons resulting in murders, fires and riots, as incarcerated populations stretch capacity

- suspected gang members jailed on basis of tattoos or clothing
- civil liberties issues have emerged

research identifies increases in violent crime where heavy-handed enforcement programs are implemented

- gangs in Honduras and El Salvador have "retaliated" with violent campaigns following implementation of mano dura policies

MANO DURA AND DEATH SQUADS IN LATIN AMERICA

Across the region, death squads operating at night have been reported. These extrajudicial groups have been known to patrol the streets, rounding up suspected gang members, often killing or severely beating them. In Honduras, social cleansing has resulted in the death of approximately 2,300 youth since 1998. In El Salvador, extrajudicial killings of criminal and gang-involved youth by groups such as the notorious Sombra Negra have been documented since the mid-1990s.



Police in Guatemala City arrest youth gang members



Medellin, Colombia

population of 2.2M with city administratively divided into numbered zones

zones with high levels of poverty characterized by social conflict and violence

- Zone 1 – poor and densely populated – homicide rate of 101 per 100,000 population
- Zone 5 – wealthy and less densely populated – homicide rate of 27 per 100,000 population

long-standing criminal gang problem

criminal gangs present in the 1970s and 1980s

currently 400 armed groups in Medellin consisting of 10,000 members

- majority of these members are young
- expansion of drug trade provide criminal gangs with finances, weaponry, control of neighbourhoods

strong links between drug trade, paramilitary groups and criminal youth gangs (bandas)

criminal youth gangs are subordinate and structurally linked to narcotrafficantes (organized drug trafficking groups)

economic resources to sustain criminal youth gangs largely obtained from drug sales

paramilitary groups increasingly control neighbourhoods and the drug trade in Medellin

- often co-opt criminal youth gangs into their service – provide security for paramilitary groups, protect drug trafficking territory and participate in the street-level distribution of drugs – cocaine amongst the principal drugs

firearms are a prevalent feature of gang crime

90% of all homicides committed with a firearm

law enforcement agencies estimate that approximately 40% of all firearms were obtained illegally

large number of illegal weapons imported from neighbouring countries

armed confrontations common among competing criminal gangs and paramilitary groups



Gang Members from Medellin show off their weapons



US approaches to youth gang issues

mix of prevention, intervention and suppression activities embraced at federal level

DOJ adopted comprehensive response to gangs

- gang membership and delinquency increasingly targeted with initiatives involving local, state and federal resources

suppression tactics remain predominant strategy in gang-problem jurisdictions

gang task forces at local and regional levels are common

state laws invoked to increase criminal sanctions for gang crime and gang involvement

- suppression tactics increasingly expanding to include prevention and intervention elements
- multi-agency and multi-jurisdictional approaches increasingly bringing together enforcement agencies and community organizations in collaborative approaches

COMMUNITY STRATEGIES IN THE US

- **broken windows** argues for vigorous prosecution of petty crime to restore public confidence in the justice system, reverse urban decay and reduce the incidence of serious crime
- **problem-oriented policing** advocates pre-emptive identification of problem individuals and communities and interdiction by police or other civic agencies prior to unlawful behaviour
- **partnerships** promotes police collaboration with citizen groups, business associations, reformed criminals (especially ex-gang members) and prosecutors
- **pulling levers** combines vigorous gun law enforcement with targeted campaigns against chronic gang offenders and is credited with cutting youth homicides in Boston by two-thirds
- **compstat**, pioneered in New York, uses computers to track crime statistics and plot strategic responses

George Kelling, Rutgers University in "The Western Standard", "Why won't they stop the killing?", 2006

We think of prison as punishment, but in many instances we're just reinforcing their loyalty to the gang. To them prison is like going to finishing school.

*Chief William Bratton (Los Angeles Police),
quoted in Foreign Affairs, "How the Street Gangs Took Central America",
May/June, 2005*



Notable programs from across the Americas

El Salvador – Homies Unidos

established in 1996 in San Salvador by former gang members to promote peace among gangs

- community-based attempt to develop “creative alternatives” for young people

Guatemala – Alliance for the Prevention of Crime

seeks to integrate communities and governments through social initiatives to address youth gangs and violence

- implements prevention program focusing on education and job-training

US Operation Ceasefire (Boston Gun Project)

problem-oriented policing intervention aimed at reducing youth homicide and youth firearms violence in Boston

- partnership between researchers and practitioners to assess Boston’s youth homicide problem and establish interventions
- based on “pulling levers” strategy resulting in focused attention on chronically-offending gang-related youth responsible for youth homicide problem

REGIONAL COOPERATION

Regional cooperation and integration has emerged as a priority to deal with youth gangs.

