# CITY OF RICHMOND

# BUILDING SAFER COMMUNITIES FUND STRATEGY

Potus Consulting Inc. 2023

Richmond

## DISCLAIMER

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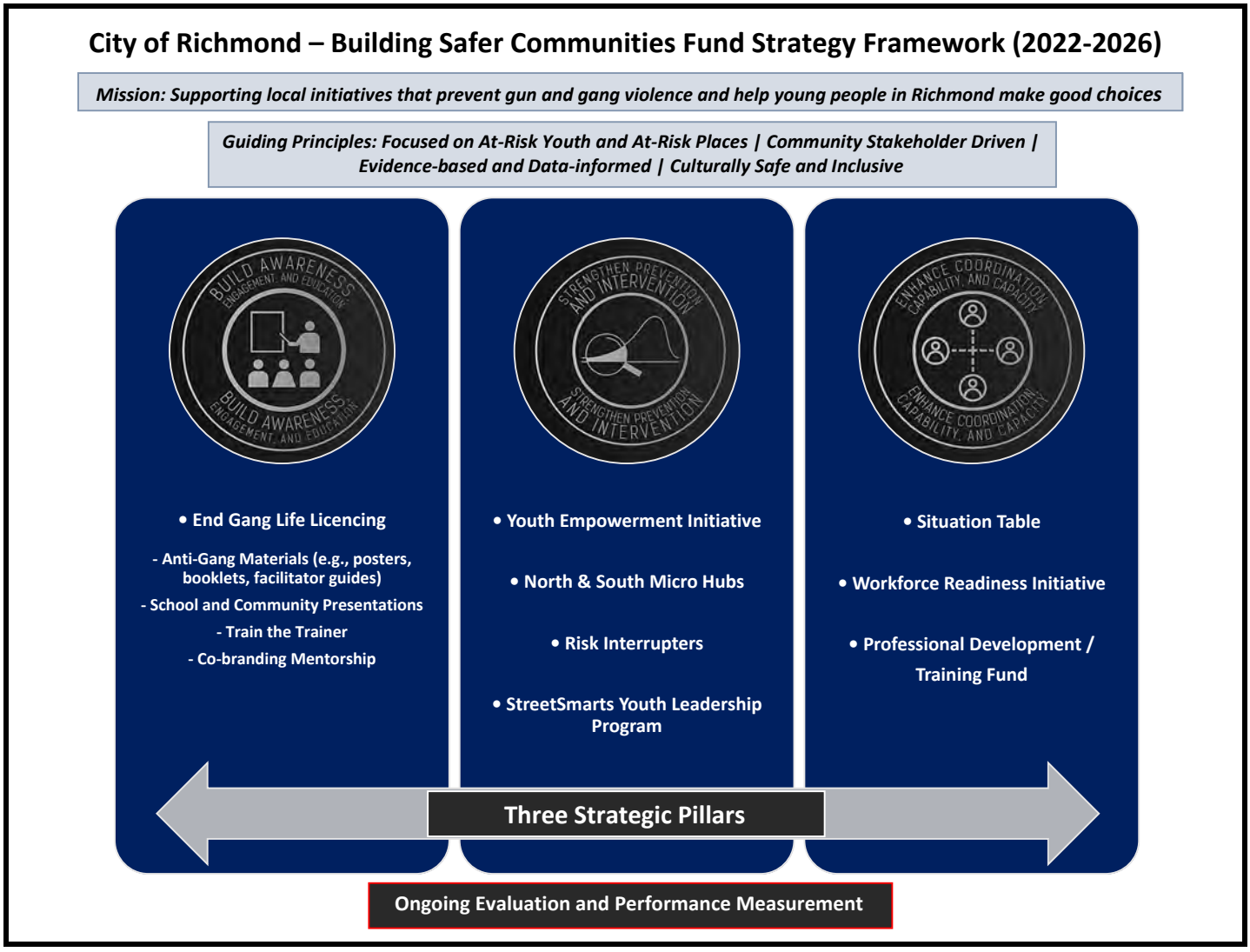
## Executive Summary

This document serves to outline the main elements of the City of Richmond's Gangs and Guns Strategy through Public Safety Canada's Building Safer Communities Fund (BSCF). This high-level overview accompanies the main report to be submitted by Potus Consulting Inc. to the City of Richmond. As such, much more detail about each pillar, the data and evidence in support of the recommendations, and the literature review can be found in that document. The figure below provides a visual overview of the proposed strategy, which is made up of three interconnected strategic pillars.



## Building Awareness, Engagement, and Education

The first pillar is to **Build Awareness, Engagement, and Education**. The elements that comprise this pillar are entering into a licencing agreement to print and distribute End Gang Life educational materials for youth and adults, establishing a train the trainer model for presentations, delivering school and community presentations, and establishing a co-branding mentorship program with the City of Richmond Media Lab.

### END GANG LIFE LICENCING

The City of Richmond will request to obtain, customize, and distribute End Gang Life material through a Limited Licencing Agreement (LLA) between the City of Richmond and the Organized Crime Agency of British Columbia (OCABC), who has trademarked and copyrighted all End Gang Life-related material and intellectual property. There is no cost associated with entering into the LLA between the City of Richmond and OCABC. With the LLA in place, the City of Richmond will request OCABC's and the Combined Forces Special Enforcement Unit of British Columbia's (CFSEU-BC) support for the City of Richmond's strategy. Of note, the use of End Gang Life material is consistent with the findings of the Literature Review and the utilization of prosocial messaging, empowering youth, collaborating with community agencies, and providing education and training opportunities.

### TRAIN THE TRAINER

OCABC and CFSEU-BC will facilitate 'train the trainer' sessions with the hired BSCF Risk Interrupters, the City of Richmond's Youth Outreach Workers, Richmond RCMP, and others, such as Touchstone Family Association, to share End Gang Life, gang prevention, education, and youth empowerment messaging. OCABC and CFSEU-BC will provide ongoing support behind the scenes as necessary.

### END GANG LIFE SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY PRESENTATIONS

OCABC and CFSEU-BC will deliver, dependent on availability, up to four school and community presentations per year. The End Gang Life educational video modules, including the school-based videos, along with the *End Gang Life Myths and Realities - Facilitator's Guide* will be provided for Risk Interrupters, Youth Outreach Workers, Richmond RCMP, and identified partner agencies to utilize and deliver. CFSEU-BC has delivered over 200 End Gang Life presentations in communities and schools across British Columbia, Canada, and the United States to over 100,000 students, parents, law enforcement, and community partners. Using the materials provided by CFSEU-BC and the train the trainer model, age-appropriate presentations will be made to all elementary schools, high schools, and community events that wish to have a presentation focusing on End Gang Life and other prosocial, youth empowerment messages and content.

### END GANG LIFE MATERIAL

OCABC and CFSEU-BC will provide End Gang Life Public Service Announcement videos and posters, the *StreetLights* gang education comic book series, the *Myths and Realities of Gangs* educational video series, and *Understanding Youth in Gangs* booklets, which is also available in an Indigenous version and in multiple languages. Digital versions will be provided to the City of Richmond to cobrand, print, and distribute the products throughout the City of Richmond. A part of the cobranding will include contact information on the material that will direct youth to the City of Richmond's Risk Interrupters and Touchstone Family Association.

### MENTORSHIP AND SPONSORSHIP OF RICHMOND-FOCUSED END GANG LIFE CONTENT

The strategy leaders with the City of Richmond and partner stakeholders will create mentorship opportunities where OCABC and CFSEU-BC will partner and provide leadership and expertise to support youth to create customized Richmond specific gang prevention, intervention, awareness, and education content. The City of Richmond Media Lab will facilitate this element and youth will learn video production, photography, graphic design, video editing, and post-production skills. Identified youth and Media Lab facilitators will mentor and include other youth in peer-led creative development so that youth voices and ideas are included in new customized content.

## Strengthen Prevention and Intervention

The second pillar is designed to **Strengthen Prevention and Intervention** in the City of Richmond. The elements that comprise this pillar are implementing a Youth Empowerment Initiative, the creation of two youth hubs in designated Community Centres, hiring three Risk Interrupters, and expanding and enhancing Touchstone Family Association's StreetSmart Youth Leadership Program.

### THREE RISK INTERRUPTERS

The best community-wide gang and gun violence prevention programs typically utilize outreach workers and/or violence interrupters to intervene and prevent conflict with high-risk young individuals. The prevention and intervention activities within these roles generally include establishing and maintaining positive and supportive relationships with members from a target population, connecting clients with services, and engaging in follow-ups. These roles are highly regarded as crucial to a comprehensive gang model and provide an avenue for connecting youth to positive opportunities, supports, and resources in the community, including employment, housing, education, and recreational activities through referral networks. The programming they deliver meets the individual interests and needs of their at-risk clients, and focuses on character and leadership development, health and life skills, arts, and sports and fitness. The Risk Interrupter is responsible for promoting engagement of at-risk youth (12 to 24 years of age) and their families in the community, delivering programming, and increasing youth access to opportunities. This

position will identify and recruit high-risk youth clients for coordinated case management services. In Year II of BSCF, three Risk Interrupter positions will be filled within Touchstone Family Association to deliver programming across the community in support of the overall strategy.

### YOUTH EMPOWERMENT INITIATIVE

The Touchstone Family Services' Leadership Skills Group (LSG) aims to provide social and emotional learning to children in grades five through seven. Participating in various afterschool programs and activities, including a Circle, games and exercises, and different projects, the students in LSG are provided with opportunities to build positive relationships with others, find inspiration in learning, explore their creativity, and to have fun. Touchstone Family Association runs this program two days a week at participating elementary schools in the Richmond School District. The Youth Empowerment Initiative will expand on this existing framework by bringing together high achieving, prosocial high school students with at-risk elementary school students to assist these children with addressing problem behaviours, while also bolstering their positive attributes. In addition to modeling prosocial behaviours, and helping the at-risk youth navigate building positive relationships, the mentors will assist with homework and engage youth in various recreational activities.

### YOUTH MICRO HUBS

A key finding in the literature is that the location of a program can have a large effect on its overall success. Offering services in a youth's natural setting not only increases the probability that the skills learned through the programs and activities will be maintained, but it also ensures that program participants are removed from the dangers that exist in their community. Placed strategically in areas with higher populations of at-risk youth, the creation of two youth micro hubs will provide an accessible, safe, welcoming, and inclusive space. The micro hubs will be open to all youth but, at designated times, the micro hubs will provide structured anti-gang education and programming to youth referred by the Risk Interrupters, Youth Outreach Workers, Richmond RCMP, high school counselors, non-profit organizations, parents, and self-referrals. Programs will be offered to specific groups of youth during different time slots to ensure the educational materials and program activities are age appropriate, and addressing the specific risk factors that present for different groups of youth. All activities and programs offered at the micro hub will be supervised and delivered by the Risk Interrupters.

### STREETSMARTS YOUTH LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

StreetSmarts is an open access youth leadership and mentorship program that provides outreach, educational and recreational activities, and a supportive environment for youth aged 12-19. Based on the developmental asset approach, StreetSmarts provides individualized mentorship to referred clients or existing Touchstone Family Association clients who require extra support. Designed to meet the youth where they are at, the program is largely unstructured, and the activities take place

primarily out in the community. Currently, the program is operating at capacity, with 25 youth accepted into the program at any given time. BSCF will expand StreetSmarts and provide targeted mentorship, supports, and programming for a larger number of at-risk youth in the City of Richmond. Adding to StreetSmarts existing programs, specific anti-gang educational materials will be adopted from existing sources, and youth will be provided access to presentations and information sessions that focus specifically on health-related factors that put youth at increased risk for gang involvement. New trauma-informed, culturally appropriate activities and programs will also be implemented to target the risks and needs of at-risk youth and build socio-emotional skills to support positive pro-social development.

## Enhance Coordination, Capability, and Capacity

The third pillar is designed to **Enhance Coordination, Capability, and Capacity** in the City of Richmond. The elements that comprise this pillar are transforming the current Complex Needs Table into a Youth Situation Table, implementing the Workforce Readiness Initiative, and creating a Professional Development and Training fund for frontline workers.

### YOUTH SITUATION TABLE

Currently, the City of Richmond operates a Complex Needs Table. This Table will be transformed into a Youth Situation Table with an expanded membership of standing members to address Acute Elevated Risk in youth between the ages of 12 to 24 years old. Situation Tables are an increasingly popular means of addressing crime and co-occurring social problems, including guns and gangs. Situation Tables represent a holistic approach to individual and community well-being and safety and are premised on a model of social service collaboration that aims to identify vulnerable individuals and connect them in a timely fashion with appropriate resources and services.

### WORKFORCE READINESS INITIATIVE

A new Workforce Readiness Initiative will be established within Touchstone Family Association to provide access to vocational training and other job-related supports to at-risk youth (some gang-involved) for them to redirect their lives and become contributing members of the community. Touchstone Family Association's new Workforce Readiness Initiative will pursue workforce readiness and development outcomes for at-risk clients across the City of Richmond by creating education pathways for youth and on-the-job coaching opportunities to help at-risk youth build soft and technical skills in alignment with their personal interests and career aspirations.

### PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT/TRAINING FUND

There is a myriad of complex individual, familial, school, and neighbourhood risk factors that influence an individual's propensity for joining a gang. Further complicating matters, there are

additional risk factors that are unique to specific groups. To be able to accurately identify a youth's presenting risk factors, develop an appropriate intervention plan, and deliver appropriate programming, the Risk Interrupters, Youth Outreach Workers, the City of Richmond volunteers, the Richmond RCMP, school teachers, administrators, and counselors, and all frontline staff from agencies supporting the City of Richmond's BSCF initiative, such as Touchstone Family Association and the Foundry Richmond, must be well-trained on several key topics to ensure they have the requisite skillset to manage at-risk youth. Based on the type of risk factors associated with gang involvement, the frontline staff will receive, at minimum, training on equity, diversity, and inclusion, cultural sensitivity, trauma-informed approaches and best practices, risk assessment, violence and de-escalation, and prevention and intervention education and training.

## Performance Measurements and Evaluation

Throughout the timeframe of the BSCF funding, Potus Consulting Inc. and other consulting firms will offer ongoing support and advice to the City of Richmond to ensure that the BSCF strategy has been implemented as intended. This will include providing an orientation to the City of Richmond's BSCF Project Manager, participating in monthly meetings with the City of Richmond's BSCF Program Manager, supporting the City of Richmond with the development and delivery of a communications strategy, developing the evaluation framework, performance indicators, and evaluation instruments to assess the BSCF strategy, and conducting all evaluations related to the various components of the City of Richmond's BSCF strategy. The evaluations will not only assess the overall success of each component of the strategy and the overall outcomes of the strategy but will be used to make changes to the strategy throughout the life cycle of the BSCF.

## Introduction

The City of Richmond Building Safer Communities Fund (BSCF) Strategy is a three-year plan for the City of Richmond to implement the Federal BSCF to address gun and gang violence through prevention and intervention initiatives such as, but not limited to, mentorship, counseling, rehabilitation, skills development, and recreational opportunities.

The City of Richmond BSCF Strategy includes research and evidence-based initiatives to address guns and gangs in the City of Richmond. The term of the BSCF program is from April 1, 2022, to March 31, 2026. Programs and initiatives developed for the Richmond BSCF Strategy would be tailored for the City of Richmond's needs and be eligible for funding under the BSCF criteria.

The Strategy includes consultation and engagement with stakeholders, community partners, and non-profit organizations that will be key in forming the Richmond BSCF strategy. Potus Consulting Inc. conducted comprehensive consultations that included the City of Richmond, Public Safety Canada, Richmond RCMP, non-profit organizations, government agencies, such as Richmond School District, community-based groups, and other relevant community stakeholders.

## Project Methodology

The objectives of the project were achieved using a combination of several key interconnected research methodologies. The project used both qualitative and quantitative research methods to collect current and historical data to develop a comprehensive City of Richmond BSCF Strategy that supports the achievement of the BSCF objectives. To achieve this objective, the project team collected, reviewed, analyzed, and incorporated information and data from several sources. Moreover, Potus Consulting Inc. performed the following research activities:

- Project planning, project management set-up, and strategy framework development.
- Internal analysis and key services inventory.
- Literature review.
- Data collection, cleaning, and analysis.
- Instrument development for interviews.
- Environment Scan (external).
- Stakeholder consultations and key interviews; and
- Needs Assessment.

Additional information related to key aspects of the research methodology are outlined below.

### POLICE-BASED DATA COLLECTION ON GUNS AND GANGS IN THE CITY OF RICHMOND

With the assistance of the City of Richmond and Richmond RCMP, quantitative data on the nature and quantity of guns and gang violence and offences was collected and analyzed to provide an overview of the nature, volume, location, and trends related to guns and gang violence in the city.

More specifically, data was requested from 2020 to 2022. A variety of analyses were conducted with the data to create an overall picture of guns and gang violence in or connected to the City of Richmond. The analyses focused on the nature and type of guns and gang violence, the number of incidents by year, month, and day of the week, date and time of incident, atom location of incident, gender, age, and firearm data related to the incident.

In addition, hotspot maps for guns and gang violence were created for the entire jurisdiction policed by Richmond RCMP at the atom level. X:Y location data was requested from the Richmond RCMP; however, due to privacy concerns, data was only provided at the level of police atom. Using the data from 2020 to 2022, these hotspot maps were created by nature of incident. More specifically, general occurrence data for violent offenders, drug offences, and money laundering were used as proxies for gang and gun activity. The purpose of these analyses is to provide the City of Richmond with an overview of the geographic distribution of guns and gang violence that can be used to inform the nature and location of programs and services.

## AN INTERNAL ANALYSIS AND KEY SERVICES INVENTORY

Potus Consulting Inc. collected, reviewed, and analyzed information and data from community services and programs designed for or affiliated with the prevention or reduction of guns and gang violence or to address at-risk youth in the City of Richmond. This included police-based, government-based, and community-based programs and services. While this did not include a comprehensive evaluation of each program or service that operates in the City of Richmond, in this report, an annotated summary of services and programs currently operating in the City of Richmond, their location, and their mandate is provided. This inventory was used to better understand the types of services and programs in the City of Richmond, their interconnectedness, and gaps that may exist in services and programs. Of note, the City of Richmond conducted their own internal scan and determined that there were no existing community services or social development programs designed specifically to address guns and gangs in the City of Richmond. However, the Richmond RCMP has several police-based programs, such as the Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE) Program, Youth Intervention Program, and the Yankee 30 Car Program, that aims to reduce and prevent guns and gang violence.

## LITERATURE REVIEW AND EXTERNAL SCAN

A literature review was undertaken to identify promising and best practices in the prevention, intervention, and reduction of guns and gangs. This included police-based, community-based, for profit and non-profit services and programs that have demonstrated success in reducing and preventing guns and gang violence. For the most part, the literature review and external scan was limited to Western countries, such as Canada, the United States, Western Europe, Australia, and New Zealand. The literature review and external scan was used to determine the empirical or evidence-base for community-based services and programs currently operating in the City of

Richmond, as well as programs and services that could be implemented in the City of Richmond to reduce and prevent guns and gang violence.

### STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATIONS AND KEY INTERVIEWS

Potus Consulting Inc. conducted formal interviews and had many conversations with key personnel at the City of Richmond, Richmond RCMP, and community-based programs working to prevent and reduce guns and gang violence in the City of Richmond. In addition, interviews were conducted with subject matter experts and program administrators from outside British Columbia. In total 33 interviews and conversations with 52 individuals were conducted with a wide range of municipal government, community, and police stakeholders.

## Demographic Information for the City of Richmond

The 2021 Canadian census provided a detailed enumeration of the Canadian population with a reference date of May 11, 2021. At the time of that census, the City of Richmond had a population of 209,937 with 100,290 people (47.8 per cent) identifying as male and 109,650 people (52.2 per cent) as female (Statistics Canada, 2022a). There was a population increase of 5.9% in the City of Richmond since the 2016 census count. In terms of age distribution, 11% of Richmond's population was between the ages of 15-24 years old, while 18% were between the ages of 15-29 years old. Approximately 30,000 people (14.0 per cent) in the City of Richmond were under the age of 14 years old.

Other 2021 Canadian census findings of relevance suggested that the most common ethnicity in the City of Richmond was Chinese, which comprised 47.5% of the population or 99,780 people. This was followed by those who identified their ethnic or cultural origin as Filipino (7.6 per cent) or English (5.8 per cent) (Statistics Canada, 2022a). People who self-identified as Indigenous accounted for approximately 1% of the total population of the City of Richmond. Of note, using the definition of a visible minority for federal employment equity purposes as being "persons, other than Aboriginal persons, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour", 80.3% of the population of the City of Richmond in 2021 was a visible minority, which was the highest proportion of any municipality in British Columbia. Of those defined as a visible minority, slightly more than three-quarters (67.5 per cent) were Chinese and 9.2% were South Asian (Statistics Canada, 2022a). Related to this, nearly one-third (31.3 per cent) of City of Richmond residents identified English as their mother tongue, followed by Cantonese (21.5 per cent) and Mandarin (21.1 per cent), while the most common languages spoken at home were English (46.1 per cent), Mandarin (17.7 per cent), and Cantonese (17.5 per cent) (Statistics Canada, 2022a). Finally, 60.3% of residents of the City of Richmond were immigrants, as of May 2021, while 35.4% of residents were born in Canada. In terms of the City of Richmond's immigrant population, 62% of immigrants were 25 years old or older at the time of their immigration and 31% were between five and 24 years old at the time of immigration. The three most common countries of birth for recent immigrants were China (52 per cent), Philippines (12 per cent), and India (7 per cent). Of the 17

municipalities in Metro Vancouver, the City of Richmond welcomed the fourth largest number of immigrants between 2016 and 2021 (Statistics Canada, 2022a).

According to the 2021 census, in terms of level of education, of those 15 years old or older, only 11.9% of City of Richmond residents did not hold a certificate, diploma, or degree, while 28.7% had a high-school diploma or its equivalent (Statistics Canada, 2021). A very small proportion of the population (3.9 per cent) had an apprenticeship or trades certificate or diploma, and an additional 13.8% had a college or other non-university certificate or diploma. In total, 41.6% of residents had either a university certificate or diploma (4.8 per cent) or a bachelor's degree or higher (36.8 per cent) (Statistics Canada, 2022a).

In terms of family structure, according to the 2021 census, approximately three-quarters (76.0 per cent) of Richmond households included married couples with an additional 7.3% having common-law couples (Statistics Canada, 2022a). Only 16.7% of households were lone-parent families of which 82.4% were headed by a woman. The most common family size was two person families (48.4 per cent) followed by three person families (26.2 per cent). Only 5.5% of families were comprised of five or more persons (Statistics Canada, 2022a).

According to the 2021 Census, 53.6% of the population of the City of Richmond aged 15 or older was in the labour market (Statistics Canada, 2022a). The most common occupations by residents of the City of Richmond were in sales and service occupations (29.3 per cent), trades, transport, and equipment operators and related occupations (12.4 per cent), and occupations in education, law, and social, community, or government services (9.8 per cent). The gross median income in 2020 was $34,000.00. The proportion of those 15 years old and older that earned less than $10,000.00 in 2020 was 14.0%, the proportion of those who earned between $10,000.00 and $49,999.00 was 53%, the proportion of those who earned between $50,000.00 and $99,999.00 was 24.4%, and the proportion that earned $100,000.00 or more was 8.4% (Statistics Canada, 2022a). The average total family income in 2020 was $116,700.00 and the median total family income in 2020 was $96.000.00, which was lower than the cities of Burnaby, New Westminster, Surrey, Vancouver, and Delta (Statistics Canada, 2022a). In terms of housing, for the City of Richmond, the 2021 census identified 81,080 occupied private dwellings. Most commonly, dwellings were apartment units (42.0 per cent) followed by a single-detached house (30.1 per cent). In addition, nearly three-quarters (71.3 per cent) of dwellings were privately owned and the remainder (28.7 per cent) were rentals (Statistics Canada, 2022a). Given this, according to the 2021 census, the proportion of home ownership in the City of Richmond was 9.2% higher than the regional average (Statistics Canada, 2022a).

## The Gang and Organized Crime Landscape in the City of Richmond

British Columbia has always had a unique and changing gang landscape. In the 1980s, law enforcement listed just a few gangs that controlled the criminal markets in British Columbia. Today, there are hundreds of unique crime groups vying for a share of the province's illicit markets. Gangs based strictly on race/ethnicity are no longer the norm (McConnell, 2015). Many of these gangs are

now poly-market in nature in that they have a significant presence in more than one criminal space, such as drugs and illegal gaming (Larsen, 2022).

Current gang dynamics, such as the creation of new alliances with previously unaffiliated crime groups and the general increased mobility across British Columbia, Canada, and internationally continue to add complexity to the overall threat picture (Bolan, 2017b). For example, crime groups have begun to bring in outside hitmen from other provinces to perpetrate gun violence locally (Bolan, 2021). Gangs based in British Columbia operate throughout the province and beyond. Although most of the criminal groups identified in British Columbia exist within the Lower Mainland, there is a substantial presence of criminal groups that operate in Northern British Columbia, the Okanagan Valley, and on Vancouver Island, most of which are heavily influenced and/or controlled by those gangs operating in the Lower Mainland (Cohen, McCormick et al., 2021; Bolan, 2019; Johnston, 2014). Over the years, many gangs from the Lower Mainland have transitioned into new cities, resulting in conflict between the pre-existing criminals occupying the drug market in those areas and the newcomers (Pearce, 2009). In addition, there are other groups that operate in more than one geographic region of British Columbia as well as nationally. Interestingly, many gang conflicts at the mid and street level[1] are directed by higher level organized crime groups or members that, at times, have been located outside of Canada (Bolan, 2017a).

The most common link between gang-related gun violence and other types of illicit activities is the drug trade. Criminal groups at all levels of sophistication use violence to further their drug trafficking activities. Typically, lower-level groups, such as street gangs, engage directly in public displays of aggression and gun violence to protect "dial-a-dope" drug trafficking territories (Cohen, McCormick et al., 2021). Dial-a-dope lines operate similar to a pizza delivery service (Osterberg, 2020). Users will call a designated drug number and organize a meeting at a specific location. The dealer then sends runners out to deliver the product. New dealers are often forced into debt with the suppliers, resulting in a cycle of debt and threats of violence that keep these typically young dealers in this dangerous lifestyle (Cohen, McCormick et al., 2021).

Gangs and organized crime continue to be a concern for local authorities and the public. It is widely accepted that the Lower Mainland, including the City of Richmond, has residents who are connected to the upper echelon of organized crime nationally and globally (Cooper et al., 2018). Moreover, transnational criminal organizations, such as the Hells Angels, Mexican Cartels, and Big Circle Boys, have connectivity to and operate in British Columbia. Their criminal activities afford them multiple revenue streams and the ability to accumulate a significant amount of capital. While measures of their illicit financial flows are difficult to determine with certainty, one estimate suggests that it is in the billions (Meissner, 2019). The more sophisticated crime networks possess a diverse criminal

[1] Criminal organizations can be best described using a pyramid structure. The top tier is considered organized crime. These groups are highly sophisticated and are modeled like a business; examples would include the Italian Mafia, Japanese Yakuza, and Chinese Triads. The middle tier is made up of groups that are more structured than street gangs, but often take direction from organized crime groups. Street gangs are generally confined to specific areas and are less sophisticated than mid-level groups (CFSEU-BC, 2023).

portfolio that allow these syndicates to regularly repopulate their criminal cells and establish new ones, even while under pressure from law enforcement. Prevalent in the Lower Mainland, crime groups or gangs, such as the United Nations Gang and Brothers Keepers, work with higher-level organized crime groups to enhance their capabilities, expand their criminal supply chains, and grow their general influence. Many gang members also regularly change alliances, which increases the risks of conflicts and volatility (Bolan, 2018).

The City of Richmond is largely a study in contrasts. On one hand, there is the presence of loosely connected, unsophisticated, lower-level groups of at-risk youth and youth offenders. These individuals are involved with weapon carrying, such as knives, bear spray, and airsoft guns, and they engage in anti-social behaviour, such as being out late at night, graffiti, damaging school property, missing school, aggression, and substance misuse. Many of these activities have been identified as pathways to gang activities, such as dial-a-doping, group violence against persons, drug rips, and home invasions (Seymour, 2022; Totten & Totten, 2012). On the other hand, Richmond is also home to high-level organized crime involved in the importation and manufacturing of illicit substances, firearm offences, human trafficking, coordinated virtual kidnapping scams[2], hostile takeovers of cryptocurrency wallets, and economic crimes, such as money laundering (Commission of Inquiry into Money Laundering in British Columbia, 2022).

As an example, testimony provided during the Commission of Inquiry into Money Laundering in British Columbia (2022) alleged that Richmond-based Asian Organized Crime groups operated illegal gaming houses to launder money from drug trafficking and loan sharking activities. The Inquiry team heard that illegal gaming, which may appear to be an insignificant part of a criminal enterprise, is a foundation through which many other illicit activities are supported, such as drug trafficking. This activity and related crimes are a significant source of revenue and provide crime groups with working capital to invest in legitimate ventures. Illegal gaming provides an attractive and lucrative source of income for these groups to advance their criminal exploits, including violent offences. There is a long history of gangs and organized crime in Richmond that is often overshadowed by criminal activity seen in nearby large cities, such as Surrey and Vancouver. Albeit there have been fewer events in Richmond comparatively, in terms of gang-related shootings, for example; however, a 20-year media scan (~2000-2022) did find no less than 220 news articles related to gang violence, gang recruitment, drug trafficking, money laundering, and other gang activities in the City of Richmond authored by media outlets, such as The Province, Vancouver Sun, Richmond News, and Richmond Review.

Unmistakably, organized criminals in the City of Richmond exhibit highly sophisticated criminality. The city is positioned at a critical junction between the Pacific Rim and numerous provincial,

[2] The scam typically begins with a phone call saying a family member is being held captive. As an example, the caller may allege that one's daughter has been kidnapped and there is the sound of a female screaming in the background. Callers will typically provide the victim with specific instructions to ensure a safe return of the family member. The victim may be ordered to stay on the line until the money is wired and received by the caller.

national, and international supply chain corridors. Richmond is also located near major ports and highways, and has an international airport, making it a hub for drug trafficking and other organized crime activities that path the way for young people entering this lifestyle and will require integrated strategies and coordinated programming to counter.

## GANG RECRUITMENT

Group-based youth delinquency and low-level street gang involvement can be difficult to disentangle or tease apart as this behaviour often appears along a continuum. Street gangs, organized criminals, insurgents, and extremist groups may differ in their aims, structures, size, and local constraints (Decker & Pyrooz 2010), but they share the same organizational problem: the need to find trustworthy, loyal, and competent members willing to engage in illegality and violence. While there are many ways in which gangs attempt to recruit new members, gangs generally recruit and socialize youth who live in their local neighbourhood and who attend neighbourhood schools (Taylor, 2009; Juhasz, 2019; Osterberg, 2020). They take advantage of the identity crisis many adolescents face when growing up and transitioning from being a child to becoming a youth or adolescent. Gangs present themselves in communities and neighbourhoods as a "group of choice" at a time when a youth's peer groups have an increasing influence over their decisions and activities. It has been well established in criminological research and theory that, for the most part, most youth want to 'fit in' or feel as though they belong (Dunbar, 2017). Gangs present themselves to vulnerable youth as an alternate source of companionship, acceptance, and security. As new recruits gain acceptance and status and are increasingly allowed to play a role in the delinquent activities of the gang, they participate in gang socialization, a process of on-the-job training and grooming. Once these attributes are internalized by a new member, the result is an ongoing development of a personal and social identity consistent with the gang (Dunbar, 2017). In identifying those youth who may be at risk for gang recruitment and by understanding how gangs socialize their members, prevention and intervention strategies can be developed and implemented to reduce opportunities for gangs to recruit young people and for young people to be better able to resist the recruitment strategies of gangs.

The following categories of gang recruitment are common in practice and in research (Carlie, 2002; Sanchez-Jankowski, 1991; Descormiers et al., 2023), but the sophistication of the gang will dictate how sophisticated the recruitment techniques will be.

- *Seduction* – The gang creates glorified myths about their group that are attractive to young recruits, and often these myths become the foundation for young aspirations. The most powerful of these trappings are the promise of money and glamour.

- *Subterfuge* - Recruiters use lies and schemes to convince youth that it really is not a gang, but rather a group of close friends who must protect themselves against a rival. Another tactic taken by recruiters is to identify other kids who may not have a good family life and convince them that they are not loved and that their group is there for them.

- *Obligation* - Often gang members will do a favour or make a loan of something to a prospective recruit and demand they give loyalty as payback. Often, these favours come in the form of protection.

- *Coercion* - This technique is used often during times of gang conflict. Coercion is usually accomplished by intimidation and threats, but physical beatings can be used as well. Coercion can mean that a family member is threatened as well.

- *Self-Recruitment* - For many reasons, youth will contact gang members and ask to join the gang. The reasons are many and not always because the individual sees the gang as glamorous. For example, the reason may be one of necessity, money, protection, or excitement.

Layton (2023) argued that there are five main attributes affiliated to the indoctrination of young people into groups, such as cults or gangs. These five attributes are: 1) a breakdown of a person's sense of self; 2) thought reform; 3) deception; 4) isolation; and 5) induced dependency. Examples of these attributes include brainwashing to make someone adopt radically different beliefs by using systematic and often forcible pressure, using manipulative techniques to get the person to do something they normally would not do, tricking recruits into joining with the promise of power, money, and acceptance, getting youth to commit themselves to a lifestyle they do not fully understand, requiring new recruits to cut people who are not part of the gang out of their lives, which makes them much more dependent on the gang, and the gang demanding absolute devotion, loyalty, and submission to the group.

More recently, with only an internet connection, gangs can extend their reach to a much broader audience through actions, such as "cyberbanging", which is an umbrella term used for gang activity on social media, "drill music", which is the use of music to taunt the opposition and fuel violent animosity, and through online forums (Patton et al., 2013). Emerging areas such as these can be completely anonymous and used to enlist young people into criminal organizations where they push a false narrative of money, power, and glamour.

## ILLEGAL FIREARMS

Gun crime has risen to the forefront of public consciousness in Canada. Statistics Canada (2022b) shows that gang-related homicides continued to account for nearly one-quarter (23 per cent) of all homicides in Canada. Of note, the 2021 gang-related rate was the highest recorded in Canada since comparable data were first collected in 2005 (Statistics Canada, 2022b). In addition, according to Statistics Canada (2022c), firearm-related violent crime increased between 2009 to 2014, and then again between 2015 and 2020, in most jurisdictions in Canada. No specific geographic region disproportionately explained this increase. Where a motive was identified, almost half (46 per cent) of firearm-related homicides in urban areas between 2015 and 2020 were motivated by a settling of accounts or debts, or related to illegal drug trade activities (Statistics Canada, 2022c). Most (63 per cent) gang firearm-related homicides in 2020 were committed with a handgun, and, in 2021,

over 80% of organized crime or gang-related homicides were committed using a firearm (Statistics Canada, 2022c).

Over the years, much of the debate has focused on gun regulation and keeping deadly weapons out of the hands of dangerous individuals. Unfortunately, far less attention has been dedicated to the effect that gun violence has on victims and society. In 2020, criminal incidents where a firearm was present involved 8,344 victims in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2022c). Organized or semi-organized criminal groups regularly use firearms as "tools of the trade" against rival groups, which may be symptomatic of a developing culture of gun violence that is glamorized by various media and normalized within film, video games, music, and social media. Illegal firearms undermine public safety and personal security. Combating illegal firearms is an extremely important element in the fight against gangs and organized crime. Guns in the hands of violent offenders threatens not only the safety of other offenders, but also first responders and the public. Shootings often take place in public spaces, risking the lives and safety of innocent bystanders and eroding public feelings of safety and trust (Gahunia, 2017).

Illegal firearms are not only an instrument of crime, but also a lucrative commodity as they contribute to both the violence and the profitability of criminal lifestyles. New areas of threat also continue to surface, such as 3D printed firearms, airsoft gun conversions to fire live ammunition, "frankenguns" or firearms made with serialized parts from different commercial guns, as well as the phenomenon known as firearm "straw purchasing" or someone who uses their gun licence to buy a firearm for someone without a licence (Cohen & Burk, 2017). An additional area that is often neglected when examining firearm offenders is the effect that their lifestyle has on their children. Moreover, in British Columbia, children with a parent who is in conflict with the law are at risk of being placed in foster care or experiencing other forms of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) as a result of the exposure to violence or other traumas during important developmental stages (McCormick et al., 2014). Once children are in care, they are more likely to become involved with the Criminal Justice System (36 per cent of children in care) than they are to graduate high school (25 per cent of children in care). Further, children of federally incarcerated fathers are between two and four times more likely to be in trouble with the law, possibly carrying on the criminality into the next generation (McCormick et al., 2014).

## GUN VIOLENCE

The Lower Mainland of British Columbia has seen a lot of gun violence, particularly for the Canadian context (Combined Forces Special Enforcement Unit – British Columbia, 2015). Gun violence as it relates to gangs can be used as an offensive or defensive tactic, it can be premeditated or spontaneous, and it can be publicly undertaken or carried out more discreetly. More sophisticated groups at times hire subordinate criminal groups or individuals to undertake violent acts on their behalf to insulate the high-level groups. This type of violence dates back many years and has resulted in several hundred victims of gang violence across British Columbia over the decades (Combined Forces Special Enforcement Unit – British Columbia, 2015). British Columbia gangs continue to demonstrate a high level of violence and have also been able to frequently adapt

to the efforts of law enforcement. They employ advanced information sharing practices, such as encrypted communications to support their violent activities, as well as counter surveillance techniques to cloak their actions from interdiction (Bolan, 2017b).

Gun violence creates a myriad of negative and costly consequences to society. While somewhat dated, based on a pioneering Justice Canada study (2008), the total cost of firearm-related crime on the Criminal Justice System in Canada was estimated to be $3,021,450,549. Early Canadian research (Miller, 1995) also estimated that the total cost of all gunshot wounds for one year was $6.6 billion. These costs include medical care, mental health care, public services (police investigation), productivity losses, funeral expenses, pain and suffering, and lost quality of life. It is, therefore, important to keep in mind that criminal justice system costs are not the only expenditures; there is a tremendous economic burden that the healthcare system also faces responding to incidents of gun violence, as well as other broader societal impacts.

Snider et al. (2009) found that, in 2001/02, 606 hospital admissions in Canada were a result of gunshot wounds. These financial expenditures by the health care system add up quickly, as American studies have shown that the average time in the hospital after a gunshot wound is 13 days—though it can range from 1 to 40 days—and each of these days costs, on average, $7,000.00 USD (Jaganjac et al., 2007). Data submitted to the Canadian Institute for Health Information on all firearm-injured patients for 1999–2003 indicated that men accounted for 94% of the 784 injured by a firearm (Finley et al., 2008). In all patients, the percentage of targeted shooting injuries was 60.3%, as opposed to accidental discharge or suicide. Moreover, the in-hospital fatality rate was 39.8%, with 83% of fatalities occurring on the first day. The number of firearms deaths largely in the first day highlights the importance of preventative strategies and the need for rapid transport of patients to trauma centres for urgent care. The predominance of men (15–34 years old) injured intentionally with handguns in Canada offers a focus for firearms programs geared to high-risk young individuals (Finley et al., 2008).

Compared to non-gang youth, young gang members and those affiliated to them typically also experience reduced life expectancy and elevated levels of violent victimization (Decker & Pyrooz, 2010). Of note, gunshot wounds are not the only harm inflicted. In addition to the physical trauma that many of these injuries would cause, mental suffering can also occur. This is because of the anxiety and fear that so often accompanies being a victim or witness of a violent act, which may be more difficult to treat than the physical ailment itself. Pain and suffering, decreased quality of life, and psychological distress can often follow victims and witnesses (Belleville et al., 2012).

In terms of investigating these types of crimes, Armstrong and colleagues (2013) reported that Lower Mainland investigators are able to identify a chargeable suspect on the same day a gang homicide occurred just 12% of the time compared to 55% of the time in non-gang-related cases. This finding demonstrates that, on average, gang-related homicide investigations (predominantly shootings) take up more time and have a greater overall strain on police investigative time and resources (See Cohen et al., 2021 for a discussion of the effects of homicide investigations on police resources). The historical data indicate that gang-related homicides between 2003-2013 occurred in many British Columbian cities. Based on their media analysis, Jingfors et al. (2015) reported that,

over this ten-year period, Richmond had the sixth largest number of gang-related homicides in the province. More specifically, there were 70 gang-related homicides in Vancouver, 61 in Surrey, 21 in Abbotsford, 14 in Burnaby, 10 in Prince George, and eight in Richmond.

In more recent years, gang shootings in the City of Richmond have taken place in public areas, such as Vancouver International Airport (2021), near General Currie Elementary School (2020), Manzo Restaurant (2020), a Cactus Club parking lot (2019), Lansdowne Centre (2018), and numerous residential areas. There have also been several high-profile shootings that have taken place in Dover Park (2015 and 2007) as well as the historic mistaken identity murder of Kirk Holiefield in 2007.[3] As per media reporting, between 2020-2022, there were over a dozen victims of gang and/or drug-related violence in Richmond, which includes homicides, attempted homicides with injury, and shot at with no injury.

## RISK FACTORS FOR GANG INVOLVEMENT

There are several consistent individual-level risk factors associated with vulnerability to gang recruitment. These include having a need for friendship, recognition, and belonging that is not been met through positive avenues, a desire for prestige or power that is not attainable through prosocial activities or associations, feelings of being disrespected and having a lack of status, the desire for excitement, the need for physical protection or security, peer pressure, the belief that joining a gang is a way to make a lot of money fast, the need to pay off debts, a belief in the glorification of the gang lifestyle, and family tradition (Spergel, 1990).

Some of the more common structural risk factors for gang recruitment are living in a neighborhood where gangs already exist, and where drugs and firearms are readily available, lacking opportunities for involvement in positive activities and hobbies, or having too much unsupervised leisure time. Familial and educational risk factors for gang recruitment include experiencing problems at home, poor family management, problematic parent-child relationships, and/or poor parental supervision, associating with aggressive peers and peers who engage in delinquency, having prior and/or early involvement in delinquency, especially violence and alcohol or drug use, low attachment to school and poor educational or employment potential (Hill et al., 1999).

Researchers and practitioners also know that certain things can push an individual away from a gang lifestyle, such as a gang losing its overall appeal, exhaustion from persistent pressure or threats from law enforcement or other gangs, a desire for a conventional lifestyle, social sanctions that result from belonging to a gang, maturation, mitigated career opportunities, family responsibilities, and a traumatic experience (Bolden & Iliff, 2022).

[3] In this case, Mr. Holiefield was driving home when he was shot to death at the intersection of Shell Road and Westminster Highway. The young father was not known to police, but it was later learned Holiefield had been killed by mistake because his truck was identical to that of gangster David Tajali, who lived near the murder scene. Mr. Tajali was later murdered in Calgary, Alberta.

To this end, there are several risk factors that have been consistently identified as contributing to gang recruitment and resilience factors that reduce the susceptibility of youth to joining gangs. Some of the more commonly identified risk factors include: (1) a high concentration of poverty, as communities with high concentrations of poverty and unemployment tend to experience higher rates of violent crime that increases the risk of violence for residents; (2) exposure to traumatic and violent events or ACEs that result in trauma can have significant long-term developmental effects and increase the likelihood of perpetrating or being victimized by violence in the future; (3) an unsafe community environment that has high crime rates, including gang activity or drug trade, easy access to firearms, and strained relationships with law enforcement increases the risk of violence; (4) housing instability, insecurity, and lack of affordability increases the risk of violence because reliable shelter is necessary to maintain a safe and healthy space to live and thrive; (5) negative peer relations, including being bullied, being socially isolated, or having a social circle that engages in delinquent, illegal, or violent activities can heighten one's risk for violence and increase the risk of seeking out negative peer networks, such as gangs; (6) disengagement from school and lack of an education can limit access to jobs, income, and other resources that may otherwise prevent involvement in quality-of-life crimes and violence; and (7) low levels of familial involvement or support, neglect, or abuse, and other home environment factors, such as the presence of domestic violence, a family member's involvement in the legal system, or having parents with low education levels can also increase the risk level for violence (City of Chicago, 2020).

A 2018 meta-analysis of available literature on gang members' mental health and emotions suggested that programming for those out of school or after school is also important (Osman & Wood, 2018). This meta-analysis revealed that gang members may be at increased risk of suffering from mental illnesses and negative emotions, such as anger. The search strategy examined 306 peer papers between 1980 and 2017. Findings showed that gang involvement relates to a range of problems, such as antisocial personality disorder (ASPD), anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and paranoia compared to violent and non-violent men (Osman & Wood, 2018). Moreover, a study from the University of South Australia suggests that exercise should be a mainstay approach for managing depression as research shows that physical activity is 1.5 times more effective than counseling or the leading medications (Singh et al., 2023). Published in the British Journal of Sports Medicine, this review is the most comprehensive to date encompassing 97 reviews, 1,039 trials, and 128,119 participants. The findings from this study demonstrates that physical activity is extremely beneficial for improving symptoms of depression, anxiety, and psychological distress in a wide range of populations.

As a result, several factors have been established in the literature as increasing individual and community levels of resilience while addressing the risk factors associated with gang recruitment and engagement. These resilience factors include: (1) economic stability related to the availability of quality employment opportunities, access to capital, and availability of living wage jobs and skill building trainings that serve to stabilize the economic structure of the community while promoting healthy living and decreasing rates of poverty; (2) adequate and timely access to comprehensive support services, including higher proportions of trauma-informed support services in

communities at highest risk of violence to improve life outcomes, including decreased exposure to violence and to provide pathways to healing and opportunity; (3) meaningful connections, involvement, and cohesion in one's community that contribute to increasing overall safety; (4) access to safe, stable, and affordable housing to promote strong resiliency in individuals and communities, as improving housing standards and options can decrease high rates of violence exacerbated by poor living conditions; (5) ensuring that young people are involved with and connected to strong pro-social peer groups, organizations, and activities; (6) access to quality education and needed resources along with strong connectedness and relationship building between students, teachers, and counsellors to equip students with the necessary skills and abilities to lead positive and healthy lives; and (7) supporting encouraging and caring familial structures that strengthen resiliency and positive growth, including neighbours, teachers, and other trusted and supportive community members (City of Chicago, 2020).

## Guns and Gangs Data from the Richmond RCMP

In consultation with the Richmond RCMP about PRIME data related to gang and organized crime activity, it was decided that their Criminal Intelligence Analyst Supervisor and one of their Crime Analysts would create and provide three datasets to the research team. The three datasets were a General Occurrence dataset, a Drug Offence dataset, and a Money Laundering dataset. The datasets were for the years 2020, 2021, and 2022. Each of the datasets will be described in greater detail below; however, it is important to note that only certain offence types were analyzed as it was decided that only particular offences served as a general proxy for organized crime and gang activity. This determination was reached in discussions with Richmond RCMP, representatives of the CFSEU-BC, and the authors of this report.

### GENERAL OCCURRENCE DATASET

After careful consideration of the available data, it was decided that 21 specific offences would be analyzed as a general proxy for gang or organized crime activity. These offences were: Arson – disregard for human life; Assault Police Officer with a weapon; Common Assault of a Police Officer; Aggravated Assault; Assault with a Weapon; Criminal Harassment; Criminal Negligence Causing Death; Extortion; Discharging a Firearm with Intent; Pointing a Firearm; Using a Firearm or an Imitation Firearm; Forcible Confinement; Intimidation with Violence or Threat of Violence Kidnapping; Attempted Murder; Conspiring to Commit Murder; Robbery with a Firearm; Robbery with Another Weapon; Sexual Exploitation; Trafficking in Persons; and Uttering Threats Against Person. In addition, the dataset did not include offences investigated by the Integrated Homicide Investigation Unit (IHIT), therefore, the dataset did not include all homicides in the City of Richmond. As well, the dataset did not include privatized files, which will reduce and exclude a number of criminal incidents that occurred in the City of Richmond, such as a gang-related homicides. Of note, based on media reporting, it is estimated that the total number of gang-related homicides, attempted homicides, and shots fired with no injury in the City of Richmond between 2020-2022 was less than 20 events.

The classification of offence types represents the most serious offence within a single event, as per the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) rules used by all police agencies. For example, if a single event included a homicide, an arson, and a theft under $5,000, the primary offence reported in the dataset would be the homicide, which is classified as the most serious offence type.[4]

## Literature Review on Guns and Gangs Prevention, Intervention, and Suppression Programs and Strategies

### UNDERSTANDING GANGS

There is considerable debate about the definition of a gang. As such, there are various definitions for what constitutes a gang. At a basic level, definitions differentiate between gangs in terms of their purpose and membership. For instance, there are organized criminal enterprises that have a clear leadership structure suspected of engaging in nefarious criminal activities outside of their local communities, such as motorcycle gangs (Howell, 2000; Osterberg, 2020). There are also prison gangs, racial supremacists, and other forms of hate groups. Some gangs restrict their membership to adults, while others involve youth (Howell, 2000). While organized criminal enterprises are frequently identified as a separate category, youth gangs are often referred to synonymously with street gangs to include a neighborhood or street-based youth group that meets specific gang criteria (Howell, 2000). As such, a youth gang is often a "self-formed association of peers, united by mutual interests, with identifiable leadership and internal organization, who act collectively or as individuals to achieve specific purposes, including the conduct of illegal activity and control of a particular territory, facility, or enterprise" (Miller, 1992, p.21). Typically, to be classified as a gang, specific criteria must be met, including being a group comprised of at least three members, having a shared and common identity amongst group members (e.g., use of symbols, colors, and/or geographic location), having some permanence and stability (i.e., exist for at least one year), and being involved, as one of its primary activities, in the facilitation or commission of serious criminal offences that would likely result in a direct or indirect material benefit to the group or any of the persons constituting the group (Department of Justice Canada, n.d.; End Gang Life, 2022; Esbensen, 2000; Howell, 2010; Juhasz, 2019; Public Safety Canada, 2022a). Focusing more on the nature of the activities, the RCMP and government of British Columbia define gangs as organized groups who participate in criminal acts, often using violence and/or intimidation, for purposes such as gaining power, recognition, profit, and/or control (Government of British Columbia, n.d.; Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 2014).

In addition to developing an understanding about the term gang, it is also important to acknowledge the truths versus myths about gangs to ensure prevention, intervention, and enforcement approaches are targeting the correct individuals, groups, and behaviours. Gangs differ in terms of their level of organization, with only certain types of gangs believed to be highly

[4] Most serious offence is commonly defined as the offence that carries the longest possible sentence.

organized (Howell, 2000). The activities of gangs also differ depending on the structure of the gang. Motivated by financial gain, criminal organizations tend to operate like a business in that they can be comprised of a small group of adults and exhibit a formal structure with stable and sophisticated operations (Government of Canada, 2022). Violent gangs with ideological goals, such as Skinheads, have highly developed hierarchies and engage in serious crimes, including group violence, to achieve their political or religious goals (Government of Canada, 2022). Street gangs, which are usually comprised of adolescents and young adults, usually have less structure, and operate more for economic reasons (Government of Canada, 2022). In British Columbia, for instance, street level gangs are typically loosely organized, have little structure, and are involved in various crimes, including robberies, property crimes, and low-level drug trafficking (Osterberg, 2020). New-age or new generation gangs appear to be less structured with more fluid relationships and leadership (Dandurand et al., 2019; Descormiers 2013). Most adolescents do not remain in gangs long-term, with most of the youth belonging to a gang for one year or less (Descormiers, 2013; Hill et al., 2001). Gangs are more transient and less territory-based than previously believed, make less use of symbols (e.g., graffiti, clothing, etc.), and are typically motivated by profit and power (Howell, 2000; Juhasz, 2019). While there are often global truths, it is also important to acknowledge that gangs will vary based on where they operate (i.e., geographic location). For instance, in British Columbia, it has been noted that the gang landscape is highly varied, with gangs possessing characteristics that are unique compared to other regions experiencing gang violence (Osterberg, 2020). Research suggests that gangs in British Columbia are more organized, are profit driven, and are heavily involved in the drug trade (Dandurand et al., 2019; Osterberg, 2020). Gang composition is also unique, as individuals drawn to gangs do not appear to exhibit traditional risk factors. Gang involved youth in British Columbia are academically successful, and often come from in-tact, middle-class families (Dandurand et al., 2019; Osterberg, 2020). The number of gangs have also increased. Compared to the 1980s, where there were a handful of gangs controlling criminal drug markets in British Columbia, by the later 2010s, there were believed to be more than 188 different criminal groups forming enterprise-driven alliances in an effort to dominate the illicit market (Combined Forces Special Enforcement Unit – British Columbia, 2015; Osterberg, 2020).