Presidents of El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua have met to develop a regional strategy to combat MS-13 and Calle 18.

Regional coordination with the US is also growing to combat the migration of gang members from Mexico and Central America to the US and vice versa.

In addition, the OAS recently adopted a regional commitment, recognizing the need to consider prevention, suppression and intervention programs in a collaborative and regional approach.

US – Gang Resistance Education and Training (G.R.E.A.T.)

- long-term strategy to prevent or immunize children and adolescents from joining gangs
- consists of four components: middle school curriculum, elementary school curriculum, summer program and family training
- preliminary evaluation show positive results in terms of reduced self-reporting of gang-affiliation and delinquency

BENEFITS OF GANG MEMBERSHIP – In Their Own Words...

“Hey, one of the reasons I joined is because I was scared. Got beat up a couple of times, got jumped and had my walkman stolen and my money. I needed backup cause I can’t fight these guys on my own”.

*Scot Wortley and Julian Tanner (University of Toronto),
Metropolis Conference, 2005*



Youth Gangs widely viewed as a serious and growing problem for the country

law enforcement, governments, academic and research community, and citizens showing increased interest and attention to the issue

interest increased in last 24 months due to high-profile gang-related incidents in Toronto and Vancouver

despite the attention, small pool of public, substantive and validated research on youth gangs and related activities exists at local, regional or national level

general lack of reliable data on current numbers of youth gangs and membership, as well as nature and scope of activities

- existing information more accurately describe youth gang problems as opposed to trends

limited academic and/or scholarly research

- one national study undertaken in early 2000s (i.e. 2002 Canadian Police Survey on Youth Gangs)
- pre-2002 – focus on US research with select studies from cities such as Toronto and Vancouver; no reliable measure of number of youth gangs or members
- post-2002 – reiteration of data from 2002 Police Survey and exploration of prevention and intervention approaches
- additional data/information is: generally preliminary; based on isolated case studies; self-identification of gang members; anecdotal evidence; snapshots rather than trends and longitudinal/statistical data

media playing a substantial role in defining parameters of youth gang discourse

media in Canada and the US has the greatest influence on the way youth gangs are perceived by Canadians

- interest increases with incidents identified as gang-related
- media reports largely suggest that gang activity as a whole is escalating
- seen as “sensationalizing” the issues, often producing reactions of fear and anxiety in general public

public discourse appears to be based on anecdotal evidence, perceptions, myths, stereotypes and media reporting

Canadian Center for Justice Statistics recently added a number of questions concerning gang-related issues (e.g. involvement of street gangs in criminal incidents, age of offenders, affiliation to organized crime, etc.) to their data collection surveys.

More research is required on:

- youth gang numbers and members – national, regional, local
- youth gang-related violence – national, regional, local
- empirical relationship between youth gangs and guns
- factors contributing to violent youth gang crimes
- variations in types of weapons and uses and types of crimes committed
- longitudinal studies of youth gang members
- relations between youth gangs, street gangs and organized crime
- empirical studies on effectiveness of anti-gang interventions





Toronto, Ontario

Canada's largest and most ethnically diverse city with a population of 2.48M (2001)

in 2001, 43% of residents part of a visible minority group

intense media attention and numerous violent incidents add to public perception that violence is on the rise

youth, guns and gangs often cited as the driving force behind emerging violence

- in 2000, three-quarters of Toronto high school students believed that youth gang activity was either a serious (23%) or very serious problem (52%) in Toronto

Toronto home to a mix of traditional and hybrid youth gangs, hard-core street gangs and ethnic gangs

estimates of active street gangs range from 73 to over 300

- at least 25 gangs are estimated to have ties to organized crime
- recent study reports one out of every ten high school youth (11%) and one out of every four homeless youth (27%) claim they have been a gang member at some point in their life (2001)

in 2005, Toronto doubled its number of gun-related homicides over the previous year

52 of 78 homicides (67%) were gun-related in 2005, compared with 27 of 64 homicides (42%) in 2004

11.4% of all homicides in 2004 were "gang-related" (youth, street and organized crime), compared to 15.3% in 2003

- most of the gun-related homicides occur in at-risk neighbourhoods such as the Jane-Finch area
- study reports that approximately 2,400 high school students in Toronto claim to have carried a gun at least once during a 12 month period between 2004 and 2005

community groups have called for increased resources to provide outreach workers and community programs

May 2006 saw the "largest-ever sweep in the history of the Toronto police", involving 600 officers carrying out pre-dawn raid on a local gang in the GTA.

Over 100 suspects – both men and women ranging in age from their late teens to 20s – with alleged connections to a local gang face more than 1,000 criminal charges. Charges range from attempted murder to weapons trafficking and participating in a criminal organization.

Police seized numerous illegal weapons including handguns, rifles, Tasers, cross-bows, knives, four bulletproof vests and hundreds of rounds of ammunition.

Toronto Star, May 2006

Random, sporadic violence in 2005 resulted in the death and injury of numerous innocent bystanders. For example:

- a four-year-old boy was among four people injured as a result of a drive-by shooting;
- a teenager was shot to death while attending the funeral of a friend, also a victim of gunfire; and
- a 15-year-old was killed and six other people wounded after gunfire erupted on Yonge Street during Boxing Day.

TORONTO'S "SUMMER OF THE GUN"

However chaotic the streets of Toronto may have seemed [in 2005], the rate of gun homicide [that year was] actually fractionally lower than it was in 1991. And Toronto's murder rate per capita [in 2005 was] lower than the rate for Winnipeg, Edmonton, Vancouver and Calgary.

*CBC.CA: Canada Votes 2006,
"Reality Check. Is happiness a banned gun?",
December 2005*

2002 Canadian Police Survey on Youth Gangs

first and only national study of its kind

youth gang defined as group of youths or young adults under 21 years of age identified as part of a gang (excluding motorcycle gangs, hate or ideology groups, prison gangs and other exclusively adult gangs)

study found that youth gangs are active across the country in both large and small communities

youth gang phenomenon relatively new in many Canadian jurisdictions

- however some law enforcement officials report youth gang problem dating back 30 years

approximately 434 youth gangs with 7,000 members nationally

- SK, MB, BC, ON home to highest percentage of jurisdictions reporting youth gang activity
- in absolute terms, ON has highest concentration of jurisdictions reporting youth gang activity
- NS, MB and QC had lowest number of gang members
- survey revealed no activity in the Territories or other Atlantic provinces

almost half of youth gang members fall within age range of 16 to 18

composed primarily of young men, but females represent significant proportion of gang population in some jurisdictions

majority of youth gangs are "hybrid" in nature

i.e. urban and suburban areas with high concentration of youth; multi-ethnic, no distinct mode of communication (e.g. distinct colours, hand signs, etc.); less territorial; fluid gang affiliation; less reliance on rites and rituals (e.g. "jumping in" entry); single generational composition; considered violent and dangerous

- gangs characterized by lack of respect for authority; participation in illegal activities; use of monikers and nicknames; code of silence

gangs cut across ethnic, demographic and socio-economic lines

African Canadian, First Nations and Caucasian youth represent largest portion of gang members

- Caucasian/White youth members distributed throughout country with exception of SK and AB
- First Nations youth gang members centered largely in SK, MB and AB
- African Canadian/Black compose the majority of gang members in QC, NS and ON
- BC youth gang membership composed primarily of Asian youth

Since 2002, reports out of New Brunswick indicate that youth gangs are a growing problem.



2002 Canadian Police Survey on Youth Gangs

youth gangs ethnically diverse

36% of active youth gangs composed of two or more racial/ethnic groups

- diversity seen most in ON, BC and MB
- homogenous groups found in NS, SK

youth gangs involved in number of criminal activities

high level of involvement in assault, drug trafficking, vandalism/graffiti/tagging, burglary/break and enter, intimidation/extortion

youth gangs responsible for more than one-third of street sale of marihuana, followed by crack cocaine and powder cocaine

- largely staying away from sales of heroin and other chemical drugs (e.g. ecstasy, MDA)

little evidence for gang involvement in immigration fraud, smuggling of consumer goods, money laundering, homicide

survey highlights possible connection between large portion of youth gangs and organized crime groups

- collaboration with organized crime groups highest with respect to drug trafficking, intimidation/extortion and auto theft

survey found majority of youth gangs "rarely" use firearms

only 11% of law enforcement respondents reported that youth gangs often use firearms in conjunction with assaults

majority of law enforcement respondents reported feeling that youth gang problem was getting worse in their jurisdictions

majority believe that migration of gang members is affecting local problems

ESTIMATED YOUTH GANG MEMBERS PER 1,000 POPULATION (2002)