In terms of the profile of gangs, previous American research suggests that gang members are typically male, recruited into a gang from an early age, live in inner cities, and are members of racial or ethnic minorities (Esbensen, 2000; Magana, 2016). However, the profile of any one gang varies based on geographic location. As of 2002, it was estimated that, of the almost 8,000 youth recognized as being gang members in Canada, the majority were from an African Canadian background (25 per cent), followed by First Nations (22 per cent), with Caucasians being the third most prevalent ethnic group (15 per cent) (Ngo, 2010). However, it is important to keep in mind that the ethnic composition of gangs varies by area. For example, Alberta reported having most of their gang members identifying as First Nations (58 per cent) and Hispanic/Latino (33 per cent) (Ngo, 2010). British Columbia has the highest proportion of Asian gang members (37 per cent), while Manitoba and Saskatchewan have the highest representation of First Nations gang members (Brar, 2017; Government of Canada, 2022). The number of females joining gangs is also increasing (Public Safety Canada, 2022b). It is believed that the role of females in gangs has been predominantly restricted to gang members' girlfriends and peripheral tomboy associates;

however, females can also take on more central roles in gangs (Esbensen, 2000; Espelage & De La Rue, 2011).

It is often difficult to make clear determinations about gang membership because many of the signs of gang activity are also associated with normative adolescent behaviour. However, there are some general indicators, including major changes in attitudes and behaviours, that are suggestive of gang involvement. Some of the key indicators include, but are not limited to: (1) changing one's style and way of walking; (2) having tattoos or other marks on the body (e.g., burns, scars, etc.); (3) using hand signals or special jargon to communicate with peers; (4) having valuable objects that an adolescent typically could not afford; (5) having new, often older friends, known to the adolescent only by a nickname or their first name; (6) being given a nickname by peers that is not associated with the adolescent's first name; (7) carrying a weapon (knife or firearm); (8) adopting violent behaviours; (9) committing criminal acts with one or more known gang members; and (10) hanging around with known gang members (Hamel et al., n.d.). Involvement in a gang may manifest itself in a multitude of ways. Thus, it is imperative that agents of social control (e.g., parents, schoolteachers, etc.) pay close attention to substantial changes in attitudes and behaviours (Hamel et al., n.d.).

## RISK FACTORS

### *Gang Membership and Involvement*

There are several reasons why individuals may join a gang, including for protection, for fun/excitement, for respect, for money or other survival needs, or because a friend or family member is involved with the gang (Department of Justice Canada, n.d.; Descormiers, 2013; Howell, 2010). Additionally, media portrayals glamourizing the gang lifestyle may contribute to a desire to join gangs (Howell, 2010; Juhasz, 2019; Osterberg, 2020). However, without a clear understanding of why and how youth gangs emerge, preventing their formation, intervening with and/or disrupting existing gangs and their activities and operations, and diverting youth and adults away from joining gangs can be a difficult if not impossible task (Howell, 2000; Osterberg, 2020). Therefore, understanding the risk and protective factors for gang involvement is critical.

Studies suggest the presence of a variety of neighbourhood, family, school, peer, and individual risk factors that may be predictive of gang membership (Descormiers, 2013; Howell, 2010). Some of the strongest predictors of gang membership include high levels of interactions with delinquent or antisocial peers and low levels of interactions with prosocial peers, early involvement in antisocial behaviour, especially violence, higher tolerance for criminal activity, high externalizing behaviours, low social competence, alcohol and drug use, low academic achievement, having a learning disability, and early sexual activity (e.g., Descormiers, 2013; Esbensen et al., 1993; Howell, 2010). Associations with weapons-carrying peers, and carrying a weapon are also significant risk factors for criminal activity and violent behaviour (Cohen et al., 2021).

Several family variables may also play a role in gang involvement, including family instability (e.g., transitioning between multiple caretakers), low attachment to parents, family management problems (e.g., low parental supervision, control, or monitoring), family conflict, parent pro-

violence attitudes, and family gang involvement/antisocial behaviour (Esbensen, 2000; Howell, 2000; Howell, 2010). It is important to note that, while youth residing in single-parent homes may be at an elevated risk for joining gangs, youth who come from intact, "good homes," with affluent, educated, hardworking, and respectable parents, also become gang members (Brar, 2017; Howell, 2000; Juhasz, 2019; Osterberg, 2020).

Numerous school factors, including low commitment and attachment to school, negative labeling by teachers, and low educational aspiration are associated with an increased risk for gang involvement (Howell, 2000). Schools with more negative climates (i.e., poorly functioning institutions with poor academic quality, high rates of social sanctions, and large student-teacher ratios), tend to hold a greater percentage of students who form and join gangs (Howell, 2010). Additionally, there is a potential link between bullying and gang involvement. Research indicates that youth who are frequently involved in bullying as either a perpetrator or a victim are at an increased risk for being in a gang, engaging in violence, and carrying weapons to school (Bradshaw et al., 2013). Part of the connection between bullying and gang involvement may be related to feeling unsafe or fearful in school (Gottfredson & Gottfredson, 2001). Growing up in an unsafe community (i.e., high-level of openly expressed crime and violence), and/or in a neighbourhood where drugs are readily accessible, particularly marijuana, may also increase the risk of gang involvement (Hill et al., 2001; Howell, 2000; Howell, 2010). It is surmised that threatening environments, an excess of free time, and a lack of connection to pro-social institutions, roles, and/or activities may increase the risk of joining a gang (Magana, 2016). These factors may contribute to several of the primary motivations for joining a gang, including protection/safety, money, thrills, power, and/or control (Ngo, 2010).

The profile of risk factors for gang membership may vary by geographic location. In British Columbia, for instance, many youth gang members come from middle-class families, perform well academically, and are involved in sports (Osmond, 2019; Juhasz, 2019; Osterberg, 2020). Contrary to earlier assumptions, a stable, upper-middle-class family, and commitment to prosocial institutions are not guaranteed to act as protective factors for gang involvement in certain contexts (Bhatt & Tweed, 2018). Similar to the more "typical" risk factor profile, gang involved youth in British Columbia do have higher levels of connections to antisocial peers and involvement with drug trafficking (Performance Evaluation and Compliance Unit, Policing and Security Branch, n.d.). The desire for power, belonging, recognition, status, protection, companionship, excitement, and monetary gain appears to be greater motivational factors for gang involvement among youth in British Columbia (Osmond, 2019, Juhasz, 2019; Osterberg, 2020).

The number of females involved with gangs is growing. However, research on female gang involvement is extremely limited (Neill, 2020). Based on the information available, it appears that, although some females become "regular" gang members, they usually play a subordinate role in a gang, are afforded fewer of the supports from other gang members (e.g., protection), and are exposed to sexual violence, beatings, intimidation, and other forms of psychological abuse (Neill, 2020). The main way females join a gang appears to be through a romantic relationship with a gang member. Females are most often recruited into a gang by their gang-involved boyfriend who promises protection, along with emotional, and financial support through the gang (Neill, 2020). While females often join gangs for the same reasons as males (e.g., fun, respect, protection), there

are also some specific risk factors that appear to leave females more vulnerable to being exploited and enticed to join a gang, including a history of sexual abuse, disconnection from school, a gap in love or attention, material wants, ideals of freedom and autonomy, an unresolved history of trauma, prior sex trade involvement, and/or a perceived need for protection (Neill, 2020).

There is also evidence to suggest that members from different communities may have different or additional risk factors associated with gang involvement. Research on the lived experiences of newcomers and youth from immigrant families suggests that the pathways toward criminal gang involvement and out of gang life are highly complex (Ngo, 2010). First-generation immigrants often experience linguistic, acculturative, psychological, and economic challenges that make it difficult for youth to form cross-ethnic friendships and achieve success in school and workplace settings (Ngo, 2010; Smith & Egan, 2014). Many first-generation immigrant youth become overly reliant on support from peers with similar cultural backgrounds, have limited access to positive role models and mentors, and feel alienated and isolated (Ngo, 2010; Smith & Egan, 2014). Second generation Canadian youth often find themselves struggling to find their identity, as they are confronted by competing expectations with respect to traditions, gender roles, religion, and politics (Brar, 2017; Ngo, 2010). In general, researchers posit that the lived experiences of immigrant youth in Canada, including early exposure to violence, ineffective parenting and/or lack of parental involvement, familial conflict, conflicting cultural values, bullying and racism, and disadvantaged socioeconomic conditions, lead to a gradual disintegration of their interactions with families, schools, and communities (Brar, 2017; Ngo, 2010). This disconnect is often associated with an identity crisis that propels youth toward forming friendships with other socially disconnected peers (Brar, 2017; Ngo, 2010). Another study examining risk factors for gang membership among Asian adolescents in Westminster, California found that pro-gang attitudes, which were associated with negative school attitudes, family conflict, poor social integration, and perceived benefits of gang membership, as well as exposure to gangs in the neighbourhood were the main factors predicting gang membership in that community (Wyrick, 2000). The researcher suggested that to be effective, programs aimed at reducing or preventing, in this case, Vietnamese youth from joining gangs should focus on improving youth attitudes about school, reducing feelings of alienation, and modifying perceptions about the beneficial aspects of gang membership (Wyrick, 2000).

Indigenous[5] youth also appear to present with some unique risk factors. Through colonization, Indigenous communities have experienced high rates of racism, marginalization, and dispossession through the loss of their land, traditional culture, and spirituality/values (Turcotte, 2019). Residential schools further contributed to the breakdown of community kinship systems and Aboriginal law, diminished parenting skills, and created "othering" of Indigenous persons by mainstream society (Turcotte, 2019). The intergenerational trauma resulting from these negative events has created a host of psychosocial issues for Indigenous communities, including abject

[5] Depending on the time period and population being studied, researchers have utilized different terminology to identify different groups of Indigenous peoples in Canada, including Indigenous, Aboriginal, and First Nations. The varied terminology utilized in this report represents the terms used by the original researchers to ensure there is accurate representation of the population(s) being discussed.

poverty, overcrowded and insufficient housing, high social services involvement, alcohol and drug abuse, low levels of educational attainment, suicide and poor health, high criminalization rates, and high rates of violence (Turcotte, 2019). Youth who have experienced these factors first-hand or trans-generationally are believed to be at an increased risk for gang recruitment and violence (Turcotte, 2019).

The traumatic, violent history of Indigenous peoples has created several unique pathways into violence and antisocial behaviour, including gang life, for Indigenous youth (Shema, 2022; Totten, 2009). In Canada, the inclination towards criminal behaviour among Indigenous people is rooted in a long history of colonialism, displacement, discrimination, and social inequity (Cesaroni et al., 2019). One of the primary pathways into gang violence is violentization, whereby Aboriginal children who have survived extreme child maltreatment, namely sexual trauma, and neglect are often driven into gang life (Totten, 2009). One of the noted effects of the residential school system is an intergenerational trauma trajectory among Canadian Aboriginal families. A pattern of moderate to severe domestic violence behaviour has left many Aboriginal children being victims of multiple episodes of violent childhood trauma that has increased their risk of engaging in violent and antisocial behaviours in youth (Shema, 2022). Another pathway into violent gang life is through the experience of multiple out-of-home placements in child welfare and correctional facilities, as these facilities provide a prime breeding ground for recruiting gang members (Totten, 2009). A third pathway is related to the impact of brain and mental health disorders resulting from childhood trauma and Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD), and of the accompanying developmental impairments and emotional vulnerability (Totten, 2009). The fourth pathway results from the impact of colonization and forced assimilation. The loss of language, ceremony, culture, tradition, and cultural identity, along with the destruction of the family unit, Indigenous parenting practices, and the social exclusion and devaluation of Indigenous people has fueled gang participation and violence (Cesaroni et al., 2019; Shema, 2022; Totten, 2009).

Mirroring the factors associated with an increased likelihood for gang involvement, several factors have been identified that are believed to help prevent gang involvement. Some protective factors linked to the family domain include strong attachments to parents, family cohesiveness, intensive parental supervision, emotionally supportive child-rearing practices, high levels of parental involvement, and a sense of belonging (Brar, 2017; Osmond, 2019). Academic success, educational goals, strong commitment to school, a respect for learning, and positive bonds with school staff are among the suggested school-related protective factors (Osmond, 2019). At the community level, it is surmised that increasing social cohesion and trust amongst neighbours may decrease gang involvement. Finally, at the individual level, it is believed that the development of several skills, including social skills, judgment, positive coping strategies, and conflict resolution, as well as increasing personal resilience and confidence help protect against gang involvement (Bhatt & Tweed, 2018; Osmond, 2019).

It is important to recognize that the balance of risk versus protective factors will play a key role in whether an individual decides to join a gang. The presence of specific risk factors, including antisocial peers, may increase the likelihood of gang membership (Gilman et al., 2014). However, it is not merely the existence of any particular risk factor that influences the likelihood of gang

involvement. Risk factors have an additive effect; as the number of risk factors increases, the likelihood that an individual will become involved with a gang also increases (Bishop et al., 2017). The interaction of risk factors from multiple domains (i.e., family, neighbourhood, school, and peers) produces the greatest risk of gang membership (Gilman et al., 2014). The accumulation of risk factors over time may further increase the likelihood of gang membership (Bishop et al., 2017). In addition, while the number and types of risk factors may vary over time, the effects of each type of risk factor do not appear to change over time. Family influences, for instance, remain important throughout adolescence (Gilman et al., 2014). This suggests that early prevention and intervention across the primary domains of family, school, neighbourhood, and peers in late childhood and early adolescence may be key (Gilman et al., 2014).

It is believed that, although youth in gangs do spend time engaging in the same activities as non-gang involved youth, including attending school, sleeping, working odd jobs, and spending time with friends (Esbensen, 2000), they are also more likely than non-gang involved youth to be engaged in criminal activities (Corrado et al., 2019). Because gang proliferation often coincides with increases in youth violence, and because the group-oriented nature of gangs contributes to gang youth engaging in higher rates of criminal activities compared to non-gang affiliated youth, it is useful to consider risk factors associated with youth violence more broadly when developing initiatives to prevent, intervene, and suppress gang involvement and activities (Esbensen, 2000; Hill et al., 2001; Rosenfeld et al., 1999).

### *Gang Exiting*

Different from general desistance, disengagement from gangs involves a declining probability of gang membership through de-identifying as a gang member, and disembedding oneself from the gang (Densley & Pyrooz, 2017). There are several environmental and individual push and pull factors that may impact motivations for leaving a gang (Brar, 2017). Many youth do not continue in a gang for a long period; they are believed to simply "grow out" of the gang lifestyle as they mature (Roman et al., 2017). Other individuals may experience a negative or traumatic event (e.g., murder of gang associate, incarceration, violent victimization, etc.) that makes gang life appear less appealing and pushes the member to exit a gang (Brar, 2017; Roman et al., 2017). Encouragement from positive role models, including teachers, parents, or mentors, as well as experiencing major life milestones, such as obtaining meaningful employment, going through a spiritual or religious conversion, becoming involved in a romantic relationship, becoming a parent, or moving to a new neighbourhood, city, or school, may pull individuals to exit a gang (Brar, 2017). Thus, like joining gangs, there are often several motivating factors that initiate gang exiting; multiple pushes and pulls may work simultaneously to motivate gang members to exit the gang lifestyle (Brar, 2017; Roman et al., 2017). All these motivational factors to disengage from the gang lifestyle create a leverage point whereby an individual experiences a cognitive shift (i.e., a desire for an alternative lifestyle) and becomes open to opportunities to change their environment/context to either "knife off" (i.e., abruptly severe ties with gang associates and eliminate criminal opportunities), or gradually weaken their bonds to a gang and eventually depart (Pyrooz & Decker, 2011; Roman et al., 2017). Focusing intervention activities on these leverage points, and the transitional phase

between active gang membership and former gang membership (i.e., number and strength of gang ties), may increase program effectiveness and long-term success (Pyrooz et al., 2014). Consequently, programs like the CFSEU-BC Gang Intervention and Exiting program provide mental health, employment, counseling, life coaching, and education services to capitalize on shifts in gang members' desire to exit the gang life and achieve long-term positive goals (End Gang Life, 2022).

## EMERGENCE AND MAINTENANCE OF PROGRAMS TARGETING GANGS

Rather than a single risk factor or root cause that leads to gang membership, as is evident from the literature previously reviewed, there are a wide variety of potential risk factors associated with gang involvement (Wong et al., 2012). Therefore, to develop an effective gang prevention strategy, knowledge about the specific causes of gangs and gang membership in specific areas is crucial. Strategies must be geared towards targeting the correct individuals and behaviours (Esbensen, 2000). Because the likelihood of joining a gang increases as the number of risk factors and the range of domains in which they are present increases (Hill et al., 2001), a singular approach to prevention and intervention will likely prove ineffective. Therefore, an effective prevention/intervention strategy must target all facets of an individual's life, and involve primary, secondary, and tertiary programs to ensure the entire population of at-risk individuals (i.e., those at greatest risk of becoming delinquent, and those are already involved in gang activity) are targeted (Hill et al., 2001).

It is also crucial to note that, because many risk factors for joining gangs emerge early in childhood around 10 to 12-years of age, it may prove beneficial to start prevention efforts during the late elementary school years (Hill et al., 2001). Research on developmental trajectories for gang membership also indicates that focusing intervention efforts on specific time points may improve the efficacy of prevention and intervention strategies. In addition to addressing early violence onset, enhancing skills for interactions (e.g., conflict resolution skills, and refusal skills) around the age of 14 years old may promote greater prosocial socialization, as well as curb antisocial socialization amongst youth who are already engaged in antisocial behaviours (Bishop et al., 2017). Focusing on and rewarding prosocial opportunities may increase bonds to prosocial institutions, individuals, and groups that culminate in beliefs in prosocial values (Bishop et al., 2017). Thus, effective gang prevention/intervention efforts should focus on providing and rewarding participation in prosocial opportunities for involvement in family and friend groups, schools, and neighbourhood activities (Bishop et al., 2017). Furthermore, while programs will vary based on the specific population targeted, all programs should, at minimum, promote the enhancement of social skills, increase the availability of prosocial opportunities, and provide rewards for engaging in prosocial opportunities (Bishop et al., 2017). Increasing and strengthening bonds to prosocial parents, teachers, and positive environments may increase protective factors by building resiliency (Bishop et al., 2017).

## SPECIFIC TYPES OF PROGRAMS

Due to a lack of formal evaluations, there tends to be a patchwork of various forms of programs and service delivery options rather than cohesive, communitywide approaches to gang problems (Bradstreet, 2015)[6]. To date, there are different approaches to tackling the gang problem with various levels of success. Prevention efforts aim to prevent gang membership, reduce conditions that increase the risk of joining a gang, and raise awareness about gang life and problems (Juhasz, 2019). Focusing on increasing knowledge and empowering individuals to develop skills to reduce risk factors, preventive awareness programs are often universal and delivered through school curricula, information sessions, and/or activities provided through afterschool and community-based initiatives. Gang membership prevention strategies target at-risk populations, such as delinquent youths, school dropouts, youth living in at-risk neighbourhoods, or youth with explicit at-risk conditions that are not tied directly to their age and gender, such as family conflicts or parental criminality (Wong et al., 2012). Activities offered through these programs typically include outreach and after-school programs offered at high-risk times. These types of programs are generally geared toward preventing youth from encountering gangs and joining gangs (Wong et al., 2012).

There are several programs focusing on preventing gang activities (e.g., gun violence, drug dealing, and other criminal activities). These programs provide alternatives to gang-life (e.g., employment, education, etc.), regulate gang activity (i.e., target specific activities associated with gangs), and suppress gang activity using law enforcement tactics (Juhasz, 2019). Regulation initiatives are designed to target individuals who are already involved with gang activities (Howell, 2000; Wong et al., 2012). Many programs developed based on this approach include employment programs, outreach for gang exiting, hotspot policing, nuisance abatement regulations or anti-gang bylaws, bar watch or inadmissible patron programs, and gun buyback programs (Wong et al., 2012; Gahunia, 2017).

Many of the police-led programs focus on gang suppression, namely deterring criminal activities of entire gangs, dissolving them, and removing gang members through prosecution and incarceration, and have been supported by various pieces of legislation that increase penalties for gang-related crimes (Wong et al, 2012). These programs are utilized in instances where a gang problem is serious and solutions require removing certain individuals from the streets (Wong et al., 2012). The goal is to prevent further gang-related crime by removing gang members from their gangs (Wong et al., 2012). There are also justice system-based interventions that are designed to target convicted gang members, and those who are incarcerated to reduce their gang membership. Educational

[6] It is important to note that due to the complexity of many gang programs, a lack of resources, and failure to include an evaluation component into the program design, there is limited rigorous research on many of the existing gang strategies. With limited resources to draw from in relation to certain programs/program elements, some of the works cited in this report are rather dated. While the outcomes from the research are important for providing context, not all these findings may remain relevant or applicable today.

programs, rehabilitation efforts, and cognitive-behavioural interventions are utilized to prepare offenders for a law-abiding life, and to prevent recidivism (Wong et al., 2012).

The growing trend in the development of programs designed to target gangs and gang activities involves taking a comprehensive, multi-agency approach that integrates components of prevention, intervention, and/or suppression activities (Howell, 2000). Comprehensive approaches are overseen by one group or organization and involve the use of prevention and gang regulation strategies (Wong et al., 2012). Similarly, there have been efforts to develop and implement more holistic approaches to gangs that involve at least four strategies, including one each of prevention, gang activity intervention, and a justice system-based intervention, with one component dedicated to prevention that targets awareness, gang membership, or gang activity (Spergel et al., 2005; Wong et al., 2012). Due to the different components and many moving parts, these programs require extensive communication and collaboration between numerous agency partners.

### *Family-Focused and Early Childhood Programs*

Familial risk factors, including lack of adequate parental supervision and monitoring, are associated with the onset of antisocial behaviours in children and youth (Aldridge et al., 2011). Linked specifically to gang involvement, permissive or authoritarian parenting styles, absent or abusive male parental figures, a lack of parental community social ties, as well as family member involvement in gangs have been cited as reasons for youth joining gangs (Aldridge et al., 2011; Corrado et al., 2019). Due to the potential influence of the family dynamic on gang involvement, most parenting and family-focused interventions are premised on the idea that early intervention will reduce the likelihood that young persons will engage in violence in the future (Russell, 2021).

Early childhood home visitation programs involve trained nurses and health visitors providing intensive in-home support to improve parenting skills, prevent child maltreatment, promote healthy child development, and support maternal mental health (Russell, 2021; World Health Organization, 2015). The Family-Nurse Partnerships (FNPs) is designed to empower first-time mothers to transform their lives and create a better future for themselves and their babies. Expectant mothers are provided care and support during pre- and post-natal care during the first two years of their children's lives through at-home nurse visitations, as well as through the provision of supports and tools needed to create a healthy start for their babies (Nurse-Family Partnership, 2023). Nurses teach positive health-related behaviours, competent care of children, and maternal personal development, such as family planning and educational achievement (World Health Organization, 2015).

Parental training and education programs aim to develop parenting skills and strengthen the relationship between parent and child by encouraging safe, stable, and nurturing relationships, and targeting risk and protective factors (Russell, 2021). Usually delivered by social workers and trained mental health specialists, these programs are offered in group settings or, when more intensive support is required, to individual families (World Health Organization, 2015). The Multisystemic Therapy (MST) Program is an intensive family-focused, community-based treatment designed to reduce antisocial behaviour in youth by improving parenting skills and youth coping mechanisms (Roman et al., 2017). Using a home-based model, the program uses counselors to help

families and youth rebuild networks with extended family and their communities (Roman et al., 2017). The program usually consists of 60 hours of treatment, including cognitive behavioural therapy, over a four-month period (National Crime Prevention Centre, 2008). For example, implemented as part of the Seattle Social Development Project, the Raising Healthy Children Project was developed on the premise that, by training parents to manage their families in ways that promote bonding to family and school, the likelihood that children would engage in health-risk behaviours would be reduced (Russell, 2021). The program was designed specifically to reduce vulnerability and increase protection against various risk behaviours at the individual, peer, family, and school levels (Russell, 2021). Geared toward at-risk youth in grades one through six, Fast Track provides a long-term, multidimensional prevention program that aims to enhance problem-solving, social, communication, and cognitive skills, develop emotional awareness, improve anger management, improve peer relations, decrease disruptive behaviour, and build bonds between the school, home, and peers (National Crime Prevention Centre, 2008). Some of the key program components include parent training, home visitations, social skills training, and classroom intervention. Designed to target slightly older youth (11- to 18-year-olds) and their families, Functional Family Therapy (FFT) provides a multisystemic prevention program to reduce the negativism associated with families at risk, strengthen family ties, improve parents' ability to manage conflicts, strengthen parental skills, and develop positive behaviours among youth with delinquency, substance abuse, and violence issues (National Crime Prevention Centre, 2008). The program is designed to be short and intensive and is delivered by therapists in the homes of participating families.

Pre-school academic enrichment programs aim to assist young children develop their emotional, social, and cognitive skills through the provision of good quality early education (Russell, 2021). Parent training and/or family support are often components of these programs and are designed to enhance the child's protective factors (Russell, 2021). Targeting vulnerable families (e.g., low income, single parents, etc.), these programs provide a range of family support, childcare, health services, and pre-school education to address risk factors for youth violence in early childhood (i.e., birth to five years old) (World Health Organization, 2015). In addition to providing education to three- and four-year-olds, for instance, the Child-Parent Centre Program provides outreach and health services, and activities aimed at improving the child-parent relationship (Russell, 2021). The Montreal Preventive Treatment Program is a secondary prevention program targeting gang involvement through the development of pro-social skills and self-development in early childhood (Howell, 2000). Designed to prevent antisocial behaviour among boys aged seven to nine years old of low-socioeconomic status who display disruptive problem behaviours in kindergarten, the program combines parent training and childhood skills development to steer antisocial children away from gangs (Esbensen, 2000; Howell, 2000; Howell, 2010). Receiving an average of 17 training sessions, parents are trained on how to monitor their children's behaviour, use positive reinforcement for prosocial behaviour, manage family crises, and utilize punishments effectively (Howell, 2000). In their 19 small-group training sessions, the boys receive coaching, peer modeling, self-instruction, reinforcement contingencies, and role playing to improve their self-control and pro-social skills (Howell, 2000). The High Scope/Perry Preschool Project, which was designed to prevent school failure in poor, African American three- and four-year olds, involves parental

support and direct connections between teachers and parents through home visits to increase the involvement of parents in their child's educational experience. The Syracuse University Family Development Research Project provided services to pregnant mothers and mothers with children under five years of age, including educational, nutritional, health, safety, and human service resources (Howell, 2000).