Area	2001 Population	Number of Youth Gang Members	Youth Gang Members per 1,000 population
Saskatchewan	978,933	1315	1.34
Ontario	11,410,046	3320	0.29
British Columbia	3,907,738	1027	0.26
Alberta	2,974,807	668	0.22
Manitoba	1,119,583	171	0.15
Quebec	7,237,479	533	0.07
Nova Scotia	908,007	37	0.04



Winnipeg, Manitoba

gangs first appeared in Winnipeg approximately 20 years ago

city recently experienced a rapid growth in youth gangs – Winnipeg Police Service has identified approximately 26 active gangs with over 2,000 members

- Aboriginal street gangs dominate

higher youth gang participation rates for young women in Winnipeg and Western Canada

numerous swarmings in Winnipeg's downtown conducted by gangs of young teenage girls – in one such attack, the oldest perpetrator was 14

Winnipeg youth gangs generally involved in street-level distribution of drugs including marihuana, cocaine, crack cocaine and crystal meth

prostitution, break and enter, robberies, assaults, intimidation, tobacco fraud, home invasions, vehicle theft, weapons offences, illegal gaming and debt collection also common

Winnipeg's North End home to prolific graffiti "tags" proclaiming turf and sending messages to other gangs

gang rivalries have led to stabbings, home invasions, robbery, machete attacks and murder

Winnipeg Police Service established a Street Gang Unit and uses a computer database to track active and inactive gang members

coupled with aggressive suppression measures/tactics, the Gang Unit has put over 385 gang members in provincial jails and many more in federal prisons

community and civic leaders are working to decrease the effects of gang membership and recruitment among youth

Winnipeg School Divisions conduct a gang prevention program entitled Choices

organizations such as Winnipeg Boys and Girls Clubs work with at-risk youth in the inner city of Winnipeg

Some researchers contend that law enforcement agencies may be less likely to identify females as gang members due to overall lower levels of female criminality.



Aboriginal Gang member



Crime, violence and guns

youth (under 18) crime rate increased between 1999 and 2003

rate of youth violent crime (homicide, assault, sexual assault and robbery) has remained relatively stable over the past decade, except for increase in 2000

- violent young people most often victimize young friends or acquaintances, not adults or strangers

Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics reports youth using firearms and other weapons to carry out offences

- 303 robberies committed with firearm in 2003; 267 in 2004
- 1,259 robberies committed with other weapons (knives, bats, etc.) in 2003; 1,263 in 2004
- 43 incidences of sexual assault with weapon in 2004; 41 in 2003

Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics reports that of the 622 homicides in 2004, 71 homicides were "gang related" (youth, street and organized crime) with 50 involving a firearm

since reporting began in 1991, number of gang-related homicides have generally increased from a low of 13 in 1993 to 84 in 2003

however, there was a decline in 2004 with 71 homicides reported as gang related

- since 1991, the Territories have not reported a gang-related homicide
- number of all gang-related homicides in Alberta in 2004 doubled from previous year

no specific data on use of guns by youth gangs

law enforcement representatives identify youth and guns as existing and growing problem

Gang related homicides occur as a consequence of activities involving an organized crime group or street gang. Examples include killing a rival gang member (in 2004, 59% of gang-related homicides were motivated by "settling of accounts"). Homicides of innocent bystanders as a result of gang-related activity are also considered to be gang-related.

Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, "Homicide in Canada 2004"

Price for black market handguns on Canada's streets have doubled in the last decade, sometimes as much as 400% from US over-the-counter prices

- .22 calibre pistol – 200% markup
- "Saturday Night Special" .25 and .32 calibre automatics such as the Bryco and Sundance – 300% markup
- 9mm, .40 or .45 calibre semi-automatics like the Glock or Tec-9 – 400% markup

Mackenzie Institute Newsletter, "On Street Gangs and Guns", January 2006

- one in 50 Ontario high school students reports carrying a gun at least once during a 12 month period between 2004 and 2005
- absolute numbers of youth estimated to carry a gun vary widely across Ontario: 2,400 in Toronto; 600 in Northern Ontario; 7,600 in Western Ontario; 4,200 in Eastern Ontario
- fewer Ontario students (2.2%) report carrying a handgun compared to American students (6.1%)

Center for Addiction and Mental Health, "eBulletin", January/February 2006



Crime, violence and guns...