### *Success of Family-Focused and Early Childhood Programs*

Although many of the early childhood programs have not been tested for their impact on gang involvement, there is evidence to show that home visitation programs may prevent child maltreatment, as well as improve the emotional and intellectual development and health status of children (World Health Organization, 2015). Early childhood development programs may also be effective in preventing delinquency and crime into early adulthood by influencing risk factors for youth violence (Russell, 2021; World Health Organization, 2015). The Nurse-Family Partnership model, for instance, has been associated with reductions in child abuse and neglect by 48%, behavioural and intellectual problems at age six by 67%, as well as child arrests at age 15 by 59% (Nurse-Family Partnership, 2023). However, these types of programs may be context specific. While studies in the United States reveal positive effects associated with the Nurse-Family Partnership program, early evaluations of this program model in the United Kingdom did not show significant benefits compared to existing services offered to young pregnant women (Russell, 2021).

Family training programs show promise for reducing disruptive behaviours and youth violence. Evaluations of the effectiveness of Fast Track reveal that participants were less aggressive in the classroom and received better feedback about their behaviour from parents and teachers (National Crime Prevention Centre, 2008). Studies also show that training parents to utilize less coercive disciplinary techniques decreases violent behaviours in their children (Weaver & Maddaleno, 1999). An examination of the Raising Healthy Children Project, for instance, revealed that, by age 18, program participants reported fewer lifetime violent delinquent acts, and, by age 21, participants were less likely to have criminal records (Hawkins et al., 1999). Evaluations of the MST program revealed that young offenders who received treatment had lower long-term rates of arrest, received fewer out-of-home placements, and had improved family functioning (National Crime Prevention Centre, 2008). The success of parenting programs has been attributed to modeling positive parent-child interactions, the development of emotional communication skills, and the use of cognitive behavioural therapeutic methods (World Health Organization, 2015). However, it is crucial to note that these programs may prove less useful for active gang members. In their study of the efficacy of the MST program, Boxer and colleagues (2015) discovered that gang involvement moderated the effectiveness of the program in a negative way. Even though active gang members received similar treatment to non-gang involved youth, the active gang members were less likely to be successful on short-term outcomes compared to non-gang members (Boxer et al., 2015).

Pre-school academic enrichment programs that are designed to provide good quality early education show promise for being an effective mechanism for reducing youth violence (Russell,

2021). These types of programs are most effective when they target at-risk children and families, include group and individual work, and integrate a parental intervention component (Russell, 2021). In a 15-year follow-up study of the Child-Parent Centre Program, Reynolds and colleagues (2001) found that young people who had participated in the program for four to six years had fewer arrests for violence, lower rates for violent convictions, and were less likely to have been incarcerated on more than one occasion. An evaluation of the Montreal Preventive Treatment Program also showed short- and long-term positive results related to decreases in delinquency, substance use, and gang involvement at age 15 (Tremblay et al., 1996). The success of early childhood programs appears to be the connection with a component of parent training. Parenting training and education programs that aim to develop parenting skills and strengthen the relationship between parent and child have shown positive effects on curbing youth violence (Russell, 2021). The High Scope/Perry Preschool Project (Schweinhart et al., 1993), and the Syracuse University Family Development Research Project (Lally et al., 1988), for instance, were found to be effective in reducing severe and chronic delinquency in long-term follow-ups. These programs are most effective when they include teaching strategies to handle a child's behaviour in a positive way and provide parents an opportunity to practice new skills (Russell, 2021).

The efficacy of family-based programs may be related to differences in content and delivery of programs, and the availability of resources (Russell, 2021). In addition, family-based programs may face implementation challenges due to a lack of desire for the programs from members of the target populations. Oftentimes, the most at-risk families are the most resistant to parenting interventions; parents may be in denial about their child's gang involvement, parents may fail to accept responsibility for their child's negative behaviour, parents may see benefits to their child being involved in a gang, and/or parents may have a lack of trust in authorities, and ultimately oppose parenting interventions (Aldridge et al., 2011). Several factors may increase the success of family-based programs, including reassuring parents that the program is designed to support them and their children, providing opportunities for parents to practice newly acquired skills, focusing more broadly on positive parenting principles rather than specific techniques to use in response to certain behaviours, and teaching strategies to handle poor behaviour in a positive and age-appropriate manner (Russell, 2021).

### *School-Based Programs*

Outside of the family, schools are the main secular institution involved in socializing children and youth (Gottfredson & Gottfredson, 2001). Thus, the school is in a unique position to influence the behaviour of young people. Provided that peak recruitment for gang membership may be as early as fifth grade, interventions delivered in school settings may provide an effective mechanism for early prevention efforts for children and youth who are at-risk for becoming involved in violence, crime, or gangs (Home Office, n.d.; Juhasz, 2019).

Most school-based programs are designed to prevent or reduce gang involvement either directly (i.e., by targeting individuals identified as being at-risk individuals for engaging in gangs or gang-related activities) or indirectly (i.e., by targeting all students to prevent negative behavioural outcomes) using prevention curriculum, instruction, and training (Gottfredson & Gottfredson,

2001). Other common program activities include services and resources for family members, and behavioural interventions through counseling, social, work, and/or psychological, therapeutic, recreation, enrichment, or leisure activities (Gottfredson & Gottfredson, 2001). To the extent that school-based programs provide successful instruction in social competencies and assist in the development of prosocial attitudes and beliefs, they may have a large effect on reducing gang involvement (Gottfredson & Gottfredson, 2001).

Many of the existing school-based programs are designed to build life and social skills, such as critical thinking, effective communication, interpersonal relationship skills, self-awareness, empathy, and coping with stress and emotions, as well as to increase knowledge and improve self-esteem to assist youth to make non-violent and pro-social choices (Russell, 2021; World Health Organization, 2015). The Linking the Interests of Family and Teachers (LIFT) Program, for instance, aims to decrease antisocial behaviour and increase prosocial behaviour among children in grades one through five by targeting negative social skills (e.g., opposition, deviance, and social ineptitude) through classroom-based problem-solving and social skills training (e.g., lecture and role playing on specific skills, unstructured free play, and structured group practice), playground-based behavioural modification (i.e., reward system for exhibiting positive problem-solving skills on the playground), and group-delivered parent training to teach parents how to create a good home environment (National Crime Prevention Centre, 2008).

Focusing specifically on gangs, some programs have incorporated an educational element designed to raise awareness amongst children, youth, and their parents about the consequences of gang involvement (Howell, 2000). To achieve their goals, most of the programs involve one or more core components, including an educational component to assist at-risk youth with the development of essential skills, such as conflict resolution, counseling for students, the use of role models and mentorship programs, as well as support and resources for parents (Gottfredson & Gottfredson, 2001; Howell, 2000). Some programs also focus on skills and education to prevent firearm use by school-aged youth. The Straight Talk About Risks Program (STAR), for example, focuses on conflict management, self-reflection, anger management, and firearm related safety and risks (Cohen, Lee et al., 2021).

There have been some promising school-based programs. The Gang Resistance Education And Training (G.R.E.A.T.) Program is a primary preventive awareness program that was introduced by the Phoenix Police Department in 1991. Targeting all middle school students between the ages of eight and 13, the program provides a low-intensity course delivered by a law enforcement officer who has been specifically trained in working with youth (Esbensen et al., 2013; Russell, 2021). The police officer delivers nine lessons over a 13-week period that teaches students about crime and being a victim, cultural sensitivity and prejudice, conflict resolution, the effects of drugs on their school and neighbourhood, personal and communal responsibilities, goal setting, and life skills necessary to resist peer pressure (Esbensen et al., 2013; Howell, 2000; Howell, 2010). The program also contains training for families and a summer program (Howell, 2010). Incorporating problem-solving exercises and cooperative learning strategies, the program's emphasis is skill development rather than the assimilation of knowledge (Esbensen et al., 2013). The Seattle Social Development Project (SSDP) is a comprehensive, multi-year school-based intervention that stresses the

importance of participation from families and schools in a youth's development of competency and skills for success (Hawkins et al., 1991; National Crime Prevention Centre, 2008). Aiming to reduce or eliminate the effects of exposure to risk, increase protective factors, and improve academic commitment and family management, the SSDP is available for the general population, as well as at-risk youth in grades one through six. The program lasts for six years, is implemented by trained classroom teachers, and consists of two components: (1) teacher training that involves proactive classroom management, interactive teaching, cooperative learning, as well as teaching communication, decision-making, negotiation, conflict-resolution, and refusal skills; and (2) parental training that involves family management training, communication training, schoolwork and skill development, and resistance skills development (National Crime Prevention Centre, 2008). It is believed that the development of a positive learning environment will curb delinquency and violence (Esbensen et al., 2013). Other school-based programs have expanded to include a role for parents. For example, the Gang Resistance Is Paramount (G.R.I.P.) program, which was developed in Paramount, California, includes holding neighbourhood meetings to provide parents with support and resources to prevent their children from joining gangs, multiple week courses for second and fifth grade students with lessons about gangs, affiliated activities, and the effects of gangs on family and opportunities, and a school-based follow-up program in ninth grade to reinforce the early learning modules (Howell, 2000). All these types of programs seek to raise awareness about gangs and assist in the development of crucial skills to help youth avoid gang membership and reduce violence and criminal activity.

Many programs also include some form of an afterschool or an outside of school hours component geared towards developing essential life skills. The Su Puede ("You Can") program in San Juan, Texas includes individual counseling, a voluntary one-year positive alternatives and role models program, a curriculum component involving weekly, culturally sensitive lessons devoted to developing skills for preventing substance abuse and violence, and a monthly weekend camping experience promoting the development of survival skills and fostering relationships with mentors (Howell, 2000). The Broader Urban Involvement and Leadership Development (BUILD) program targets gang members specifically and offers a gang prevention curriculum focusing on self-esteem enhancement, communication skills, problem-solving techniques, goal setting, and decision-making, and an afterschool program designed to encourage youth to leave gangs (Howell, 2000; Roman et al., 2017). The program includes various prosocial activities for youth, including afterschool sports programs, career training, and deploys trained street workers (Romanet al., 2017).

Some initiatives broadly aim to create safe school environments, including the Safer Schools Together initiative in British Columbia aims to end community violence by working with school districts and communities to create positive, safe, and caring learning environments (Safer Schools Together, 2019). Programs using School Liaison Officers (SLOs) or School Resource Officers (SROs) are believed to contribute to school safety and improve student problem-solving through the physical presence of law enforcement officers in school, the delivery of presentations and educational materials by officers, as well as the creation of positive bonds between students and law enforcement officers (Cohen & Osterberg, 2018). Other school-based programs target specific activities. The Parents and Schools Succeeding in Providing Organized Routes to Travel

(PASSPORT) program was developed in California and offered a unique, collaborative effort involving the school district, police, parents, and community organizations. By establishing specific routes for students to use when traveling to and from school in high-crime or gang-oriented areas that are supervised by police, school administrators, safe school coordinators, and parent volunteers, this program was believed to curb negative behaviours, including fights, as well as engagement in other unsafe activities, such as interactions with gang members that can foster recruitment (Howell, 2000). Under the umbrella of the Safe Routes to School movement, many cities have adopted programs aiming to not only protect children from threats posed by motor vehicles on their travels to and from school, but also from the social dangers of bullying, harassment, gang recruitment, fights, and violence (Lieberman & Zimmerman, n.d.). Bringing together families and community stakeholders, Safe Routes to School programs encourage parents to walk/bike their children to and from school, and create 'walking school buses' (i.e., organized groups of students walking together who are supervised by adults) with or without corner captains (i.e., adults in designated homes or businesses along walking routes that watch for the safety of children on the street) that ensure children get to and from school safely (Lieberman & Zimmerman, n.d.). In the United States, there are over 17,000 Safe Routes to School initiatives. In Canada, similar initiatives have also been adopted. In Calgary, Alberta, for instance, the Active and Safe Routes to School program (ASRS) aims to address and solve ongoing transportation and safety issues in school areas, including concerns with students travelling alone (The City of Calgary, 2023). Promoting school travel planning and active school travel, the program is geared toward empowering students to choose healthy lifestyle, while also improving safety and accessibility in and around school zones (The City of Calgary, 2023).

As previously stated, research on risks for gang membership suggest that early intervention in the main domains of family, neighbourhood, school, and peers is key (Gilman et al., 2014). In the school context, it is suggested that including an anti-bullying curriculum prevents gang membership by assisting students in the development of emotional and social skills necessary for understanding risky situations, violence, and abuse, and managing conflicts in a pro-social manner (Home Office, n.d.). Anti-bullying programs are also believed to prevent gang involvement by removing the need for protection from bullies (Howell, 2000). These programs usually involve dissemination of educational material, including booklets for children and youth explaining the problems associated with bullying and potential solutions, and pamphlets or packages for parents/families with advice for identifying and addressing bullying, and the development of school-wide antibullying policies (Howell, 2000). The Olweus Bullying and Prevention Programme uses a whole-school approach to reduce new bullying problems, and improve peer relations at school (Russell, 2021). Designed to restructure the school environment and eliminate opportunities and rewards for bullying, the program implements clear school rules and management structures for bullying, raises awareness for parents, provides training for staff, provides classroom curriculum for students, and implements individual-level interventions for those who have been bullied or who are bullying others (National Crime Prevention Centre, 2008; Olweus & Limber, 2019). Originally developed in Norway, this program has been evaluated in the United States and implemented in the United Kingdom (Russell, 2021). The KiVa program, which also implements a whole-school approach, aims to improve social and emotional skills, influence group norms and bystander behaviour, and create a climate of non-

bullying in individual classrooms and the school as a whole using curricula, online games, work with bullies and victims, and dissemination of materials for teachers and guides for parents (Russell, 2021).

Many school-based programs are designed to modify specific behaviours, such as aggression and anger, and build key social, emotional, and life skills in youth (Home Office, n.d.; Russell, 2021). The Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS) program is a universal intervention program that targets children between the ages of three and 12 years old. Delivered by teachers, the curriculum focuses on feelings and relationships, interpersonal and cognitive problem-solving, and increasing self-control (Russell, 2021). This program is a strong, evidence-based model for addressing youth violent outcomes (Russell, 2021). The Striving Together to Achieve Rewarding Tomorrows (CASASTART) program is a family- and school-centred approach designed to keep high-risk eight- to 13-year-olds free of delinquency, gang involvement, and substance abuse (Howell, 2010). Similarly, the Life Skills Training program that comprises drug resistance skills, self-management skills, and general social skills components has been touted as an effective approach for preventing youth violence (Russell, 2021). The Project Towards No Drug Abuse (Project TND) is a classroom-based drug abuse prevention program that aims to reduce or eliminate the use of substances (e.g., tobacco, marijuana, alcohol, and hard drugs), as well as weapon carrying (National Crime Prevention Centre, 2008). Targeting youth aged 14 to 19 years old attending alternative high schools, the program consists of 12 interactive sessions that encourage the development of better motivation and decision-making skills. Although designed as substance abuse prevention programs, Life Skills Training and Project TND target psychological and social factors that promote the initiation of risk behaviours that include violence (Russell, 2021).

### *Success of School-Based Programs*

Apart from a few (e.g., Esbensen et al.'s (2013) evaluations of the short- and long-term outcomes associated with G.R.E.A.T.), many school-based programs have been subjected to little rigorous empirical scrutiny. Furthermore, the research on school-based programs provides mixed results in terms of the efficacy of school-based crime prevention approaches. The few evaluations of School Liaison or Resource Officers, for instance, found that, along with some other positive findings, including improved relationships between police and students, SLOs are believed to provide social capital functions by creating informal networks among high-risk students, teachers, victims, administrators, and parents (Cohen & Osterberg, 2018). At the same time, other evaluations of these initiatives have revealed either no differences in feelings of safety between students in SLO schools and non-SLO schools, or even negative feelings among students about police presence in the school, including feeling intimated, uncomfortable, or as though they were being watched (Cohen & Osterberg, 2018). In examining school-based gang preventive awareness and membership initiatives specifically, a meta-analysis found that most studies did not produce significant treatment effects on delinquency outcomes (Wong et al., 2012). It is surmised that one of the reasons school-based programs may prove ineffective is because they may not capture the most at-risk youth. Cohen et al. (2019) noted that youth at highest risk for gang involvement may not be

present at school due to being suspended or expelled. Thus, there may need to be additional mechanisms in place outside of the school to ensure target populations are accessible.

However, some studies have found evidence to suggest that school and education-based approaches may have more positive outcomes. Universal school-based programs have been found to reduce violent behaviour among students across all school years (World Health Organization, 2015). Evaluations of the LIFT program, for instance, revealed that participants had lower levels of aggressive behaviour, as well as better problem-solving and conflict resolution skills compared to youth who had not participated in the program (National Crime Prevention Centre, 2008). These programs may also be effective in reducing youth violence (Russell, 2021). An evaluation of the SSDP program revealed that participants showed early positive outcomes, such as lower levels of aggression after grade two, and greater attachments to family and school at the beginning of grade five, as well as more long-term positive results, including reduced levels of violent delinquency and sexual activity at the end of grade 11 (National Crime Prevention Centre, 2008).

In addition to improving academic achievement, programs aimed at creating safe school environments may prevent violence and weapons carrying (Home Office, n.d.). Programs that seek to develop young people's social, emotional, and life skills have been shown to have a positive effect on various violence-related outcomes (Russell, 2021). More specifically, programs that build skills related to problem-solving, critical thinking, communication, decision-making, relationships, self-awareness, and empathy are linked to reductions in violent outcomes in youth, including fighting, hitting, and bullying (Wilson & Lipsey, 2007). The PATHS and Life Skills Training programs have both shown positive effects on aggression and violent behaviours among participants (e.g., Botvin et al., 2006). However, the effectiveness appears to be limited to those programs delivered in the school setting (Russell, 2021).

There is also some evidence to suggest that school-based programs may decrease gang involvement and/or affiliation among participating students (e.g., Arnette & Walsleben, 1998; Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 1999). A long-term follow-up of the G.R.I.P. program revealed that 96% of the approximately 3,000 program participants were not identified as gang members in police records (Arnette & Walsleben, 1998). It is surmised that the lack of future gang involvement is connected to the negative attitudes towards gangs that youth develop through the program. In addition to finding further support for the connection between school-based prevention programs and negative attitudes toward gangs, Esbensen and Osgood's (1999) 12- and 18-months follow-ups with those students who had completed the G.R.E.A.T. program showed that the program had many positive outcomes that decreased the likelihood that students would join gangs, including a decreased likelihood of having delinquent friends, more positive attitudes toward police, greater commitment to school and success at school, higher self-esteem, higher levels of attachment to parents, and greater commitment to prosocial peers and activities. Some other research suggests that the effect of school-based programs may be more indirect by reducing the presence of known risk factors, including bullying (e.g., Olweus, 1992; Smith & Sharp, 1994). The results from two multi-site evaluations of the G.R.E.A.T. program in the United States revealed several important outcomes. In one of the evaluations, Esbensen and colleagues (2012) noted that the program decreased gang membership among program participants; however, the program did not

significantly affect rates of violent offending. Evaluating attitudinal and behavioural outcomes at the one-year and four-year post-program follow-up periods, Esbensen and colleagues (2013) found that students who participated in G.R.E.A.T. were more risk averse, had better anger control, had lower odds of joining a gang, and were more apt at using refusal techniques. However, the researchers failed to find lasting effects in relation to peer-related factors, including prosocial peers, peer pressure, negative peer commitment, and delinquent peers. The researchers suggest that the program's effects on peer relations is muted over time (Esbensen et al., 2013). Collectively, the available evidence suggests that school-based gang preventive awareness programs, such as G.R.E.A.T., can be implemented to successfully effect gang involvement (Gravel et al., 2013), and can be effectively included in a larger community-wide effort to reduce gang membership (Esbensen et al., 2012).

It is important to note that the effects of stand-alone school-based prevention programs at reducing future gang involvement are modest (Howell, 2000; Russell, 2021). It is surmised that school-based programs could be enhanced by incorporating program elements that target specific risk factors. For instance, bullying prevention or anti-bullying programs have been consistently linked to reductions in bullying perpetration and victimization (e.g., Bellis et al., 2017; Gaffney et al., 2019), as well as to improvements in bystander responses or attitudes and beliefs about bullying (Bellis et al., 2017). The Olweus Bullying Prevention Program is considered a model program based on its association with successful reductions in self-reported bullying, victimization, and delinquent behaviours (National Crime Prevention Centre, 2008). Similarly, the KiVa program has also been found to significantly reduce the rates of bullying behaviours and victimization amongst children aged 10 to 12 years old (White, 2019). To be effective; however, the program elements geared toward addressing bullying must be age-tailored and school-specific (i.e., targeting the specific student needs and school climate) (Russell, 2021). Moreover, the program would need to include parent and teacher training and target disciplinary methods (i.e., school-wide rules against bullying) (Home Office, n.d.).

Incorporating an afterschool component to mobilize community resources to address gang activities may also prove effective (Howell, 2000; Russell, 2021). In an evaluation of the BUILD program, Thompson and Jason (1988) discovered that youth in the program were less likely to join a gang compared to a group that had not participated in the program. Building in an intervention component would provide a mechanism for disrupting the gang activities occurring on school grounds (Howell, 2000).

It is evident from the mixed results that there are various caveats to developing and implementing a successful school-based program. Prior to developing a program, an assessment of risk factors, along with school-related gang problems and safety issues, should be completed (Howell, 2000). Gang initiatives in schools should be research- and evidence-based and outcome focused (Howell, 2000). It is recommended that school-based programs, at a minimum, include in-school safety and control procedures, provide gang awareness training for school personnel, parents, and students, provide interpersonal skills training to students to help resolve conflicts, include in-school enrichment procedures geared toward making the school experience meaningful, enjoyable, and effective, increase adult supervision of students after school, and provide formal links to

community-based programs (Goldstein & Kodluboy, 1998; Howell, 2010). Adding in a "booster" in the form of follow-up instruction at a later date may also bolster a program's effects on gang involvement (Gottfredson & Gottfredson, 2001).

### *After-School and Out-of-School Programs*

Research suggests that delinquent activities increase during the immediate hours following release from school (Cohen & Osterberg, 2018). The implementation of after-school programming is founded on the idea that increasing opportunities for adult supervision will reduce the hours of youth self-care (Cohen & Osterberg, 2018). Out of school activities include afterschool provision and activities provided separately from education, such as music, art, sports, clubs, wilderness or challenge activities, or volunteering (Russell, 2021). Provided either in a school or community setting, recreation, enrichment, or leisure programs are designed to provide play, amusement, and diversion outside of school hours, as well as to provide youth with opportunities to strengthen their social and academic skills, expand their prosocial experiences and relationships, and engage in activities that they can be successful in (Gottfredson & Gottfredson, 2001; Russell, 2021). Offering supervision of youth during critical times of the day when youth violence is believed to peak (i.e., between 15:00 and 18:00), these approaches aim to address key risk and protective factors (Russell, 2021).

The Leadership and Resiliency Program (LRP) targets youth aged 14 to 19 with the goal of enhancing their internal strengths and resiliency. Offering adolescent group meetings, community service with abused and neglected animals, performance skits for young children, and outdoor adventure programming, the program aims to increase students' perceptions of competence and self-worth, improve identification with positive roles, improve communication and refusal skills, and increase knowledge of substance abuse and violence (National Crime Prevention Centre, 2008). The Participate and Learn Skills (PALS) afterschool program in Ottawa, Canada that was situated in a public housing complex, recruited economically disadvantaged children between the ages of five and 15 to participate in after-school activities designed to improve skills in sports, music, dance, scouting, and other non-sports areas (Jones & Offord, 1989). The Los Angeles Better Educated Students for Tomorrow (LA's Best) program provides a range of educational and recreational enrichment activities to support young people's intellectual, social, and emotional development (Russell, 2021). Offering a safe, supervised, and nurturing environment, the goal of LA's BEST is to provide a haven for at-risk young people in neighbourhoods where gang violence, drugs, and other anti-social behaviours are prevalent (Russell, 2021).

Coupling after-school activities with family programming, the Families and Schools Together (FAST) program is an intervention that aims to improve child well-being by strengthening relationships, particularly the parent-child bond, increasing the child's success at school, reducing drug and alcohol abuse in the family, and reducing family stress and isolation (World Health Organization, 2015). Offered for eight weeks to all children within the same grade, the program brings the whole family to the school building after school hours to take part in family activities and share a family meal (World Health Organization, 2015). The program provides families with

children who are new to the school the opportunity to meet their children's classmates and their families through group sessions.

Community-based afterschool programs provide a mechanism for targeting youth gang involvement by mobilizing community resources. The Gang Prevention Through Targeted Outreach is a secondary prevention program operated by the Boys & Girls Clubs of America. It is a community-wide gang prevention program with four main objectives: (1) community mobilization of leaders and club staff to design strategies that offer youth alternatives to the gang lifestyle; (2) recruitment by police, schools, social services, and community organizations of at-risk youth into club programs through direct outreach and referral networks; (3) programming to meet the individual interests and needs of the youth that focus on character and leadership development, education, and career development, health and life skills, arts, and sports, fitness, and recreation; and (4) case management to examine the monthly progress on specific program goals (Howell, 2000). The program targets youth at-risk of becoming involved in gangs and aims to alter their attitudes and perceptions of gangs and enhance communication skills, problem-solving techniques, and decision-making abilities. This is accomplished by offering specific program activities, including structured recreational, education, and life skills programs that are designed to satisfy the youth's interests and their physical and social needs (Esbensen, 2000; National Crime Prevention Centre, 2008). The city of Tacoma's City Connections Project targets middle school-aged youth at risk-for violent behaviour and academic failure and refers them to one of three intervention programs (Marc Bolan Consulting, 2010). The Functional Family Therapy (FFT) is a structured family-based multi-step approach aimed at enhancing protective factors and reducing risk factors in families through family visits with trained therapists (Howell, 2010). The Aggression Replacement Therapy (ART) program is a secondary prevention program for highly aggressive and delinquent youth (Howell, 2010). It is a 10-week, 30-hour intervention program designed to provide specific curriculum to youth exhibiting aggression problems to assist with developing skills for prosocial functioning (Marc Bolan Consulting, 2010).

Some extracurricular leisure and sports-based programs have been designed with the purpose of building character and leadership skills. Organized through American police departments, the Police Athletic League (PAL) involves police officers coaching youth in sports and helping with homework and other school-related activities (National Crime Prevention Centre, 2008). With the goal of protecting children during their critical developmental years, the program offers several prosocial activities and programs, including (1) head start/daycare that allows parents to participate in GED classes, exercise, nutrition, and educational programs, while also giving parents access to childcare; (2) educational resource centres that provide a safe space outside of the formal classroom for children to enhance their educational experience and develop creative approaches to learning; (3) computer literacy where instructors teach youth basic computer skills; and (4) adventure-based learning through day or week skill-building experiences, including camping, hiking, skiing, and canoe trips (National Crime Prevention Centre, 2008).

### *Evidence of Success of After-school and Out-of-School Programs*

Although research on the effectiveness of after-school programs is limited, there is some evidence to suggest that multicomponent programs may result in positive outcomes. The FAST program has been implemented in several primary schools around the world (e.g., Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, etc.), and the effects of the program in these schools has been evaluated using pre- and post-program data (World Health Organization, 2015). The results indicate that parents reported an increase in family cohesion, a decrease in family conflict, and an increase in the parent-child bond. Furthermore, the program was found to provide a positive environment that contributed to reducing child conduct problems and increasing child prosocial behaviours (World Health Organization, 2015).

Well-structured, youth-led (i.e., designed in collaboration with the youth) extra-curricular programs have been shown to have a small, positive effect on self-esteem and risky behaviours (Home Office, n.d.). However, some research indicates that loosely structured activities may make situations worse by removing supervision and increasing exposure to unstructured socializing that may promote antisocial attitudes and create more opportunities for deviance (Hoeben & Weerman, 2016; Home Office, n.d.). There is some anecdotal evidence to suggest that participation in Participate and Learn Skills reduces engagement in crime (National Crime Prevention Centre, 2008). An evaluation of the Leadership and Resiliency Program showed that participants not only experienced reductions in school suspensions and juvenile arrests, but they also had improvement in school attendance and graduation (National Crime Prevention Centre, 2008). An examination of the Participate and Learn Skills program also found that children who participated in the program fared better compared to youth in similar neighbourhoods on different outcomes, including increased self-esteem and reductions in juvenile delinquency (Jones & Offord, 1989). An evaluation of LA's BEST suggested that the program helps to decrease young people's arrests for violence and crime (Russell, 2021). An evaluation of the Boys & Girls Club Targeted Outreach revealed that program participants reported reductions in gang-associated behaviours, and some even reported leaving their gang (Arbreton & McClanahan, 2002). It is believed that the success of the clubs is largely because they are able to not only reach and recruit youth who need the services most (i.e., the youth at highest risk for gang involvement or the most hard-core gang members) through direct outreach and referrals, but they are also able to build positive relationships and wrap the youth in targeted, individualized services to keep them involved in the programming (Arbreton & McClanahan, 2002). The Clubs appear to have identified a crucial component to the success of a community-based program; if the Clubs cannot identify and meet the youths' needs, gangs will fill the gaps (Arbreton & McClanahan, 2002). Additionally, because the programming is place-based (i.e., provided at the Club site), it offers more opportunities for integration and cooperation amongst service providers, and encourages collaboration. While there were mixed results in relation to the MIP program's influence on youth attitudes towards conflict and frequency of aggressive behaviours, the ART program was associated with improvements in youth attitudes about conflict and declines in the frequency of aggressive behaviours (Marc Bolan Consulting, 2010). Furthermore, an evaluation of the Tacoma Connection Project revealed that certain components of the model showed some promising results; of the 266 youth who participated in the

Connection Project, less than 6% were charged with a criminal offence after the start of their selected intervention (Marc Bolan Consulting, 2010). It appears that the most promising results are found when youth are provided structured activities they personally connect with.

The evidence about the efficacy of out-of-school activities that are provided separately from education on youth violence is inconclusive (Russell, 2021). Furthermore, it remains unclear as to whether particular activities are more effective than others (Russell, 2021). Evaluating the impact of 11 sports-based programs in London, the Early Intervention Foundation did not find conclusive evidence to support any connection between programs and the prevention of youth violence and crime (McMahon & Belur, 2013). Similarly, Spruit and colleagues' (2016) meta-analysis of 51 studies examining the relationship between sports participation and juvenile delinquency revealed no significant association between the two suggesting that adolescent athletes are no more or less likely to engage in delinquent behaviour than non-athletes. Research on the benefits of extracurricular activities shows that sports may have both positive and negative developmental outcomes (Dandurand & Heidt, 2023). On the positive side, sports can help youth develop teamwork, emotional control, and initiative. Conversely, participation in sports may also lead to peer pressure to engage in activities that are morally wrong, such as aggression, physical violence, and bullying (Dandurand, & Heidt, 2023). Programs that bring high-risk youth together may increase antisocial relationships, as well as cohesion amongst anti-social peers (Russell, 2021). Overall, there is a lack of conclusive evidence that involvement in school-based recreational programs reduces problem behaviours (Dandurand & Heidt, 2023; Gottfredson & Gottfredson, 2001).

The design of an after-school program appears to be critical. Participation in extra-curricular activities (sport and non-sport) can provide situations in which youth face challenges and have various positive and negative experiences that may benefit their development (Dandurand & Heidt, 2023). Given that improperly designed after-school programs may increase youth victimization and delinquent activity, as well as increase exposure to antisocial peers (Cohen & Osterberg, 2018), it is imperative that programs are developed with consideration of good or best practices (Dandurand & Heidt, 2023). Effective programs will have explicit crime prevention objectives that are clearly linked to the afterschool/sports activities (Dandurand & Heidt, 2023). Focused on enhancing protective factors and mitigating risk factors, effective programs provide youth with support, as well as offer opportunities for learning, personal growth, success, and recognition (Dandurand & Heidt, 2023). These types of programs must be context-specific to ensure they are able to attract the target population and provide activities or services that youth enjoy, want to engage in, and that will also detract from negative outcomes (i.e., be responsive to the needs of the target youth) (Dandurand & Heidt, 2023; Russell, 2021). Program structure and content based on a specific curriculum, or a planned set of activities may lead to more positive outcomes (Cohen & Osterberg, 2018). Ensuring the program is relevant requires understanding the needs and perspectives of the target population, as well as the potential impact of culture (Dandurand & Heidt, 2023). Vulnerable groups and at-risk youth should be encouraged to participate without being stigmatized (Dandurand & Heidt, 2023). It is especially important to ensure gang-involved youth are provided with the opportunity to develop a positive identity through participation in the program, which

requires careful management of group dynamics (Dandurand & Heidt, 2023). In these instances, smaller programs are often preferrable to larger ones (Cohen & Osterberg, 2018). With Indigenous youth, it is important to ensure activities are designed to promote holistic health, traditional culture and values, connections to the land, and relationships to Indigenous communities (Dandurand & Heidt, 2023). Finally, to be most effective, after-school programs should be intensive, long-lasting, and recognize the importance of quality interactions with key social agents, such as peers, parents, teachers, and coaches. Ensuring youth are consistently involved in a program, are well supervised and supported, are provided with opportunities to belong and build skills, and have their family, school, and community integrated into the process will encourage youth to engage with the activities and achieve positive developmental outcomes (Dandurand & Heidt, 2023).

### *Mentorship Programs*

Mentorship in the context of youth violence involves an older peer or adult(s) acting as a positive role model for a young person, and providing social, emotional, and/or academic support and guidance (Russell, 2021). One of the most well-known mentorship programs is Big Brothers, Big Sisters. Implemented in 12 countries, the program works by matching adult volunteer mentors to a child, with the expectation that, through the development of a caring and supportive relationship, the mentor will assist the child in addressing problem behaviours (World Health Organization, 2015). Mentors in Violence (MVP) is a universal program that uses a peer-to-peer learning approach, where mentors are selected from the same social group as the mentees and are trained to deliver information about how to feel and act (Russell, 2021). The Gang Rescue and Support Project (GRASP) founded in Denver, Colorado, is a peer-run intervention program targeting youth who are at-risk of gang involvement or who are active in gangs. The mentors are ex-gang members, and they hold small group meetings and offer peer mentoring to encourage people to live more positive lives (Hritz & Gabow, 1997). The Tacoma Urban League Male Involvement Project (MIP) is a mentorship program consisting of culturally anchored weekly group activities and structured curriculum on life skills, conflict resolution, communication, and anger management that targets male African American, Hispanic, Asian American, and Native American youth (Marc Bolan Consulting, 2010). In this program, elementary and middle-school males of colour are provided mentorship from men of colour to provide a safe and supportive community where the students feel valued and have clear pathways to opportunity (Tacoma Urban League, 2019). The Youth at Risk Development (YARD) is a city-wide program that offers prevention services aimed at addressing the root causes of gang involvement at the individual level through social development and rehabilitation. Offering intensive mentoring and case management, this program is geared toward improving attitudes and behaviours, such as increasing positive attitudes toward employment, improving school attendance and performance, decreasing antisocial attitudes, decreasing antisocial peer association, and decreasing criminal activity of high-risk youth and youth involved in gang-related activities in Calgary, Alberta (Public Safety Canada, 2012a).

Based on the premise that a key risk factor for gang involvement and delinquent behaviour is the breakdown of the family structure, the Violence Free Zone model was developed to fill the gaps in broken families by providing a mentor and engaging in reparenting (Howell, 2000). These types of

programs have been implemented in different cities across the United States, including Dallas, Texas, Los Angeles, California, and Indianapolis, Indiana (Howell, 2000).

### *Success of Mentorship Programs*

There remains limited research about the efficacy of mentorship on youth violence-related outcomes. Hritz and Gabow's (1997) evaluation of GRASP revealed that program participants' involvement in gangs decreased following the intervention, and their school involvement and employment improved. An evaluation of the YARD program revealed mixed results in terms of the program's ability to meet its objectives. While participation in the program was associated with decreases in positive attitudes toward gangs and criminal behaviour, the program did not result in significant changes in the youth's relationships with and attitudes toward antisocial peers, school commitment, involvement in extracurricular activities, or alcohol consumption (Public Safety Canada, 2012a). However, there is some evidence to suggest that both universal and targeted mentorship programs can be effective in reducing youth violence when offered as part of a broader suite of interventions (Russell, 2021). Watts (1991) discovered that culturally specific mentoring that matches youth with adult role models helps to reduce gang involvement. Evaluations of the MVP program indicate the program has positive effects on attitudes and gender-based violence behaviours (e.g., Williams & Neville, 2017). An evaluation of the community-based Big Brothers, Big Sisters program revealed that the program may help reduce youth violence by reducing key risk factors (Grossman & Tierney, 1998). Mentored youth were less likely to skip school, use illegal drugs, and start consuming alcohol when compared to non-mentored youth during an 18-month follow-up period (Grossman & Tierney, 1998). Results from a meta-analysis (Lipsey, 2009) and large-scale program review (Greenwood & Turner, 2009) show that mentorship programs are successful in reducing recidivism by as much as 22%, and lowering involvement in delinquency, respectively. However, to be effective and ensure strong relationships between mentors and mentees, mentoring must be consistent and frequent (e.g., weekly meetings), take place over prolonged periods, be comprised of well-trained, effective, and motivated mentors, and contain an emotional support component (Russell, 2021; Weinrath et al., 2016). Additionally, it is suggested that mentorship programs should be incorporated into a broader suite of intervention initiatives, as mentorship alone is unlikely to significantly effect re-offending (Russell, 2021).

### *Community-Based Programs*

Many community-based service programs are geared toward providing services for at-risk youth and those already involved with the criminal justice system (Howell, 2000). The House of Umoja, which was developed by two community residents in Philadelphia in the 1970s, was designed as a family-centred organization to provide a human support system, role models, and socialization to help at-risk youth develop a sense of belonging, a strong identity, as well as the mechanisms for resolving conflicts (Howell, 2000). The Stop Now and Plan (SNAP) program targets children aged six to 12 who have come into contact or are at risk of coming into contact with the criminal justice system, and provides services aimed at reducing aggressive and anti-social behaviour, and preventing future delinquency (National Crime Prevention Centre, 2008). Consisting of courses designed for children and parents, the program teaches anger and impulse control, effective

behavioural skills for reducing aggressive and delinquent behaviour, and good parenting skills (National Crime Prevention Centre, 2008). The Massachusetts Safe and Successful Youth Initiative (SSYI) has been implemented in eleven areas with the highest rates of violent crime per capita, with the aims of reducing violence and promoting healthy development and outcomes amongst young males between 14 to 24 years-old who have already committed a gun or gang-related crime or have been victims of such a crime (Campie et al., 2017). Identified at-risk males are engaged with outreach workers who act as mentors to help secure support and resources for program participants (Campie et al., 2017). In this program model, case management services work closely with mental health clinicians to provide individualized service plans that include behavioural health services, educational programs, and workforce development (Campie et al., 2017). Albuquerque's Youth Development Inc. (YDI)'s Gang Prevention and Intervention Program is designed to prevent initial gang involvement among younger teenagers, and, through a structured seven-week program, provide non-violent activities for current gang members that lead them to become involved in counseling and community service and to learn important skills, including non-violence conflict resolution skills (Howell, 2000). The District of Columbia's Homicide Reduction Strategy's Weed and Seed intervention program provides viable alternatives to crime through afterschool programs, summer camps, and midnight basketball tournaments that provide at-risk children between the ages of nine and 12 with tutoring, mentoring, and recreational programs (Project Safe Neighborhoods, 2005). The Teens on Target (TNT) program, which is administered by the Youth Alive! Nonprofit agency in Oakland, California, aims to reduce youth injuries and death from gang-related and other gun violence through peer education, intervention, mentoring, and leadership development (Howell, 2000). The training curriculum was developed by TNT leaders, who are often violence victims, to address the relationship between violence and family contexts, guns, gangs, and drugs, the causes and effects of violence, and advocacy skills necessary to stop violence (Howell, 2000). In addition to conducting student workshops and mediating conflicts between rival groups, TNT leaders operate a peer visitation program for hospitalized youth who are recovering from serious injuries to dissuade them from retaliation (Howell, 2000).

Providing culturally sensitive services, the Regina Anti-Gang Services operated through the North Central Community Association in Regina, Saskatchewan, provides intensive support services to reduce involvement in gang life and facilitate leaving gangs for gang-involved Aboriginal youth and young adults (National Crime Prevention Centre, 2012). Working with community-based partners, such as the Regina Police Service, Regina Board of Education, and the Saskatchewan Department of Corrections and Public Safety, this program provides intensive counseling, life and cognitive skills development, cultural/faith-based programming, outreach, family programming, and gang exit strategies (National Crime Prevention Centre, 2012). The Youth Alliance Against Gang Violence (YAAGV), also known as the Warrior Spirit Walking Program, is another community-based crime prevention program targeting Aboriginal youth between the ages of 12 and 21 who are gang-involved or at risk of gang involvement (Public Safety Canada, 2020). The program is based on the Circle of Courage approach that incorporates four of the medicine wheel values: (1) Belonging; (2) Mastery; (3) Independence; and (4) Generosity. Grounded in this framework, the program focuses on increasing protective factors and reducing risk factors by increasing youth attachment to school, reducing youth involvement in gang violence and crime, and increasing literacy skills and high

school completion rates (Akca et al., 2020). Some of the core components of this model include counseling, participation in presentations to other youth about the dangers of youth violence (presentation team), participation in an alternative school program to assist with completing high school training (senior and junior Won Ska cultural schools), engagement in activities that are provided in a safe environment through the youth activity centre, van outreach, and court outreach (Public Safety Canada, 2020).

Some programs are designed for specific environments. Grounded in social disorganization theories, the Chicago Area Project (CAP) was designed to improve neighbourhood conditions believed to increase the likelihood of youth gang formation, such as the lack of afterschool and recreation programs, by making use of existing community structures and involving local community groups, including Indigenous community organizations and church groups (Esbensen, 2000; Howell, 2000). The CAP is a primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention initiative that includes recreational activities, community self-renewal, mediation, and the use of detached community workers who became involved with community improvement campaigns, such as health care, and advocacy for gang members (Esbensen, 2000; Howell, 2000). The Inner-City Games (ICG) program, which operates in 12 cities in the United States, provides alternatives to gang life for inner-city youth in urban centres (Howell, 2000). Providing opportunities for youth to participate in educational, cultural, community-enrichment, and athletic programs, the ICG program helps youth build confidence and self-esteem to make more prosocial choices. Designed particularly to address issues in low-income areas and public housing projects, the Neutral Zone program provides high-risk youth with a safe alternative to being out on the streets late at night (Howell, 2000). The Boys & Girls Club of Canada/America offer programs that promote healthy growth and development for youth between the ages of five to 18, and families living in high-need communities (National Crime Prevention Centre, 2008). Located in Club facilities, schools, church basements, or community centres, the Clubs provide an array of services, such as summer camps, recreational programs, group homes, school-aged childcare, drug counseling programs, leadership development programs, peer counseling, support for teen mothers, and alternative education programs designed to take a child-focused approach to skill development, self-esteem enhancement, and character building (National Crime Prevention Centre, 2008). Delivered by qualified staff and volunteers, the programs provide a safe and positive space for children during the hours they are unsupervised and most vulnerable, such as between 15:00 and 18:00.

Starting in the 1940s, community-based youth gang programs in the United States began to rely on detached workers to transform street gangs into prosocial groups (Howell, 2000). Most of the program activities were carried out on the streets, and included securing health care for gang members, providing employment counseling, doing advocacy work with the police and courts, and other actions geared toward changing gang values (Howell, 2000). Evidence from program evaluations of several detached worker programs suggest that, as a singular approach, this type of program is ineffective (e.g., Klein, 1995; Miller, 1962). In fact, in an evaluation of the Los Angeles Probation Department's Group Guidance Project, Klein (1995) discovered that the group activities, which included weekly club meetings, sports activities, tutoring, individual counseling, and advocacy with community agencies and organizations served to increase gang growth and

cohesiveness that promoted increased gang delinquency. Even though the detached worker model fell out of favour, several other intervention strategies have been developed building on the basic tenets of the detached worker model. In effect, different intervention strategies have built upon the basic idea behind the detached worker strategy to provide alternatives to gang life.

Starting in the 1950s and 1960s, street outreach workers were seen as a viable mechanism for eradicating gang problems by connecting gang youth with community agencies and social supports (Bradstreet, 2015). In addition to connecting target youth to services and prosocial activities, outreach workers would have additional responsibilities, including assessing youth needs, intervening in crises, responding to conflicts and violence, and helping to educate youth and disrupt the cycle of violence (Bradstreet, 2015). Recognizing the important role that outreach workers can play as role models and mentors, many community-based programs have incorporated some form of outreach into their strategy to address gangs and violence. Community-wide violence prevention programs utilize members of the community as "street outreach workers" (SWs) to intervene and prevent conflict with violence-involved individuals (Frattaroli et al., 2009). Outreach activities include establishing and maintaining positive, supportive relationships with members from a target population, connecting clients with services, and engaging in follow-ups (Frattaroli et al., 2009). The use of street outreach workers has been incorporated into several community-based preventive programs. The Comin' Up gang intervention strategy developed by the Boys & Girls Clubs of America, for example, works with all identified and referred gang members and provides them with educational and employment opportunities, life skills development, and aims to reduce incidences of gang violence and establish truces among rival gangs. The hallmark of the program is the use of the program's successful clients, namely ex-gang members, as outreach workers (Howell, 2000). The comprehensive gang model in Bloomington-Normal, Illinois utilizes SWs to reach out to youth in gangs or those who are at-risk for gang membership to connect them with opportunities, such as education and job training. The role of SWs was also expanded in the CeaseFire-Chicago program to include direct mediation of street conflicts and the provision of resources and supports to assist individuals in their transition away from violent lifestyles (Frattaroli et al., 2009). In Lowell, Massachusetts, the United Teen Equality Centre (UTEC) incorporates SWs into all components of the approach, including intensive follow-ups (i.e., home visits, phone calls, and contacts with youth's social supports), outreach, access to resources, and using crises as an opportunity for change (Frattaroli et al., 2009). The program uses SWs to meet youth where they are at to directly intervene to prevent or mitigate violence (crisis as an opportunity) and to serve clients through a personalized approach that is tailored to the individual's needs (Frattaroli et al., 2009).

Recognizing that addressing trauma is critical to breaking the cycle of violence, many community-based interventions aim to reduce (re)injury and retaliation of those who have been violently injured using a trauma-informed or public health model (Roman et al., 2017). These models usually incorporate assessment, intensive case management, mentorship, and multidisciplinary case review (Roman et al., 2017). The Community Initiative to Reduce Violence (CIRV) program in Scotland is a community-based, public health approach to gang prevention and intervention. The program offers access to diversionary activities, personal development, and employment

preparedness in exchange for a "no violence, no weapon" pledge by the participants that is monitored by the police (Russell, 2021). This public-health approach has also been implemented in the United States through the Cure Violence model (Butts et al., 2015). The Cure Violence model employs multiple methods to change norms about violence at the individual-level, as well as at the community-level (McGarrell et al., 2013). Based on the assumption that violent behaviour responds to structures, incentives, and norms, this models relies on three key elements to stop the transmission of violent behaviour: (1) interrupting the transmission of violence directly by preventing retaliatory shootings, mediating ongoing conflicts, and following-up with ongoing conflicts; (2) identifying individuals who are most at risk of perpetrating gun violence and introducing them to alternative models of conflict resolution; and (3) changing group norms regarding violence through public education efforts conveying the message that violence is harmful, unacceptable, and must stop (Butts et al., 2015). This model requires the use of special program staff members, known as "violence interrupters" (VIs). Selected for their experience with crime and violence, VIs form relationships with high-risk youth and monitor their ongoing disputes to learn about potential acts of retaliation before they happen (Butts et al., 2015). Vis are believed to be key in mediating street-level conflict and control rumours in the immediate aftermath of a violent gang crime (Brantingham et al., 2017). Outreach workers are also crucial to the success of the model; they provide an avenue for connecting high-risk individuals to positive opportunities and resources in the community, including employment, housing, education, and recreational activities (Butts et al., 2015). This model is meant to complement law enforcement efforts to address violent crime by approaching the problem from a different angle (McGarrell et al., 2013). Gun violence is essentially treated through the same mechanism as medicine treats infectious diseases (Wong et al., 2012). The Cure Violence model has been implemented in several cities across the United States, including Chicago, Illinois (Chicago-CeaseFire), Baltimore, Maryland (Safe Streets), Brooklyn, New York (Save Our Streets), Phoenix, Arizona (TRUCE Project), and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania (One Vision One Life).

Wraparound programs aim to deliver flexible, strength-based, comprehensive services to help at-risk individuals and their families in community settings (Walter & Petr, 2011). The wraparound philosophy is based on several core elements, including individualizing, strength-based services, utilizing a team, using family, service providers, and key members from the family's social support network to direct the process, ensure supports include a balance of formal services and informal community/family supports, develop plans of care based on a collaborative process, and ensure the approach is flexible and adequately funded (Walter & Petr, 2011). Wraparound programs were traditionally implemented through community mental health settings; however, they have been expanded to schools and community settings (Walter & Petr, 2011). One of the main wraparound services in North America is Wraparound Milwaukee. The program is administered by the county's behavioural health division and includes partnerships with more than 100 community organizations (Osmond, 2019). Offering a personalized, flexible, and strength-based approach, the program provides services aimed at assisting at-risk youth and young adults by addressing academic success, aggressive behaviour, violent tendencies, bullying, mental and physical health conditions, community connection, and household-related issues (Osmond, 2019). The program has four main components: (1) care coordination that is used to determine the resources and needs of each individual family; (2) a child and family team (i.e., the relatives, friends, and neighbours that

comprise the family's support system); (3) a mobile crisis team that is available to the family when the program coordinator is unavailable; and (4) a provider network that consists of the wraparound staff (i.e., social worker, psychologist, etc.) (National Crime Prevention Centre, 2008). Founded in 2009, Project BUILD was designed to be a wraparound program that functioned to enhance the lives of youth by connecting them to educational and employment resources, mentors, and prosocial role models (Parker et al., 2014). Utilizing outreach workers, individuals are assessed for their goals, aspirations, and circumstance, and provided individualized resource referrals (Parker et al., 2014). Because of this individualized approach, even though the program is primarily focused on targeting gang and potential gang members, the program can serve most youth populations (Parker et al., 2014).