illegal firearms obtained from two sources – domestic theft; smuggled into the country

theft of legal firearms from commercial businesses and private residences in Canada

- known firearm owners/collectors deliberately targeted
- police believe that gang members actively gather intelligence on legitimate gun collectors
- between 2,000 and 3,000 firearms are stolen or reported missing in Canada each year
 - 85 handguns were stolen in two separate break-and-enters in Toronto during a two-week period in February 2006

Canadians are smuggling illicit firearms (generally handguns) from US

- some States allow unregulated and undocumented purchases at gun shows and flea markets
- Canadian citizens use fraudulent US identification to obtain firearms
- smugglers use a variety of methods to smuggle guns into country including hidden compartments within vehicles, vessels or back packs

no reliable estimate of overall illicit firearms market in Canada

- no known methodology to provide accurate estimates
- drug trade seen as major instigator in creating demand for illegal firearms

due to high prices less sophisticated gangs often cannot afford handguns

homemade/improvised firearms, fake, drilled-out starter pistols and sawed-off long guns becoming more common in Canada

- of 49 firearm incidents in York Region in the first three months of 2006, 30 involved fake guns
- in western Canada, cut-down long guns are the guns of choice due to their availability
- innovative underground arms dealers now rent weapons

CBSA seizes approximately 1,000 – 1,500 smuggled guns every year. In 2004, CBSA seized 1,099 firearms including 140 non-restricted firearms, 299 restricted firearms and 660 prohibited firearms.

Internet is an emerging tool for the sale of illicit firearms. In 2005 Toronto police arrested four people on a total of 276 charges for selling illegal firearms over the Internet.

Speaking to CBC Radio, a member of a Toronto gang said that guns and gunplay have become an essential part of a violent drug-based world. "Guys want to kill people," he said. "That's showing off, showing you're hard." "This is not a gun problem, it's a cultural problem."

"CBC News", March 16, 2004



Vancouver, British Columbia

Vancouver reported one of the earliest onsets of youth gang activity in the country (1979)

studies of media reports suggested that the first significant wave of street gang activity may have occurred earlier – between 1948 and 1959

- subsequent waves occurred between 1970 and 1975 (the “Park gangs” and the “Chinatown gangs”) and 1985 and 1990

today, hybrid youth gangs are emerging that include members from multiple ethnic groups including Asian, South Asian

- involved in distribution of drugs, trafficking, transportation of drugs across the Canada-US border, extortion, kidnapping and murder
- Indo-Canadian community has been particularly hard hit by gang violence with over 100 murders of young men in the past 10 years
- Indo-Canadian gangs involve a wide spectrum of youth, some from wealthy, educated families

Integrated Gang Task Force (IGTF) was established in 2005 by the Government of BC in response to consultation with Indo-Canadian leaders

IGTF investigates all gang activity in the Lower Mainland

- 60 full-time police officers and 13 civilian staff
- regional approach to enforcement and intelligence-sharing targeting violent criminal gangs

Vancouver and the Lower Mainland witnessed a number of gang attacks in 2005:

- two men were wounded when assailants entered a Vietnamese restaurant and fired more than a dozen shots; and
- a known gang member and his girlfriend were gunned down at a busy Abbotsford intersection.

Gang and organized crime murders are more difficult to investigate. Until recently, the Indo-Canadian community preferred to settle their own differences.

*Supt. John Robin, BC's Integrated Gang Task Force
"Vancouver Sun", December 2005*

BENEFITS OF GANG MEMBERSHIP – In Their Own Words...

“It’s like the only jobs they got for poor black people is like McDonald’s or Wendy’s or other bullshit like that. Low, low pay, no respect...I’m my own boss, make way more money and don’t sell myself out to shit like that. I’d rather die than embarrass myself like that.” (male 23 years)

“Obviously I do it for the cash. If there weren’t no money in it I’d be gone.” (male 20 years)

*Scot Wortley and Julian Tanner (University of Toronto),
Metropolis Conference, 2005*



Select approaches to youth gangs in Canada

Project Gang Proof – Manitoba

prevention program developed by Manitoba Justice, the Winnipeg Police Service and RCMP "D" Division in 2001

- produced a handbook for families and communities to assist in preventing youth from becoming involved in gangs
- offers information on gangs in Manitoba, processes of gang recruitment, risk factors of gang involvement, gang identification strategies, gang prevention strategies and information concerning drugs