There have also been several wraparound programs developed in Canada. Developed in 2011, the Surrey Wraparound (Wrap) initiative is a partnership between the Surrey School District, the City of Surrey, the Surrey RCMP, and CFSEU-BC. Together, these organizations work to build positive connections between at-risk youth aged 11 to 17 years old and their school, community, and home to address risk and needs factors, and protect youth from being enticed to engage in criminal activities, such as joining gangs (Juhasz, 2019). Based on a philosophy of care model, clients are provided with a wraparound team that works cooperatively to design and implement a care plan that supports the well-being of the client (Osmond, 2019). Some of the services provided by Wrap include supervised work experience for youth to build self-worth, goal setting to help the youth be successful in the school environment, athletic and recreational opportunities to help youth focus on and develop their strengths, and mentorship to help build trusting and positive relationships between youth and police (Surrey Schools, n.d.). Even though the program targets all youth at risk of becoming involved in a gang or gang activity, the Surrey Wrap program worked to address the needs of two distinct groups: (1) at-risk youth who present with traditional risk factors (i.e., experience poverty, substance abuse, and unstable home environments), and (2) South Asian youth from middle-class families who lack family bonds (Public Safety Canada, 2012b). Abbotsford has several wraparound-style programs geared toward addressing the needs of at-risk youth. Abbotsford's Youth Crime Prevention Project aims to foster crime prevention through an integrated, multi-agency approach that includes outreach, education, and mentoring for street entrenched, sexually exploited, or homeless youth at risk of gang and criminal involvement, and South Asian youth who are at risk of gang involvement or who are already participating in gangs or gang-related behaviours (Public Safety Canada, n.d.). Once referred to the program, unique wraparound plans are developed and implemented by a team of support staff to address the specific risks and needs of the youth. Elements of the plan can include counseling, access to recreational activities, outreach support, family support services, educational supports, and life skills work (Public Safety Canada, n.d.). In another example, Abbotsford's In It Together program is a collaborative anti-gang initiative that brings together the Archway Youth Resource Centre, South Asian Community Resource Office, Abbotsford Police Department, and Abbotsford School District to disrupt and interrupt the flow of youth aged 11 to 24 into gangs or organized crime (Archway Community Services, 2023). With the goal of reducing gang involvement or gang activity, In It Together ensures at-risk youth and their families are provided with a multitude of resources and supports, including individual case management, youth outreach, recreation, essential skills,

counseling, and access to parent and youth groups (Archway Community Services, 2023). Also based on a wraparound approach, Hamilton's Gang Prevention Strategy (GPS) targets youth aged 13 to 25 deemed to be at a higher risk for being involved in a gang, and aims to increase awareness of consequences of gang involvement, encourage youth to adopt a less positive attitude toward gangs, increase motivation to participate in prosocial behaviours, decrease risk factors associated with interest in gang activity, and increase protective factors that contribute to a youth's interest in prosocial activities (Public Safety Canada, 2012c). The key elements of this approach include the assignment of a coach, development of a case management plan, and monthly meetings with the coach (Public Safety Canada, 2012c).

Another unique project was developed in the City of Surrey through a university setting that combined academic researchers with key community stakeholders. Consisting of academic researchers, community groups, including the school district, city mayor's office, and the parents and teachers association, the RCMP and CFSEU-BC, as well as non-profit agencies serving the youth and local community, the Acting Together-Community-University Research Alliance (AT-CURA) project was developed to take a different approach to tackling the gang problem in British Columbia (Bhatt & Tweed, 2018). Focusing on strengths rather than weaknesses, the AT-CURA project aimed to identify factors that would prevent and protect youth from negative influences and the allures of criminal gangs (Bhatt & Tweed, 2018). The idea was that internal protective factors, such as intelligence, and academic aspirations, along with external protective factors, including positive parenting, relationships with non-delinquent peers, positive school success, and prosocial involvement, may play key roles in influencing adolescents' resiliency and beliefs about the costs and benefits associated with gangs (Bhatt & Tweed, 2018). To strengthen the protective factors, AT-CURA offered violence prevention training workshops for youth, parents, and service providers (Bhatt & Tweed, 2018). The Choices workshop[7] involved former gang-involved youth who worked in partnership with local police and high school teachers to develop and offer a training workshop for 220 high school students (Bhatt & Tweed, 2018). This workshop engaged youth in various scenarios of turning points adolescents typically encounter to help steer them through various positive outcomes. To strengthen ties with positive role models at school, home, and in the community, the project developed a community garden summer project. A partnership between the high school, city, and local garden and tools businesses provided at-risk youth with the opportunity to learn to grow and tend an organic vegetable garden and to receive a small remuneration for their work as a reward (Bhatt & Tweed, 2018). To engage with parents, the project provided community forums for dialogue through radio and public events (Bhatt & Tweed, 2018). A short, easy-to-read book was also developed that provided parents with information about the dynamics of local gang recruitment processes. Additional efforts were made to engage with the police and communities, including assisting police with disseminating information about the dangers of gang activities through posters and videos, and creating leadership summits where police and community leaders

[7] This workshop has since become a part of the End Gang Life campaign by the Combined Forces Special Enforcement Unit-BC (Bhatt & Tweed, 2018).

could collaborate on action plans to address gang involvement in their communities (Bhatt & Tweed, 2018).

Other programs have been developed specifically to improve conditions for gang members and to assist with exiting the gang lifestyle. The Homeboy Industries is the largest gang rehabilitation societal re-entry program in the United States (Tally & Fulton, 2013). Founding the Jobs for a Future programs in Los Angeles, California, Homeboy Industries places gang members in jobs in the community, including bakeries and merchandise creation (Howell, 2000). Some of the enterprises serving as job-training sites and revenue to fund the program include Homeboy Bakery, Homeboy Silkscreen, Homeboy Graffiti Removal Services, and Homeboy Maintenance Services (Tally & Fulton, 2013). Adding to their repertoire of services, Homeboy Industries provides tattoo removal, counseling services, job skills training, case management, mental health services, domestic violence services, substance abuse services, education, and certification programs to assist former gang members and gang-impacted individuals to successfully re-enter the workforce (Tally & Fulton, 2013). Administered by the United States Department of Labor, YouthBuild provides an alternative education program targeting 16 to 24-year-olds. Participants develop construction skills as they help to build affordable housing in their neighbourhoods (Roman et al., 2017). Similarly, Job Corps is designed to help disadvantaged youth become responsible, employable, and productive citizens by providing various forms of education (i.e., academic, health, etc.), vocational training, job placement, personal and professional skills development, and counseling services (National Crime Prevention Centre, 2008). Youth attend the program for up to two years and are paid a monthly stipend after joining the program. Offered through the PLEA Community Services Organization of BC, Career Path provides at-risk youth with meaningful employment and mentoring to assist with obtaining jobs into adulthood. Along with a variety of training and educational opportunities, the program offers intensive one-to-one support and supervision, job placements, and employer mentoring (Institute for the Prevention of Crime, 2011).

In Saskatchewan, there has been a provincial shift toward the development and implementation of community-based approaches to address street gangs (Akca et al., 2020). Supporting the Provincial Gang Strategy, the grassroots organization STR8 UP 10,000 Little Steps to Healing Inc. provides outreach, intervention, and prevention services designed to help individuals between the ages of 15- and 30-years old abandon the gang lifestyle and reintegrate back into their communities (Akca et al., 2020). Based on the success of other intervention methods and best/promising practices identified in the research, STR8 UP's initiative was developed to provide a localized and sustainable approach to gang prevention through the increase of programming around healthy family dynamics, mental health, addictions, education, employment, and housing (Akca et al., 2020). The community intervention model portion of the program consists of three phases. First, once a client is referred to the program, a dedicated outreach worker is assigned to provide individual support for four to six months (Akca et al., 2020). The second phase is transformation, which involves 16 months of intensive programming to assist clients to reach their educational and employment goals. In the third phase, clients receive support for one to two years after they complete the initial phases of their healing (Akca et al., 2020). The community outreach model component of the program includes a range of services designed to assist gang members who are considering or who are in the

process of leaving their gang. Some of the key services include mentorship, training focused on professional development and literacy skill development, community education (e.g., workshops, presentations, projects), tattoo removal, and advocacy and outreach work (Akca et al., 2020). Considering lived experiences and challenges faced in building healthy lives, the program activities are provided in four phases: (1) decision-making about changing their lifestyle; (2) transition out of the gang; (3) transformation (i.e., taking on new responsibilities and engaging in new opportunities); and (4) stabilization in new lifestyle (Akca et al., 2020).

### *Evidence of Success of Community-Based Programs*

Despite their popularity, these community-based approaches have received little empirical evaluation and support. Some of the initiatives show promise in improving the quality of life of at-risk individuals and their families. For example, the Boys & Girls Clubs of Canada/America have been shown to increase a sense of belonging amongst at-risk youth, help in school and family life, and reduce contacts with the criminal justice system (National Crime Prevention Centre, 2008). An evaluation of the Surrey Wrap program found decreases in negative police contacts for at-risk youth, and that the Wrap team had successfully prevented the formation of a gang on at least one occasion (Public Safety Canada, 2012b), The SNAP program has been associated with improvements in parent confidence in raising a child, as well as reductions in criminal records among high-risk children (National Crime Prevention Centre, 2008).

There is also some evidence to suggest that community-based initiatives can assist with preventing gang involvement and gang activity. Research shows that participation in programs with an employment component may not only assist with obtaining employment, but may also decrease engagement in risky, deviant, or violent behaviours, including using alcohol, selling drugs, and damaging property (e.g., Sum et al., 2013). Results from an early study of Job Corps showed that, in addition to increasing average weekly earnings, program participants had lower arrest rates (Schochet et al., 2001). Homeboy Industries claimed that 70% of their trainees who completed involvement with the program found gainful employment and stayed out of prison (Magana, 2016). Homeboy Industries also showed promise for improving community conditions and the quality of life of former gang members (Tally & Fulton, 2013). Specifically, four of the services provided by the program (alcohol and drug rehabilitation, anger management and domestic violence, mental health services, and tattoo removal) have been linked to positive outcomes (Akca et al., 2020). Key program services were associated with the replacement of gang life with positive activities, such as becoming employed, establishing a new identity, improving parenting and family relationships, overcoming drug and alcohol addiction, and establishing plans for the future (Akca et al., 2020). To date, the program has supported over 5,000 community members, provided almost 12,000 tattoo treatments, and conducted more than 3,500 therapy sessions (Homeboy Industries, 2022). In addition to benefiting the community by using the proceeds from these ventures to fund community services and programs, providing jobs may be an effective intervention strategy. Research suggests that legally obtained income earned from legitimate employment is viewed positively by gang members and is associated with reductions in recidivism and gang violence (Howell, 2000). However, it should be noted that employment drop-out rates were relatively high

between seven and 90 days of program participation (Tally & Fulton, 2013). With nearly two-thirds of the program participants being re-arrested, recidivism rates among program participants also remained high (Tally & Fulton, 2013). The evidence suggests that programs may be less effective when individuals maintain strong ties to their gang (e.g., maintain relationships with active gang members).

Many programs finding success have attributed positive outcomes to specific components or strategies, namely the use of outreach workers to fill gaps and connect youth to social supports in safe environments (Bradstreet, 2015). Using outreach programs and ex-gang members in outreach efforts, for instance, has historically been linked to preventing gang involvement (e.g., Curry, 1995; Parks and Community Services Department, 1997). Examining the effect of interventions provided through Project BUILD, researchers discovered the program was associated with decreases in several negative behaviours, including gang activity, school failure, substance use, and, to a lesser extent, association with deviant peers and delinquency (Parker et al., 2014). Participation in the YAAGV program was associated with significant decreases in the acceptance of gangs between program entry and at 24- and 30-months follow-ups of 38% and 42%, respectively (Public Safety Canada, 2020). YAAGV program participants also showed increases in conflict resolution between program entry and six-months post-program entry (Akca et al., 2020). An examination of the SWs in the UTEC program further exemplifies the potential benefits of outreach services. Frattaroli and colleagues (2009) discovered that SWs may positively effect youth violence by offering a unique opportunity to encourage dialogue between disputing parties and to provide gangs with key tools to help in the process of resolving their conflict. Furthermore, SWs were seen as being capable of creating viable alternatives to violence for youth through the provision of opportunities to engage in education, gain skills, find employment, or engage in recreation (Frattaroli et al., 2009). Campie and colleagues (2017) examination of the effect of the SSYI program revealed that some of the major benefits of the program related to the outreach staff. Positively, staff were perceived by participants as being relatable and dependable. Examining the success of the House of Umoja, the National Centre for Neighborhood Enterprise (1999) found that the program's family model, process of socialization, and emphasis on service, leadership training, and development played key roles in preventing more than 500 minority males from joining gangs by improving their self-worth. Connecting youth with mentors, supports, and resources increases advocacy for youth, may foster an increased sense of belonging, and provides emotional support. All these positive program elements are believed to lead to decreases in negative behaviours, while also promoting increased commitments to prosocial institutions and activities (Tolan et al., 2014). However, it is crucial to note that successful street outreach requires using the right people as outreach workers. Research indicates that outreach workers should be of similar background to the clients, have a good reputation in the community, have strong community ties to be able to connect with the clients, and have a clear understanding of the gang problem (Bradstreet, 2015), Moreover, in addition to being able to work within the restraints of the existing service framework (i.e., understand what services are available), outreach workers must be able to establish working relationships with community service providers and the police to be able to make appropriate referrals (Bradstreet, 2015).

Evaluations of public health model programs suggest that these approaches show promise for reducing or eliminating gang-related offending and behaviours. For instance, a preliminary quasi-experimental pre/post study of the CIRV program revealed that a public health approach with gang-related youth aged 16 to 29 was associated with reductions in violent offending and weapons carrying (Williams et al., 2014). Within a two-year follow-up period, program participants' violent offending and weapons carrying were reduced by 52% and 84%, respectively (Williams et al., 2014). Similar trends were found among cities that adopted the SSYI program. Areas with an implemented SSYI program saw significant reductions in crime, primarily violent crime, among the population of young adults between the ages of 14 to 25 compared to non-SSYI cities (Campie et al., 2017). Furthermore, there is some evidence to suggest that case management and the use of violence interrupters may reduce injury, prevent retaliatory violence, and decrease re-entry into the criminal justice system (Roman et al., 2017). As an example, an examination of an Oakland hospital-based program found that participants were 60% less likely to have criminal involvement, and 70% less likely to be arrested for any offence (Becker et al., 2004). Similarly, examinations of the Los Angeles GYRD program revealed that the violence interruption component of the initiative resulted in an over 18% reduction in the retaliation rate (Park et al., 2021), and that clients who were involved with the Prevention Services (i.e., initiatives aimed at reducing youth from joining a gang among those ages 10 to 15) reported engaging in fewer violent and gang-related behaviours between program intake and at retest (i.e., between four and eight months after being enrolled) (Cahill et al., 2015). In their study of violence interruption, Brantingham and colleagues (2017) determined that using civilian intervention workers to mediate street-level conflicts may complement the efforts of the police. In this way, violence interrupters may help to buy time, and separate potential shooters from their victims and from their group members who may be encouraging violence (Whitehill et al., 2013).

Evaluations of several of the Cure Violence initiatives suggest that public health-based initiatives may target the correct population (i.e., high-risk individuals), and effect at-risk individuals through the provision of services, including assistance with finding employment, drug abuse treatment, and obtaining education (McGarrell et al., 2013). However, evidence to support the effect of the Cure Violence model on other important outcomes, including lowering gun violence and homicides, is less consistent (Butts et al., 2015). An assessment of Baltimore's adoption of the Cure Violence model showed that, when implemented in its full capacity, there were reductions in homicides and shootings by 56% and 34%, respectively (Webster et al., 2012). Examining 17 years-worth of data, a national evaluation of Cure Violence revealed that shootings did appear to decrease as a direct result of the initiative by between 16% to 28% (Skogan et al., 2009). However, the shootings decreased in only four of seven study sites (Skogan et al., 2009). Given the difficulties associated with implementing these types of programs, the lack of success may not be attributable to the actual design of the initiative itself. The evaluation of the Chicago-CeaseFire program noted several obstacles to developing these types of initiatives, including establishing consistent funding, consistency in program implementation, obtaining community buy-in, and establishing new programs in neighbourhoods with severely high-levels of disorganization (Butts et al., 2015). To be effective, programs need to align with the specific characteristics of the community, including the

scope and nature of the problem, as well as working within the confines of the availability of resources and support for the program.

Research on wraparound programs has been limited, and results pertaining to their effect on behavioural outcomes have been inconclusive (Walter & Petr, 2011). Some research does suggest that participation in wraparound programs may decrease behavioural impairments and improve school functioning (Walter & Petr, 2011). Using a quasi-experimental design, Public Safety Canada (2012c) evaluated Hamilton's Gang Prevention Strategy (GPS) and discovered that the program increased community knowledge about drug abuse and gang prevention, strengthened bonds between youth and their coaches, and increased community engagement among participating youths through volunteer opportunities and legitimate employment. Moreover, the program resulted in decreases in some negative behaviours, including gang involvement, certain delinquent behaviours, such as carrying illegal weapons, and drug use (Public Safety Canada, 2012c). However, other studies have not found any positive effects from wraparound programs (Walter & Petr, 2011). There are also some potential unintended consequences associated with these types of programs. For example, program eligibility requirements may lead to the exclusion of some youth who could benefit from the program but do not meet the "risk" threshold (Public Safety Canada, 2012c). Furthermore, including high-risk or gang-involved youth in the same activities as low-risk youth may expose the latter to the gang lifestyle and increase negative peer associations (Public Safety Canada, 2012c). There are also several challenges to implementing a wraparound program, including navigating effective collaboration among partner agencies to arrive at a single comprehensive plan, defining and adhering to the principles and processes of the program, while simultaneously developing a flexible, individualized service plan, and balancing the use of natural supports with the more formal services (Walter & Petr, 2011). One of the key implementation issues involves the family-centred components of these programs. In their evaluation of the GPS program, Public Safety Canada (2012c) found that many families are dysfunctional or unsupportive, which has posed challenges for service providers in effectively engaging them.

It is important to acknowledge that there are some potential negative outcomes associated with certain components of community-based programs. The use of group programming, such as that which occurred with the detached workers programs, has been found to lead to an increase in gang cohesiveness (i.e., growth and closeness), which, in turn, was associated with increased gang crime (Klein, 1995). Based on a group guidance philosophy, detached workers arrange club meetings to bring together gang members to teach democratic values and reorient their attitudes and behaviours to be more prosocial. However, even though the young gang members viewed the meetings as a time for companionship, a place to go, and an opportunity to seek help, they would also find that the meetings showed a gang's strength (i.e., the influence of a gang in a community) and provided a place to recruit new members (Klein, 1969). Increasing the cohesion amongst gang members was found to be related to delinquent behaviours through companionship-based crimes (i.e., crimes committed by more than one individual) (Klein, 1969). More recent longitudinal research on peer-group interventions have also suggested that group interventions for high-risk youth may lead to deviancy training (i.e., the reinforcement of problematic behaviours), which predicts increases in delinquency, substance use, violence, and adult maladjustment (Dishion et al.,

1999). Based on their study of factors accounting for peer influence of adolescent delinquency and depression, Reynolds and Crea (2015) suggest that, because peer influence may be amplified by social network factors and a youth's ability to self-regulate, avoiding iatrogenic effects requires adopting a network-informed intervention approach. The available evidence and information drawn from failed initiatives provides a foundation for moving forward with improving community-based approaches to addressing gangs and violence. To be effective, programs need to target the community structure and capacity of gangs alongside the individual members to be able to properly intervene in group processes and address different forms of gang subcultures (Esbensen, 2000; Klein & Maxson, 2006).

## POLICE AND GOVERNMENT-BASED PROGRAMS

A notable risk factor for gang membership is perceived lack of safety (Howell, 2010). Seeking protection through gang membership is a common motivation for joining a gang (Howell, 2010). Neighbourhoods characterized by visible signs of crime and violence may contribute to gang involvement (Leschied, 2005). Thus, to prevent gang membership, Leschied (2005) argues that it is essential to first address existing gang problems. In effect, by reducing the visibility of gang activities, gang membership becomes less appealing. Compared to community-based strategies, law enforcement initiatives primarily involve suppression initiatives designed to extinguish existing violent behaviour through aggressive law enforcement and deterrence. This may involve setting an example through direct communication, such as delivering deterrence and zero-tolerance messages to active gang members, and the use of various legal response mechanisms that persuade offenders and others in the community to avoid criminal behaviour (Butts et al., 2015). To target gang activities, law enforcement strategies emphasize certainty, severity, and celerity of punishment (Roman et al., 2017).

One of the most common strategies adopted by police agencies has been hotspot policing (Sherman et al., 1998, Stewart, 2023). Police data and geo-spatial analytics are used to identify and respond to crime in areas where there are concentrations of criminal behaviours ("hotspots"). Targeting these high-risk times and places, hotspot policing involves increasing visible patrols of uniformed officers. Concentrated deployment in high-crime areas is believed to discourage offenders from taking advantage of opportunities to commit crime (Sherman et al., 1998). Hotspot policing has been implemented in British Columbia to address the gang and violent crime problem. In 2019, for instance, a gang task force embarked on a 30-day project known as PARA BELLUM that involved tailoring resource deployment strategies to mitigate, disrupt, and suppress gang-related violence. Based on an analysis of historical crime trends and patterns, hotspots and high-risk times were identified, and the task force was deployed to specific locations during times when violence was most likely to occur (CFSEU-BC, 2021a). Throughout this project, the team checked 2,147 people, created 435 files, made 59 arrests, and seized over 40 prohibited weapons (CFSEU-BC, 2021a; Stewart, 2023).

Coinciding with the re-emergence of the community policing model, many police agencies across North America began developing specialized gang units (Weisel & Shelley, 2004). Most law

enforcement agencies have a gang unit tasked with engaging in gang intelligence, investigations, suppression activities, and preventive functions (Howell, 2000). In British Columbia, Canada, law enforcement agencies began developing gang units in the 1980's (Juhasz, 2019), and many programs aiming to address community gang problems have been independently developed and delivered by gang units at various police departments. For example, the Abbotsford Police Department's Gang Crime Unit developed a multifaceted approach to target youth and young adults identified as being at-risk for gang involvement and to suppress gang activity (Abbotsford Police Department, 2022). The PATHWAYS program utilized community engagement, prevention, and intervention to prevent youth and young adults from becoming entrenched in the gang lifestyle and attempts to divert these individuals away from a criminal lifestyle. The program focuses on building positive relationships in the community, addressing risk factors, and strengthening protective factors through engagement, education, and empowerment strategies to prevent gang involvement and mobilizing resources and services to intervene in gang activities (Abbotsford Police Department, 2022). Supported by the Vancouver Police Department's Gang Unit, the "Her Time" program implemented in 2017 focuses specifically on girls in gangs. This program aims to raise awareness about the dangers associated with becoming involved with male gang members using presentations (Juhasz, 2019). In addition to targeting females who are already gang-involved, the program targets young women and high-school-aged girls who are at-risk of becoming involved in a gang (Juhasz, 2019).

In 2004, the Province of British Columbia created an integrated anti-gang agency, known as the Combined Forces Special Enforcement Unit of British Columbia (CFSEU-BC), to establish a coordinated approach to aggressively "target, investigate, prosecute, disrupt, and dismantle organized crime groups and individuals that pose the highest risk to public safety due to their involvement in gang violence" (CFSEU-BC, 2021b). This agency is comprised of members from every police department in British Columbia, as well as the British Columbia Integrated Task Force (CFSEU-BC, 2021b). Led and developed in December 2013 by the Organized Crime Agency of British Columbia (OCA-BC) working within the CFSEU-BC, the End Gang Life program is a comprehensive gang education, prevention, and awareness initiative that uses bold, emotional, and visually impactful images and messages to engage the public about gangs, provide material that educates the public about gangs, aims to prevent youth and young adults from joining gangs, and encourages those involved in gang life to exit (Cohen et al., 2019; Pritchard, 2019). More specifically, the End Gang Life program provides comprehensive gang education, awareness, and prevention initiatives through outreach, life coaching, counseling services, mental health and general educational programs, and career path exploration and skills development (CFSEU-BC, 2021b). Using myth-dispelling, emotive, and visually impactful messaging provided through a variety of mediums (e.g., booklets, social media/videos, school presentations, video modules with facilitator's guides for teachers, television, and online/radio advertisements), CFSEU-BC aims to engage with the public and prevent youth and young adults from joining gangs (CFSEU-BC, 2021b; Cohen et al., 2019). As part of the End Gang Life Strategy, CFSEU-BC created the *Myths and Realities of Gangs* video modules that have been seen by over 75,000 youth in British Columbia and which remains a critical component of the CFSEU-BC's End Gang Life gang prevention, education, and awareness initiative. The videos are available on the CFSEU-BC's website, www.endganglife.ca, and

have been distributed to police agencies and community partners across Canada and beyond. Accompanying the series is now an educational Facilitator's Guide that helps guide teachers, police officers, and others with those viewing the videos to explore and discuss the many themes and topics that the videos cover. Piloted by the RCMP F Division in La Ronge, Saskatchewan, the End Gang Life program was adapted to include culturally significant supplementary materials, including media content about Indigenous culture, history, and ways of knowing, and former gang members experiences about intergenerational violence, poverty, and family addictions, to target risk factors specific to at-risk and gang-involved members from Indigenous communities (Turcotte, 2019).

Focusing specifically on encouraging existing gang members to leave their gang, the End Gang Life's Gang Intervention and Exiting Team (GIET) provides supports to high-risk individuals over the age of 12 who are committed to long-term positive change (CFSEU-BC, 2021b). In addition, the GIET is committed to encouraging gang exiting using targeted enforcement activities, including deterrence tactics (CFSEU-BC, 2021b). Using problem solving and mediation skills, this team of specialized police officers and civilian case managers work to better understand the key determinates of gang violence and work with internal CFSEU-BC stakeholders and external law enforcement and community partners to develop and implement community mobilization, prevention, disruption, and focused deterrence strategies. This team aims to create community-based solutions that empower law enforcement and community partners to affect change (CFSEU-BC, 2021b; Cohen et al., 2019). They also seek out unique solutions and strategies that may lead to gang exiting opportunities. The Province of British Columbia initially funded the program as a Pilot from November 2016 to March 2019; however, they have now provided permanent funding. The team currently consists of six police officers (3 OCA-BC and 3 RCMP) and seven civilian case managers, supervisors, and a program manager (CFSEU-BC, 2021b). This program was the recipient of the Canadian Association of Chief of Police and Motorola Canada 2022 Community Safety and Well Being Award for its efforts. It remains the only police-embedded program of its kind in Canada.

The Los Angeles Police Department's Community Resources Against Street Hoodlums (CRASH) unit involves uniformed police engaging in high visibility, street surveillance, and proactive suppressive activities, as part of a high-profile gang control operation (Esbensen, 2000). Other units have been developed to tackle specific issues, including youth violence and handgun violence. The Baltimore City Police Department's Handgun Recovery Squad targets hotspot areas to seize guns. This unit is buttressed by the Youth Violence Strike Force, which works closely with Federal, State, and local agencies to apprehend and incarcerate violent gang members (Howell, 2000).

The Edmonton Police Service has proposed a Guns and Gang Strategy that brings together their expertise, tools, and structure to combat serious drugs and firearms offences (Edmonton Police Service, n.d.). Combining the efforts of their specialized teams (e.g., Firearms Investigation Unit, Gang Suppression Team, Edmonton Drug and Gang Enforcement) and community partners, the strategy focuses on identifying, suppressing, investigating, and preventing gun and gang activity.

Some of the key activities include: (1) focused deterrence and investigative excellence[8] to stop or reduce the source of gun and gang violence/activities; (2) intervening in areas or instances where gun and gang activity occurs by targeting gang-involved youth and high-risk youth and diverting them away from gangs and the justice system; and (3) providing education and resource materials to communities to prevent gun and gang violence (Edmonton Police Service, n.d.). In addition, the initiative provides training, awareness, and support to build a system-wide capacity to successfully address gun and gang activity (Edmonton Police Service, n.d.).

In Sweden, the Stockholm Gang Intervention and Prevention Project (SGIP) was designed to meet three objectives: (1) to prevent and impede gang recruitment by working with a social coordination group (i.e., groups of key individuals from police and community-agencies), and identifying collaborative ways to divert at-risk individuals from gangs; (2) to use intelligence-led gang operations based on detailed gang intelligence and analysis; and (3) to manage gang members seeking to exit gangs and provide individualized intervention action plans (Leinfelt & Rostami, 2012). Within this broader model, the PANTHER (Preventive Analysis about Network Targets for Holistic Enforcement Response) gang prevention program was developed. This program aims to incorporate police suppression and enforcement methods with intervention and prevention methods in one comprehensive fully operational model (Leinfelt & Rostami, 2012). To address the multifaceted problem of street gangs, the program was designed to be flexible and adaptable to fit the specific contextual needs. The specific program elements are determined based on a thorough understanding of the problem, such as the number and type of gangs operating, gang development in the area and the extent of gang activities, and identification of the viable operational methods and tactical response options, including targeting individuals or gangs versus targeting certain areas to disrupt gang activities (Leinfelt & Rostami, 2012). The approach also provides for a range of investigative strategies, including interrogating suspects, interviewing witnesses, and conducting and executing search warrants (Leinfelt & Rostami, 2012). “Go for the money” is a key component of the PANTHER method and involves seizing assets at every opportunity during criminal investigations to limit the proceeds of crime (Leinfelt & Rostami, 2012). Recognizing the importance of desistance in the prevention and intervention of gangs, the PANTHER model provides a mechanism for creating a desistance unit. Utilizing a police desistance team, as well as a Social Intervention Team (i.e., team consisting of members from collaborating agencies, such as the police, social services, employment service, etc.), gang members who are ready to exit the gang lifestyle will have their needs assessed, and an individualized exit action plan is developed (Leinfelt & Rostami, 2012). A critical component within this model is collaboration; police personnel and community agencies must work together to identify and tackle the gang problem (Leinfelt & Rostami, 2012). In addition, the model includes an evaluation component that requires police

[8] This term refers to investigations that follow best practices in investigative techniques and likely follow established and recognized Major Case Management principles. In effect, it refers to avoiding all the things that may be fatal to a charge approval or prosecution.

administrators to determine the value and success of their tactical operations (Leinfelt & Rostami, 2012).

Tita and Ridgeway (2007) noted that gang-related violence tends to be spatially concentrated in and around the activity space of gangs, such as places where gangs congregate. As well, Prowse (2012) suggested that when gang affiliated people know that they are targets of violence from rival groups, they perceive that the safest place for them is in public places, as they hope this will be a deterrent for those pursuing them. However, this is often not the case. Throughout North America, gang members, and occasionally innocent victims, have been targets of gang shootings in public places, such as bars and restaurants. One approach to address the violence in public spaces is the use of Inadmissible Patron Agreements (IPA). In British Columbia, Restaurant Watch and Barwatch are public safety partnerships to discourage and deter violent acts in and around restaurants and night clubs. Both programs rely on the IPA developed in consultation with local business, public partnerships, and the police. In British Colombia, Restaurant Watch is co-sponsored by the police of jurisdiction and the BC Restaurant & Foodservices Association and Restaurants Canada. Barwatch is an independent organization that has an agreement in place with the police of jurisdiction. Specifically, the Barwatch program relies on a signed Authorization Agreement by the owner or designated representative of each participating establishment. The Authorization Agreement authorizes sworn members of the police and its partner police agencies to act on the establishment's behalf to deny entry and/or remove any Inadmissible Patron, such as those known to the police to be involved in gang-related activity. Any powers of arrest and definitions for trespassing, including notice of trespassing, used by Barwatch are in adherence with the *British Columbia Trespass Act*.

A community-based initiative, the Barwatch Program was originally formed in December 1995 after a series of violent events occurred in bars and nightclubs in Vancouver, British Columbia (Gahunia, 2017). The Barwatch program's formation was based primarily on a partnership between the Vancouver Police Department (VPD) and bars, pubs, and nightclubs in the downtown area of Vancouver to promote safety and the security of patrons within these establishments. The Restaurant Watch Program was created by a VPD police officer in 2008 after a string of public shootings occurred in the city of Vancouver. The police officer that created the Restaurant Watch program was interested as to whether a program like Barwatch could be adapted to include restaurants, as gang members were often found dining in some of Vancouver's popular eateries (Gahunia, 2017). Both Barwatch and Restaurant Watch are voluntary programs and act as a contract between members of these programs and the police. The aim of these programs is to discourage and prevent patrons from engaging in behaviours that endanger others. An Inadmissible Patron is a person whose lifestyle, associations, and activities pose a risk to public safety, either directly or from third parties. Ejection criteria for an Inadmissible Patron, under the Barwatch Program, is the individual must be a known-to-police member of an organized crime group or gang, be an associate of organized crime and/or a gang, be involved in the drug trade, have a history of serious and/or violent criminal activity, or have a history of firearms offences.

In terms of gun violence, coordinated responses have been developed to address this issue. Most police-based gang deterrence and suppression tactics have evolved to combine the efforts of

several law enforcement agencies in multi-agency and multijurisdictional approaches, and to include collaborative approaches with other community agencies and sectors. Many of the police-based deterrence programs involve some component of a "pulling levers" strategy. As a problem-oriented approach, pulling levers involves selecting a particular crime problem, such as gang violence, convening an interagency working group of law-enforcement practitioners, conducting research to identify the key offenders, groups, and behavioural patterns, reaching out directly to gangs and communicating a zero-tolerance for violence, and developing a response that encompasses all legally available sanctions (e.g., directed police patrol, drug tests, service of outstanding warrants, etc.) to stop violent behaviours (Braga et al., 2008; McGarrell et al., 2013). Coupled with law enforcement prevention efforts, the strategy also involves connecting offenders though social services and community resources, including mentors, vocational training, and housing, to further assist with stopping them from continuing their behaviours (Braga et al., 2008; McGarrell et al., 2013).

The Boston Gun Project's suppression program, also known as Operation CeaseFire, was designed to target youth and adult gang members using a coordinated task force of 45 full-time Boston police officers and members from outside agencies (Howell, 2000). Originally implemented in 1996, this program was revived in 2006 to respond to the increase in youth gun violence. The program contains two strategic components: (1) law enforcement attack on illicit firearms traffickers supplying guns to youth; and (2) a deterrence strategy to prevent youth gang violence by actively focusing criminal justice attention on chronically offending gang-involved youth (National Crime Prevention Centre, 2008). The program involves an explicit communication campaign, wherein community groups and individual gang-members are informed about the zero-tolerance approach to gang violence (Juhasz, 2019). As part of this campaign, long-sentences received by offenders are publicized in high-crime areas. The program also includes gang-focused suppression tactics, such as "pulling levers", to impose costs on offenders related to chronic offending by serving warrants, enforcing probation restrictions, and deploying federal enforcement powers (Howell, 2000). Operation Night Light is the component of the program that ensures youth are complying with probation terms, and city gang prevention and media specialists (i.e., "streetworkers") are employed to work alongside police and probation officers to resolve conflicts and connect youth with services (Howell, 2000). Two other components of the project are designed to interrupt the fear-driven gun acquisition and youth violence. The "coerced use-reduction" strategy involves deploying gang mediation specialists to gang hotspots to conduct surveillance, rapidly deploying interagency crisis intervention teams to provide a rapid response to shootings, assaults, and other triggering incidents, and assigning patrol officers to monitor hotspots for any reoccurrence of gun violence (Howell, 2000). In addition, the Boston Police Department uses gun-tracing capabilities to disrupt the illicit gun market.

Similar initiatives have been implemented in different jurisdictions across the United States. The St. Louis CeaseFire Operation is a coordinated law enforcement response that involves cracking down on illicit gun trafficking, responding swiftly to acts of gang violence through intensive surveillance, using youth outreach street-workers to mediate conflicts between gangs and gang members, providing social service interventions, and implementing Operation Night Light, which involves a

team of police and probation officers visiting homes of youth on probation to ensure compliance with terms (Howell, 2000). The Los Angeles County Sheriff Department's Operation Safe Streets (OSS), which involves teams of gang investigators being assigned to sheriff's stations to concentrate law enforcement resources on targeted gangs and their members, consists of police suppression activities coupled with prosecution and intensive probation supervision (Howell, 2000). In 2009, the Chicago Violence Reduction Strategy (VRS) was developed to target street groups disproportionately responsible for gun violence and to deter future violence using coordinated enforcement action against all group members, community condemnation of violence that is disseminated by respected community members, and the provision of social services (Fontaine et al., 2017). The objective of the VRS "call-in" is to deliver a focused deterrence message to groups of gang-involved individuals (Papachristos & Kirk, 2015). A meeting, which takes place at a police station or courtroom, is held between a group of targeted offenders, and a collective of police officials, representatives of the community, and social service providers. Although the exact message varies, the purpose of the meeting is to explain the gun violence situation, and emphasize enforcement (i.e., no negotiations, breaks, or deals, and the need to put the guns down) (Papachristos & Kirk, 2015). One of the keys to success is how the message is delivered. The message must be perceived as being fair and the actors delivering the message must be viewed as being just (Papachristos & Kirk, 2015). Relying on a carefully scripted message allows for a balance to be struck between the enforcement, community, and service elements (Papachristos & Kirk, 2015).

In 2001, the United States Department of Justice sponsored an initiative known as Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) that involved a "pulling levers" deterrence strategy to prevent gang-related gun violence, coupled with community outreach (Braga et al., 2008). Coordinated through 94 United States Attorney's Offices, PSN is a national program emphasizing five core components: partnerships, strategic planning, training, outreach, and accountability (McGarrell et al., 2013). Creating local gun crime reduction task forces that bring together federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies, as well as establishing partnerships between different sectors of local government, social services, community groups, and citizens, the program aims to prevent gun crime and increase the legitimacy of interventions (McGarrell et al., 2013). Taking a problem-solving approach, PSN was designed to assist jurisdictions in the development of a proactive plan for gun crime reduction suitable to their local context. Plans would be aimed at prosecuting violent gun offenders and intensifying federal gun law enforcement using technology and intelligence gathering (e.g., mapping, hotspots identification, and tracing seized guns) (Herraiz, 2004). Specialized training on current laws and trends affecting law enforcement, including firearm identification, trafficking, and tracing are key components of the model (Herraiz, 2004). In addition to deterrence through highly focused reductions on gun crime (e.g., data driven approaches to identifying high-risk, high-volume violent offenders), community outreach and public awareness are central to PSN's success. Increasing awareness of PSN, promoting community involvement, using media campaigns to communicate deterrence messages to the community (e.g., radio, television, posters in jails, etc.), and working with citizens to develop a gun crime reduction strategy are important outreach components (Herraiz, 2004). Resources were also provided to assist with the development of intervention and prevention programs, such as mentorships, vocational

training, and job preparation (McGarrell et al., 2013). Accountability requires a focus on outcomes, including reductions in levels of reported gun crimes in targeted areas (McGarrell et al., 2013). There have also been some unique elements added to the PSN to allow communities to address their specific needs. For example, in Lowell, Massachusetts, the program's enforcement efforts were focused on individuals identified as "impact players" in the city's violence problem (Tally & Fulton, 2013). Identifying and incarcerating the core contributors to the violence problem was believed to prevent the spread of violence as a norm in the community and to effect change in the criminal culture (Tally & Fulton, 2013). In Chicago, the PSN model was adapted to include offender notification forums (Tally & Fulton, 2013). Parolees with a history of gang or gun violence are invited to attend bi-monthly meetings where law enforcement efforts, ex-offenders experienced with exiting the gang lifestyle, and available programs and alternatives are presented and discussed (Tally & Fulton, 2013).

Combining resources from different levels of government, the Los Angeles Metropolitan Task Force was developed in response to the 1992 riots and involved a collaboration between the FBI and local police to investigate and make arrests (Howell, 2000). In addition to resulting in approximately 1,000 arrests for violent crimes alone, federal and local officials, as well as most frontline officers, attributed long-term reductions in crime rates to this initiative (Howell, 2000). This initiative was also credited for increasing officers' engagement in proactive investigations of entire gangs (Howell, 2000). Similarly, the Minnesota HEALS (Hope, Education, and Law and Safety) initiative is a public-private partnership between corporations, state and local law enforcement agencies, and other community and government representatives designed to address gang activity (Howell, 2000). The gang suppression activities include saturation patrols, rapid response teams to prevent retaliation, gun tracing, prosecution in cases involving guns, and vertical prosecution where a designated gang prosecutor can screen and select cases to go to trial and work these cases from start to finish. Most of the suppression activities are concentrated in the Minnesota Anti-Violence Initiative that uses police-probation teams to target gang members who possess weapons and are repeat offenders (Howell, 2000). The Tri-Agency Resource Gang Enforcement Team (TARGET) operates in Orange County, California and is comprised of the police and sheriff's departments, the District Attorney, and the Probation Department (Howell, 2000). The TARGET team consists of a gang investigator, a probation officer, a deputy district attorney, and district attorney investigator who work closely to identify, monitor, arrest, and incarcerate the most violent and prolific gang members to reduce gang crime (Howell, 2000).

Another problem-solving approach is the Drug Market Intervention (DMI) model. Developed by police officers in High Point, North Carolina, this problem-solving approach seeks to target the drug activity commonly associated with gangs (McGarrell et al., 2013). Coupling short-term enforcement with an increase in collective efficacy and informal social control, this model aims to eliminate the illegal, open-air drug markets through the incapacitation of chronic drug-selling offenders involved in violence, and the diversion and deterrence of lower-level dealers. The program also aims to prevent the drug market from re-emerging by building community partnerships to reclaim neighbourhoods affected by gangs (McGarrell et al., 2013). The initial phase of the program involves increased police presence in the neighbourhood to convey the message that drug markets are not

tolerated. Police presence is gradually diminished and replaced with residents assuming control over public space (McGarrell et al., 2013).

### *Effectiveness of Police-Based Programs*

The hotspot policing approach has received empirical support as an effective strategy for targeting specific types of crimes. Studies of various hotspot policing initiatives have found significant reductions in crime calls for service to police (e.g., Braga et al., 1999; Criminal Justice Commission, 1998; Sherman & Weisburd, 1995), and crimes committed in areas targeted through hotspot policing approaches (e.g., Caeti, 1999; Sherman & Rogan, 1995). In addition to reducing gun crimes, Sherman and Rogan (1995) found that hotspot policing resulted in a significant increase in the number of guns seized by police. A meta-analysis revealed that hotspot policing programs have resulted in significant reductions in specific violent crimes, drug/disorder offence outcomes, and property crime (Braga & Weisburd, 2022). Braga and Weisburd (2022) estimate that hotspot policing focused on specific geographic areas can generate a substantive (upwards of 16 per cent) decrease in crime.

In contrast, there are mixed results about the ability of police-based programs to impact perceptions and attitudes about gang life and violence. An initial evaluation of the CFSEU-BC's Gang Exiting Program revealed that the 18 individuals who engaged with the program during its initial 30 months of operation showed decreases in risk levels and negative interactions with police (Turcotte, 2019). More specifically, the clients reported spending more time with prosocial peers, less time or no time on gang lifestyle-related activities, and more engagement with employment or employment-training opportunities (Turcotte, 2019). However, an evaluation of the culturally adapted version of the End Gang Life program in La Ronge, Saskatchewan, revealed that, while student attitudes toward gang life were positively affected, in that they were less likely to think they would join a gang or that they viewed gang involvement as a positive thing. Still, there were mixed results relating to attitudes towards general violence. which highlights the effects of intergenerational trauma on Indigenous youth as many feel powerless to say "no" to gang life (Turcotte, 2019). However, the evidence did suggest that the program may have an indirect protective effect against gang involvement by bolstering a key protective factor, cultural pride (Turcotte, 2019). In the evaluation of the End Gang Life Program, Cohen and colleagues (2019) suggested that the effectiveness of this type of program may be bolstered by expanding the number of former gang members working with the program as mentors, and ensuring the program material is strategically delivered. More specifically, to be effective, the material must be appealing, timely, and relevant to the local context (Cohen et al., 2019).

In a 2019 study of End Gang Life school presentations, participants from two samples (Undergraduate Students and Community Members) were exposed to one of 15 End Gang Life Public Service Announcements (PSAs; six videos, six posters, three radio ads) after which they completed self-report questionnaires (Pritchard, 2019). The questionnaires addressed participants' opinions about the PSA and participants' level of antisociality as measured by self-reported offending and psychopathic features. This sample consisted of undergraduate students who completed the study online. The Community Study used a similar design but was conducted with

participants recruited from the community. A third sample consisted of high school students in British Columbia who completed paper self-report measures following a presentation by the CFSEU-BC. The results showed that undergraduate students and community members were more likely to perceive the PSAs as effective when negative emotions, such as sadness, were elicited, when the content was perceived to be realistic, and when a greater range of emotions were perceived. Generally, these results were found regardless of the degree of participants' personality characteristics, suggesting that PSAs may be of comparable effectiveness. Of the three groups, the high school students reported the highest perceived sensations in response to the End Gang Life presentations. Further, the high school students were receptive to the presentations (Pritchard, 2019).

There is also evidence to suggest that rigorous gang programs, particularly those involving gang deterrence and suppression initiatives, have been associated with positive outcomes, including decreases in gang-related crimes, such as violence and gun homicides (Braga & Weisburd, 2022; Gravel et al., 2013; Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 1999). The results are especially promising in areas where the gang problem is chronic (Gravel et al., 2013). Some specific programs have been hailed as successful gang deterrence strategies. For example, Boston's Operation CeaseFire is regarded as a successful pulling levers strategy (Braga et al., 2008). Examining trends in serious violence in Boston between 1991 and 1998, Braga and colleagues (2001) discovered that the initiative was associated with a decrease in several gang-related behaviours, including an approximately 60% decrease in the number of youth homicides and a 25% decrease in the monthly number of gun assaults. A more robust examination of Boston's Ceasefire operation revealed that, following its reboot in 2006, the program generated a 31% reduction in total shootings for directly treated gangs (i.e., those subject to the intervention) (Braga et al., 2013). Examinations of similar deterrence strategies, including the Indianapolis Violence Reduction Partnership (McGarrell et al., 2006), as well as various PSN sites, such as Chicago, Illinois (Papachristos et al., 2007), and Lowell, Massachusetts (Braga et al., 2008), found these strategies do reduce crime, including gun violence and homicides. Evaluations of other deterrence-based strategies, including Chicago's Violence Reduction Strategy (Fontaine et al., 2017; Papachristos & Kirk, 2015), and project Longevity in New Haven, Connecticut (Sierra-Arevalo et al., 2017) were also associated with reductions in gun violence, shooting patterns, and shooting victimization of group members.

In addition to reducing crime rates and gun violence, deterrence strategies have also been found to promote nonviolence by shifting attitudes about guns. An evaluation of Baltimore's Safe Streets program revealed that, through engaging with hundreds of high-risk youth, the program was able to decrease acceptance for using guns to settle grievances (Webster et al., 2012). It is believed that the connections made between program participants and outreach workers served to alter attitudes and provide a mechanism for protecting against future involvement in violence (Webster et al., 2012).

There have also been some initiatives showing a great degree of success in specific contexts. In addition to identifying and targeting 77 high-rate offenders and gang leaders within the first two years of its operation, the TARGET teams placed two-thirds of the offenders into custody, and

achieved a 99% conviction rate (Howell, 2000). At the end of the second year, there was also a 62% decrease in serious gang-related crime (Howell, 2000). Due to the nature of the resources required to concentrate enforcement efforts, it is suggested that the TARGET approach will likely produce positive results in cities with smaller gang problems (Howell, 2000). This suggests that the success of police-based initiatives may be a function of how well they have identified and designed their strategies to address their specific gang problem (Juhasz, 2019).

Despite several positive outcomes associated with deterrence/suppression initiatives, there appears to be some major caveats to the success of these approaches. Based on interviews with 12 law enforcement officials involved in gang units, Juhasz (2019) discovered that Operation Ceasefire initiatives may be less applicable, effective, and realistic outside of the United States. Recognizing that gangs in British Columbia, Canada may be fundamentally different from gangs in other parts of Canada or the United States in terms of demographics, risk factors, and motivations, coupled with the fact that Canada's judicial system does not support a pulling-levers style approach, the perception of Canadian law enforcement officials is that a deterrence-based strategy would not be a promising avenue for addressing the gang problem in British Columbia (Juhasz, 2019). The societal- and neighbourhood-level changes (e.g., changes in crime trends, and community demographics) may also play a key role in the efficacy of gang deterrence/suppression strategies (Braga et al., 2008). Furthermore, much of the success of these initiatives is believed to be attributed to the involvement of communities in the strategy. Compared to cities that did not implement PSN initiatives, it was cities that implemented higher dosage PSN initiatives (i.e., those that incorporated high levels of research, partnerships, and federal prosecution) where greater reductions in violent crimes were found (McGarrell et al., 2013). Police are unable to pursue innovative, and, sometimes even harsh, enforcement strategies without the support of the community (Braga et al., 2008). The DMI intervention model, for instance, which relies on residents to assume control over neighbourhood drug markets, has been associated with decreases in drug-related crimes, as well as perceptions of improved quality of life, and a greater appreciation for the police by residents (McGarrell et al., 2013).

Another concern about police-based initiatives is the sustainability of the programs and their associated outcomes. These types of initiatives are resource-intensive, and require strong leadership, coupled with long-term partnerships between the police and community agencies (McGarrell et al., 2013). Many programs have short-term effects on crime because, once the initiative is no longer implemented, the original crime problem returns (Avdija, 2012). Over time, as organizational priorities shift, key personnel may be reassigned or multi-agency teams involved with the coordination and implementation of the strategy may no longer exist (McGarrell et al., 2013). Therefore, it appears that success requires plans for resource allocation, leadership and succession, and long-term sustainability (Cohen et al., 2019; McGarrell et al., 2013). Recommendations for improving the End Gang Life program, for example, focused on ensuring there was funding for key full-time positions, including the public outreach coordinator and the social media coordinator, as well as prioritizing the development of a steering committee to ensure the mandate of the program was being fulfilled effectively (Cohen et al., 2019).

There is no evidence to suggest that police crackdowns, including the pulling levers-based approaches, have long-term positive effects on gang problems (Howell, 2000). An examination of the Community-Oriented Policing Services (COPS) anti-gang initiative in Dallas, Texas, indicates that police suppression strategies (i.e., saturating high-visibility patrols in target areas) are less effective in reducing gang-related violence than concentrating police efforts on enforcing curfews, truancy laws, and regulations (Howell, 2000). An evaluation of the OSS similarly revealed that police suppression activities were less important to the success of the program when compared to the personal relationships police investigators established with gang members by maintaining regular contact (McBride, 1993).

There are some important lessons to be learned from the apparent effectiveness of various suppression strategies. Gang regulation programs appear to be most effective when there is continuity in the intervention, such as coordination of resources beyond a single gang unit. The community-wide approach employed by the pulling lever strategies appears to be the most effective (Wong et al., 2012). In addition, the effectiveness of a given strategy will be bolstered when it is designed based on a consideration of the influence of group processes in relation to criminal gang activity (Wong et al., 2012). By targeting specific activities rather than the gang members themselves, suppression programs tend to be more effective. Furthermore, targeting specific crimes, such as gun crimes, is a more fruitful venture than targeting gang crimes more generally (Wong et al., 2012).

It is also advised that caution be heeded when designing and implementing police-based programs in different communities. Police initiatives rely heavily on data analysis for identifying the nature and scope of the gang problem. In addition to incomplete and missing data issues, the degree of intelligence gathered from the analyses and interpretation of the data depend on the qualifications and skills of the analyst (Leinfelt & Rostami, 2012). Poor data or poor analysis of the data could create a situation wherein the very foundation of a program is based on incomplete or inaccurate depictions about the nature and extent of the gang problem. Police initiatives are often based on the ability to identify and directly deal with gang members. However, because certain types of gangs operate more secretively, they have lower street presence and are less readily accessible to police (Braga et al., 2008). In addition, because the relationship between law enforcement and racialized communities is often characterized by distrust and a lack of communication, it may be difficult for police to obtain reliable information about members from certain gangs, such as those in Asian communities (Braga et al., 2008). Moreover, some communities are more insular and more likely to address crime and gang issues within the community instead of contacting the police. Provided that many police-based programs are developed on the assumption that stronger police-community relationships will reduce gang violence, mutual mistrust between the police and target groups may act as an impediment to the delivery of key components of these programs, including antiviolence messages (Fontaine et al., 2017).

With respect to British Columbia's Inadmissible Patron Programs, research has been conducted to understand whether these ejection program worked to enhance public safety (Gahunia, 2017). The interview participants, who were from both the police and bar/restaurant industry, felt that innocent victims were harmed by the violence intended to target gang members. The

bar/restaurant participants stated that their motivations for participating in the program were to increase public safety and prevent gang-related violence. Some of the interviewees shared their concerns about gang members' criminal lifestyles, which inevitably caused a concern for the safety and security of their patrons and staff. All the bar/restaurant participants commented that after they joined the program, they felt that the number of gang members dining at their establishments started to decrease, demonstrating a deterrent effect on the criminal population. It was also noted that participants felt the program sent a clear message to gang members that they were not welcomed in local area establishments; therefore, the program may also directly address some of the gang lifestyle appeal that motivates youth and young adults to explore opportunities for gang membership in British Columbia (Gahunia, 2017). Although the authors of this strategy reported that they were unaware of a formal, scientific evaluation of the effectiveness of such ejection programs, practically speaking, these programs appear to have merit. The City of Vancouver continues to use this program and other cities within British Columbia have adopted similar Inadmissible Patron Programs to help curb opportunities for gang violence. These programs exemplify a community policing approach where the police and the restaurant or entertainment industry work in partnership, taking a pro-active and problem-solving approach to deter gang violence and enhance public safety (Gahunia, 2017).