Community Solution to Gang Violence – Edmonton, Alberta

established in 2003 in response to growing gang activity in the city – comprised of cross section of citizens, community organizations, policing organizations and all levels of government

- organized around community-based working groups that develop and implement action plans: community awareness, early intervention, values and education, youth programming, and government and policy
- goal is to create and sustain collaborative processes that work towards a community free of gang violence through the focus on a mix of prevention, intervention and suppression approaches

Projet Alternative Gang – Québec City, Québec

formed in 2005 in an effort to mobilize and educate community about gangs

- organizing sports, outdoor and socio-cultural activities for youth to provide alternatives to gang involvement
- facilitating workshops and information booths about youth gangs in local high schools

Maximized Potential – Toronto, Ontario

youth outreach group established in 2005; focused on developing youth "at-risk" of losing their potential into contributing adults

employs a multi-media message delivery system in schools aimed at youth in grades 5 through 10 – two unique programs

- Educational program – four different presentations which are tailored to individual school needs
- L.I.F.E. program (Life, Leadership, Integrity, Fortitude, Endurance) – three phases presented over one semester, complemented with ongoing contact via a web-page and a 24 hour hotline

Sometimes the message of graffiti is simple, other times it takes decoding.

- **"INF"** stands for "In Full Effect" meaning that a gang dominates the territory
- **"PK"** stands for "Posse Killers", the rivals of the Indian Posse
- **"187"** is the California criminal code section for homicide and is used as a death threat among gangs

Sergeant Rick Lobban, Winnipeg Police quoted in First Nations Drum, "Gangsters Out to Beat the Rap", 2000



Approaches...

Toronto Anti-Violence Intervention Strategy (TAVIS) – Toronto, Ontario

implemented in January 2006 to reduce gun violence – response to wave of gun violence in 2005

- 52 firearms homicides in Toronto in 2005

targets problematic areas and high-risk communities

- draws influence from successful programs (and lessons learned) implemented in gang-problem jurisdictions in the US

focused on intervention, prevention, enforcement and community mobilization

- police officers based in a community for an extended period to build relationships and work with the community to identify issues which joint action can resolve
- intelligence-gathering a key component of the enforcement strategy, with dedicated officers
- aggressive, targeted enforcement is a vital component
- rapid response teams travel to different divisions where violence has been evident
- high-profile police patrols operating in high risk communities

in 2005, approximately 80 anti-youth gangs programs were identified across Canada

majority of programs focus on awareness about gangs and/or education

- funding obtained largely from public institutions; several programs privately funded through monetary and in-kind donations
- gang-related activity appears to have outpaced anti-gang programs



IMPACT ON SASKATCHEWAN COMMUNITIES Key indicators



– Criminal Intelligence Service Saskatchewan,
"2005 Intelligence Trends: Aboriginal-based Gangs in Saskatchewan"

BENEFITS OF GANG MEMBERSHIP – In Their Own Words...

"They are my friends. I just like hangin' out and having fun... I know they got my back and I'll always have a little money or some help if I need it." (female 21 years)

Scot Wortley and Julian Tanner (University of Toronto),
Metropolis Conference, 2005

Appendix – Acronyms

AGI – Aboriginal Gang Initiative

CBSA – Canada Border Services Agency

CISC – Criminal Intelligence Service Canada

CSC – Correctional Service Canada

FBI – Federal Bureau of Investigation

GTA – Greater Toronto Area

IGTF – Integrated Gang Task Force (British Columbia)

M-18 – Calle 18/18th Street Gang

MS-13 – Mara Salvatrucha 13

NGCRC – National Gang Crime Research Center

NWEST – National Weapons Enforcement Support Team

OAS – Organization of American States

OJJDP – Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention

PSEPC – Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Canada

PWEU – Provincial Weapons Enforcement Unit

US – United States

US DOJ – US Department of Justice



Appendix – Evaluation Form

Feature Focus Evaluation Form

We appreciate your feedback!

Please help us to ensure this Feature Focus contains relevant, accurate and useful information by taking a few moments to answer the questions below and either fax or e-mail them to the Strategic Policy and Planning Branch of the RCMP.

Fax: (613) 993-4453

E-mail: alison.whelan@rcmp-grc.gc.ca

(internal feedback can be sent via ROSS)

Does the document contain information that is relevant and useful to you?

Are there important issues and/or trends that we are missing?

Is the format logical and easy to follow?

(How could it be improved?)

Additional Comments?

Thank you for your input!