## COORDINATED APPROACHES

There is a myriad of risk factors believed to be associated with one's initial involvement and continued engagement in gangs. To be effective in disrupting and dismantling gangs and gang-related activities, a comprehensive approach is recommended by the research literature. Compared to one-dimensional programs, combining program elements, including social services, crisis intervention, gang suppression, education, and community involvement, may prove more effective (Howell, 2000; Russell, 2021). The OJJDP's Comprehensive Community-Wide Approach to Gang Prevention, Intervention, and Suppression program is based on the Spergel model that incorporates secondary and tertiary prevention, as well as suppression. Specifically, this model uses five strategies that involve engaging communities in a systematic gang assessment, consensus building, and program development process (Howell, 2000). Utilizing a team-oriented and problem-solving approach, the model involves: (1) mobilizing community leaders and residents to strengthen or develop new opportunities for addressing gang-involved youth; (2) providing academic, economic, and social opportunities (e.g., school and job training); (3) engaging in social intervention using highly trained, relatable, and "streetwise" outreach workers, grassroots organizations (e.g., family, neighbourhood groups, citizen groups, etc.), and other social services/agencies (e.g., school, and community-based organizations) to act as links between gang-involved individuals, their families, and needed services; (4) utilizing formal and informal gang suppression tactics, including supervision or monitoring of gang-involved individuals; and (5) organizational change and development to allow for the reallocation of resources to support anti-gang initiatives (Esbensen, 2000; Howell, 2000; Magana, 2016; Spergel et al., 2005). Implemented in Mesa, Arizona, the Mesa Gang Intervention Project (MGIP) is comprised of representatives from the City of Mesa, the Mesa Police Department, juvenile probation departments, the Boys & Girls Club, Arizona State University,

and others, who work together to target youth involved in gangs or at high risk for gang involvement, and provide them with necessary services, including counseling, job referrals, drug and alcohol treatment, and other social services. Providing community assistance, the MGIP team also educates residents about gang problems and listens to concerns about the neighbourhood (Howell, 2000). Additional components of this program include a mentorship program, outreach through the Boys & Girls Club, cognitive restructuring classes for gang-involved youth, parenting classes, an arts program, a summer camp program focusing on cultural diversity, tattoo removal service, and educational sessions (Howell, 2000).

The Spergel model has also been adapted to target specific gangs. The Gang Violence and Reduction Program (GRP) was developed in the Little Village neighbourhood of Chicago to target older members (ages 17 to 24) of the area's two most violent Hispanic gangs, the Latin Kings and the Two Six (Howell, 2000). This program consists of two coordinated strategies. The increased supervision and suppression of potentially violent youth gang members is completed by probation and police. Representatives from various community organizations and agencies, including local churches, job placement agencies, and youth services agencies, provide a wide range of social services and opportunities for the targeted youth, including education, jobs, job training, family support, and counseling, to encourage their transition to legitimate behaviour (Howell, 2000). Modeled after the GRP program, the City of Los Angeles developed a comprehensive, community-wide gang-violence reduction strategy that involves collaborative partnerships between community and faith-based organizations, City Council, the Los Angeles Unified School District, and the County of Los Angeles (Villaraigosa, 2007). The approach includes prevention, intervention, re-entry, and suppression efforts. Targeting the entire population of high-crime, high-risk communities, the prevention efforts consist of access to public schools, the distribution of health and support resources to children and families (e.g., prenatal and infancy support, afterschool programs) through a one-stop resource centre, case management, mentoring, and gang awareness training for teachers, parents, and the community (Villaraigosa, 2007). The LAPD host regional educational seminars to provide key stakeholders and local leaders with information on gang culture and trends. The LAPD also engage in proactive community media campaigns to provide residents with knowledge and tools to thwart gang violence in their neighbourhoods (Villaraigosa, 2007). Intervention efforts are designed to focus on active gang members, close associations, and gang members returning from prison using aggressive outreach, ongoing recruitment, and careful planning and coordination of services. The re-entry component provides appropriate, individualized services, including job training, educational and vocational training, counseling, referrals to drug and alcohol treatment, and criminal justice supervision for offenders facing challenges with re-entering their communities following incarceration (Villaraigosa, 2007). The suppression element focuses on the aggressive prosecution of gang leaders (Villaraigosa, 2007). Based on neighbourhood characteristics, including gang-related crime statistics, poverty levels, unemployment statistics, and the number of youth on probation/parole, the City identifies and targets the areas most affected by gang violence as "Gang Reduction Zones" (Villaraigosa, 2007).

According to the Canadian-based International CPTED Association, Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design is a multi-disciplinary approach of crime prevention that uses urban and

architectural design and the management of built and natural environments. CPTED strategies aim to reduce victimization, deter offender decisions that precede criminal acts, and build a sense of community among inhabitants so they can gain territorial control of areas, reduce crime, and minimize fear of crime. CPTED is known around the world as Designing Out Crime, defensible space, and other similar terms. In the context of guns and gangs, the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) deployed a CPTEP initiative in 1990 called Operation Cul-de-Sac that was designed to address gang shootings in a crime-plagued area. The LAPD erected concrete barriers to "design out" drive-by shootings from a 30-block area district of South-Central Los Angeles (Lasley, 1998). The zone was then saturated with officers on foot, horseback, and bicycle, and "OPEN TO RESIDENTS ONLY" signs were also put up. As a result of Operation Cul-de-Sac (OCDS), serious crime dropped 17% the first year and homicides in the area was reduced from seven in 1989 to one in the subsequent two years. Assaults were also reduced by 25%. Interestingly, violent crime was not displaced, as no evidence of change in offending patterns was discovered in the neighbouring areas. Most noteworthy, the number of homicides and assaults in the area increased after the LAPD ceased the initiative after two years.

In another example, a research team from Rutgers (Jain et al., 2020) conducted a series of case studies on CPTED in Paterson, New Jersey, Seattle, Washington, Chicago, Illinois, and New Orleans, Louisiana. Many of the cities examined identified specific hotspot corridors due to gang violence, shootings, and drug dealing. Evaluations found positive effects on public safety, particularly on violent crime, post CPTED implementation. More specifically, in the New Orleans study, their CPTED project (SafeGrowth) led to a 78% reduction in neighborhood crime. Moreover, homicides in Hollygrove (a focused area) declined from 15 in 2004 to one in 2017. Using natural surveillance, natural access control, target hardening, and creating high use environments, the community was able to reduce criminal activity in these specific areas through the implementation of CPTED principles (Jain et al., 2020).

Utilizing the OJJDPs five strategies for a comprehensive response, the Shannon Community Safety Initiative (CSI) was developed to provide locally tailored solutions to gang problems in Massachusetts. Building on the strengths of police agencies and social service providers' efforts to counter youth violence, the Shannon CSI encourages the coordination of prevention, intervention, and suppression programs to create a best practices model of strategies that have been proven to successfully reduce youth violence and gangs (Innovative Practices from the Shannon Community Safety Initiative Series, 2007). Recognizing that failures to implement a comprehensive response are often associated with insufficient resource allocation to partner agencies, a lack of centralized leadership, and coordination across partner agencies, this model identified additional steps necessary to implement a comprehensive approach. The Shannon CSI model incorporates effective leadership (i.e., having a key stakeholder/champion to oversee the main goals of the project and coordinate project partners), coordinated action steps (i.e., outlines of the activities to be completed by each member associated with each of the comprehensive program areas), and information sharing through meetings and data collection (Innovative Practices from the Shannon Community Safety Initiative Series, 2007). The Brockton collaborative strategy, for instance, includes an array of suppression activities that have been integrated with youth outreach, mentoring, a drug

treatment program, and opportunity provision activities, such as job readiness training, job placement programs, GED training, and recreational activities (Innovative Practices from the Shannon Community Safety Initiative Series, 2007). By providing for increased coordination of information on individual youth coming from different program partners, the Brockton Strategy standardized and streamlined information about referrals, services received, and case management (Innovative Practices from the Shannon Community Safety Initiative Series, 2007).

Like the OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model, the Los Angeles Gang Reduction and Youth Development (GRYD) program was developed to provide gang prevention and intervention services in communities most affected by gang violence (Akca et al., 2020). Similar to many other comprehensive strategies, GRYD includes primary and secondary prevention strategies to build the resilience of the entire community against gang-related risk factors and provides services to high-risk youth between the ages of 10 and 15. Moreover, the program provides interventions in the form of family case management services to families of gang-involved youth aged 14 to 25, and immediate crisis response to gang-related violence incidents. There are additional, unique components to this program, including the focus on community engagement through community education initiatives, such as campaigns, programs, events, and partnerships. In addition, the program goes beyond targeted suppression activities and recognizes the importance of communication with police to provide a more comprehensive anti-gang strategy (Akca et al., 2020).

In 2011, the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hubs (MASH) gang strategy was developed in the United Kingdom (Smith & Egan, 2014). This strategy identifies five key principles to be addressed through an integrated service provision, including preventing youth from becoming involved with violence through early intervention and prevention, providing pathways out of violence and the gang culture, punishment and enforcement to suppress violence, creating partnerships between local police and agencies to respond to gang and youth violence, and providing support to areas wanting to tackle gang and/or youth violence (Smith & Egan, 2014). Based on this framework, cities like Manchester have formed multi-agency teams to safeguard young people, families, and communities from violent gang activity and support gang members from exiting the gang lifestyle (Smith & Egan, 2014). Focusing on early intervention and prevention, programs typically aim to improve protective factors by developing different capacities, including resilience, relationship building, creativity, planning and problem-solving, leadership and participation, confidence, communication, and feelings management (Smith & Egan, 2014). Additional gang interventions targeting serious offenders within gangs include intensive support programs, domestic violence and sexual exploitation programs, and mentoring services (Smith & Egan, 2014).

Other coordinated approaches have been developed to provide early intervention strategies. The Youth at Risk Development Program in Calgary, Alberta is an early intervention program designed to support at-risk youth between the ages of 10 and 17. Based on a detailed assessment, the program provides individual, coordinated, and managed interventions that empower youth to make positive choices and recognize alternative solutions. This program is run by the City of Calgary Community and Neighbourhood Services in conjunction with the Calgary Police Service and involves collaborative partnerships with the Boys & Girls Club of Canada, Calgary Board of

Education, Calgary Catholic School District, Calgary Housing, Calgary Transit, Native Counseling Services of Alberta, and the YMCA (National Crime Prevention Centre, 2012). The Alberta Gang Reduction Strategy (AGRS) is a long-term suppression approach involving collaborative partnerships between government, municipalities, educators, parents, health professionals, and community leaders and agencies. The program aims to reduce gang-related crime and violence by preventing at-risk youth from being recruited into gangs (Tally & Fulton, 2013). Some of the key goals include building community capacity through public awareness about gang activity, addressing risk factors through early intervention, developing exit strategies that encourage healthy alternatives, and adopting flexible strategies that recognize the importance of community engagement and cultural inclusion (Tally & Fulton, 2013).

Providing a place-based comprehensive approach, the Harlem Children's Zone and Beacon Centers focus on revitalizing the neighbourhood and developing healthy children through various programs, including parenting education, youth development, after school activities, health services, child welfare services, and employment services. Many of the program components are operated through the Beacon Centres, which are school-based community centres. This program is believed to offer a complete youth and community development initiative (The Advancement Project, n.d.).

Targeting gang-involved or at-risk youth between the ages of 11 and 14 from ethno-racial minority groups, the Positive Alternatives to Youth Gangs (PAYG) Project provides in-school, after-school, summer, parent, and community intervention programs. The in-school group program operates at the grade six level, and involves individual support, mentorship, family support services, and the use of various activities to address specific areas, such as conflict resolution, problem solving, peer mediation, leadership, gang resistance strategies, racism and culture shock, bullying, and family violence (Institute for the Prevention of Crime, 2011). The afterschool program provides homework help, reading circles, access to computers, and recreational activities. The family support program provides two full-time Family Support Workers to help parents understand gang activity, how to keep their children gang-free, and to build skills in parenting areas where they are struggling (Institute for the Prevention of Crime, 2011). The summer program offers social, recreational, music, and arts programming, as well as life skills workshops. Consisting of community forums, the community program is designed to increase awareness of gang activity and how to deal with it, as well as to improve community engagement in combatting violence (Institute for the Prevention of Crime, 2011).

Focusing on more than crime prevention, several strategies have been developed to address overall community safety through health, social outreach, housing, and community safety initiatives (De Jager & Cohen, 2021). The Community Safety and Wellbeing (CSWB) approach is a cross-sectoral, integrated, and inclusive of partnerships and multi-disciplinary representatives model to dealing with chronic social issues, such as mental health and homelessness, as well as criminal activity by addressing the role of trauma in vulnerable situations, including root causes of certain behaviours (De Jager & Cohen, 2021). The goal is to address adverse childhood experiences and traumas early to prevent involvement in the criminal justice system (De Jager & Cohen, 2021). This approach

involves the adoption of programs in four domains: (1) social development (upstream), which involves reducing the probability of harm and victimization through long-term, multi-disciplinary efforts, collaboration, and investments to improve the social determinants of health; (2) prevention (midstream), which involves proactively implementing evidence-based situational measures, programs, or policies to identify and address root causes through cross-sectoral responses to prevent social disorder, crime, victimization, or harm; (3) risk intervention (downstream), which involves mobilizing and engaging community programs to address or interrupt situations where there is an elevated risk of harm; and (4) incident response, which involves immediate and reactionary responses to crime and/or situations that threaten safety (De Jager & Cohen, 2021).

One community safety and well-being approach is the Situations Tables ("Hubs") model that has been adopted in several communities across Canada to provide a holistic, risk-driven intervention initiative (Cohen et al., 2022). The Situation Table brings together members from multiple sectors and organizations, including police and justice services, mental health and addictions services, children and youth services, school boards, outreach and harm reduction, housing, and hospitals, to work collaboratively to identify individuals and families presenting with a range of acute risk factors and provide interventions that would alleviate risk prior to the situation devolving into a crisis (Cohen et al., 2022). The purpose of this model is to allow for organizations to immediately and collaboratively respond to and provide short-term opportunities to address emerging problems, risk conditions, and crime-related issues (Cohen et al., 2022). In addition to providing a more efficient way to address social problems, including homelessness and mental health-related issues, the Tables model offers a more effective way to respond to crime, especially those associated with gang activity, using a collaborative approach (Cohen et al., 2022). Some of the more common interventions include education on parenting or life skills, addressing housing needs, family therapy or counseling services, mentorships, and culturally sensitive/appropriate services (Cohen et al., 2022).

Coordinated through the Office of Violence Prevention, the Milwaukee Blueprint for Peace provides a public health approach to reducing violence (City of Milwaukee, 2016). Emphasizing that program success is dependent on the power, connection, and engagement of community residents and multiple sectors, the Blueprint provides a guide to inform coordinated actions for violence prevention. The Blueprint outlines six goals designed to address violence by reducing community exposure to identified risk factors, and to strengthen access to resilience and protective factors (City of Milwaukee, 2016). The first goal, "Stop the shooting. Stop the violence." outlines the importance of strategic, timely, and coordinated efforts among residents and first responders to prevent gun violence. Some of the strategies for effective prevention include: (1) utilizing data to identify hotspots of violent activity to prioritize prevention efforts; (2) implementing focused, evidence-based outreach and violence interruption strategies to proactively mediate conflicts and prevent potentially violent situations; (3) providing support services for survivors of violence immediately post-incident; (4) decreasing illegal gun availability; and (5) promoting violence prevention as a way of life (City of Milwaukee, 2016). Committed to helping families, individuals, and communities heal and move forward in positive ways, the Blueprints second goal is to

"Promote Healing and Restorative Justice" (City of Milwaukee, 2016). To achieve this goal, the Blueprint recommends promoting healing, behavioural health, and trauma reduction, as well as strengthening treatment and healing services for survivors of sexual assault and domestic violence. Additionally, the Blueprint recommends identifying and supporting people at risk for self-harm, strengthening and preserving healthy relationships, and improving cultural competence and support for the cultural identity of community members (City of Milwaukee, 2016). Recognizing the association between family dynamics and violence, the third goal of the Blueprint is to "support children, youth, and families" (City of Milwaukee, 2016). Strategies within this goal focus on strengthening the family unit by promoting healthy child development, bolstering school-based initiatives that promote social-emotional learning, mental health, healing, and conflict resolution, as well as increasing employment and workforce development opportunities for high-risk youth (City of Milwaukee, 2016). The fourth goal centres on promoting economic opportunities for adults who face barriers to employment. Some strategies for accomplishing this include connecting adults to employment opportunities with a living wage, strengthening economic supports for women and families, fostering local entrepreneurship, and strengthening financial literacy (City of Milwaukee, 2016). The Blueprint also aims to build safe and strong neighbourhoods by ensuring there is sufficient investment in creating positive community environments for residents and youth (City of Milwaukee, 2016). This goal can be accomplished by improving government-community relationships, creating safe and accessible community spaces, building resident leadership and collective action, and connecting residents to resources designed to improve their quality of life (City of Milwaukee, 2016). Lastly, the Blueprint outlines the importance of strengthening the capacity and coordination of prevention efforts by ensuring all sectors are sharing responsibility for addressing violence and the underlying risk factors (City of Milwaukee, 2016). Ensuring full participation by all agencies requires creating mechanisms for sustainable funding, implementing effective communication strategies, increasing accountability, and applying trauma-informed, racial, equity, and implicit bias reduction lenses across sectors (City of Milwaukee, 2016).

### *Effectiveness of Coordinated Responses*

Anecdotally, comprehensive, coordinated programs are believed to be the most effective in addressing complex social problems (De Jager & Cohen, 2021; Russell, 2021). Collaborative responses are believed to be more effective than the traditional siloed approach in addressing complex social disorders by creating the context for community mobilization (De Jager & Cohen, 2021). There is some evidence to support the use of comprehensive strategies. An evaluation of the Gang Violence and Reduction program showed positive outcomes, including decreased levels of serious gang violence among the targeted gang members, with targeted members having fewer arrests for serious gang crimes (Howell, 2000). Furthermore, the program appeared to improve public perceptions about gang crime and police effectiveness in managing gang-related activities (Howell, 2000). An evaluation of the Little Village Project in Chicago showed that, over a two-year period, participants reported significant decreases in offences and arrests (Totten, 2009). The OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model has been proven to decrease criminal activity and gang involvement, reduce serious and violent crimes, and increase success in job and educational opportunities (Magana, 2016). A multi-site evaluation of the OJJDP Gang Reduction Program

showed that different program sites had varying degrees of success (Cahill & Hayeslip, 2010). There were decreases in trends for serious and violent gang crimes in Los Angeles and Richmond; however, in Milwaukee, the program was only tied to decreases in drug crimes (Cahill & Hayeslip, 2010). In an evaluation of one of the OJJDP programs, the Building Resources for the Intervention and Deterrence of Gang Engagement (BRIDGE) implemented in Riverside, California, it was discovered that the project not only brought greater awareness to the community about the needs of gang youth, it was also associated with a reduction in arrests for serious violence for program participants, and a decline in serious violence and drug offences in the program areas (Spergel et al., 2005). Similarly, the GRYD program was found to result in reductions in risk scores and risk of gang involvement among participating youth by approximately 13% and 58%, respectively (Akca et al., 2020). The program was also associated with decreases in gang-related homicides (79 per cent reduction) (Akca et al., 2020).

Some comprehensive programs have also proven successful in reducing risk factors that may be associated with gang involvement. An evaluation of nine Situation Tables currently operating in British Columbia revealed that most cases are referred to a Table because of risk factors related to mental health issues, homelessness, drug issues, lack of basic needs, and involvement with crime (Cohen et al., 2022). Of note, drug issues were a more common risk factor for individuals under the age of 29 who were referred to the Tables (Cohen et al., 2022). This suggests that the younger people referred to the program may be experiencing risk factors also associated with gang involvement. By developing intervention plans involving multiple agencies and services, Tables were able to successfully close most of their cases by addressing the risk factors that contributed to the acutely elevated risk status (Cohen et al., 2022). It is suggested that the collaborative action and immediate connection to social services is the key to intervening in elevated risk situations (Cohen et al., 2022).

However, despite some success, evaluations of comprehensive and holistic approaches have not consistently shown strong evidence in terms of their effectiveness (Wong et al., 2012). There are also some notable limitations to adopting a more comprehensive approach to gang problems. There is often resistance on the part of local agencies to participate in the strategy, divergent interests on the part of collaborating partners, a tendency for suppression efforts to dominate, and some resistance to using ex-gang members in intervention strategies (Spergel et al., 2005). One of the biggest challenges associated with comprehensive programs is the degree to which the program is implemented following the initial design (Wong et al., 2012). The BRIDGE program, for instance, changed directions after its initial implementation (Spergel et al., 2005). In its fourth year, BRIDGE recognized the importance of outreach and the provision of social opportunities in terms of effectively engaging with and providing services to gang-involved youth. Additionally, the representation of community grassroots and community-based organizations on the steering committee was found to be critical in incentivizing community participation in tackling the gang problem (Spergel et al., 2005). Moreover, to be effective, the interventions and strategies must be adapted to target the right people and problems. This means that a comprehensive approach must provide a flexible framework to allow for program components to be adapted to changes occurring within a particular community (Cohen et al., 2022). Therefore, the ability to extrapolate a

comprehensive program developed for one community to another may prove problematic. Provided that different communities have different problems and varying degrees of resources, the major components of any program will be unique to each community. Thus, it is difficult to determine the utility of comprehensive programs outside of their specific setting (Wong et al., 2012).

Another issue is related to the level of synchronicity required by partnering agencies. For comprehensive approaches to work, all stakeholders must be on the same page. Schools, police departments, employment agencies, grassroots organizations, community-based agencies, probation agencies, and others who are brought together, must all be working towards the same goal (Wong et al., 2012). Each partner agency must ensure their initiative is targeting the right people and the right types of behaviours. With agencies fighting for resources, this may be a difficult feat. Moreover, as organizations change and there is staff turnover, there is the potential for the focus of partner agencies to shift away from the original goals of the program, which may lead to disagreements or friction (Innovative Practices from the Shannon Community Safety Initiative Series, 2007). Early feedback from the Shannon CSI initiative highlights several important factors that are required for the successful implementation of a comprehensive model. In addition to providing clear oversight of program design and implementation at the outset, participating sites must be capable of identifying, supporting, and implementing each of the strategies outlined in the comprehensive initiative (Innovative Practices from the Shannon Community Safety Initiative Series, 2007).

## CIVIL/LEGISLATIVE RESPONSES AND THEIR EFFECTIVENESS

Governments, organizations, and the legal system may have an influence on gangs and gang-related activities through the enactment of various laws and policies. For example, school districts often implement policies to restrict behaviours that would result in harmful outcomes. Pursuant to the Provincial Standards for Codes of Conduct Order under the British Columbia's *School Act*, school boards must establish codes of conduct that define unacceptable behaviours while at school, at school-related activities, or in circumstances where engaging in the activity would negatively affect the school environment (e.g., bullying and cyberbullying) (PREVNet, 2023). Additionally, some school boards have developed policies specific to violence, intimidation, and possession of weapons that set the standards for zero tolerance of threats or acts of violence, prohibitions of weapons possession, and mechanisms for encouraging students to act responsibly (School District No. 43, n.d.). To effectively mitigate risk, schools require a comprehensive policy about weapons and violence (Cohen, Lee et al., 2021).

To the extent that the legislative and regulatory initiatives are aimed at all levels of government and are responsive to changing realities, they may strengthen existing prevention, intervention, and suppression efforts (Public Safety Canada, 2018). Following the implementation of the Youth Criminal Justice Act (YCJA), the intensive support and supervision program (ISSP) provided a court-mandated sentencing option that allowed for closer supervision and additional community support for some youth on probation (Osmond, 2019). In addition to monitoring youth and helping them

comply with judge-appointed conditions, the ISSP helps with school, employment, recreation, family support, substance abuse, and counseling that extend beyond what is offered through traditional probation orders (Osmond, 2019). The ISSP is one of the justice-related services provided by the PLEA Community Services in British Columbia that has been associated with several positive outcomes, including decreases in rates of violent and delinquent behaviour (Osmond, 2019). Results from an evaluation of Montreal's ISSP; however, revealed that the participants' risks and needs were not significantly altered after participating in the program (Osmond, 2019). It is suggested that this was due, at least in part, to the challenges associated with developing personalized strategies, as well as engaging clients in programming (Osmond, 2019).

Intensive Supervision Probation (ISP) programs combine suppression and involvement in treatment to increase positive outcomes for high-risk offenders on probation (Weinrath et al., 2016). In addition to requiring frequent contacts with a probation officer, these programs include curfews, electronic monitoring, urinalysis, and additional programming (Weinrath et al., 2016). There are mixed levels of success with these types of programs, with human-service-oriented ISP's faring better than surveillance-based programs in relation to reductions in reoffending (Lowenkamp et al., 2010). Programs that score high on measures of therapeutic integrity or treatment fidelity tend to be the most effective (Lowenkamp et al., 2010). In terms of effectiveness of ISPs with young offenders, the limited research findings showing less favorable results suggests that there is something missing from ISP programs targeting high-risk youth (Weinrath et al., 2016). Given the growing body of evidence showing that mentoring is associated with decreased involvement in delinquency when compared to other young offender interventions (e.g., Greenwood & Turner, 2009; Lipsey, 2009), it has been suggested that mentorship may be one of the missing elements from current ISP programs (Weinrath et al., 2016). One example of this is the serious offender services program, 'Spotlight', that was developed by Manitoba Corrections to target high-risk, high-needs youth who are gang members. Differing from previous ISP programs, Spotlight incorporates street-level mentorship with the intensive supervision of probation clients (Weinrath et al., 2016). Specifically, the program provides support-based services, including mentorship activities, individualized programming, and probation counselling, alongside deterrence-based strategies that include intensive supervision and targeted surveillance, to facilitate positive behavioural changes (Weinrath et al., 2016). Unique to this program, the mentors are not volunteers, but rather are paid community corrections employees who have specialized training in cognitive behavioural assessment and intervention techniques (Weinrath et al., 2016). In their evaluation of Spotlight, Weinrath and colleagues (2016) found that, while reoffence rates remained high for Spotlight cases (65.1 per cent reoffended), the severity of the new convictions was lower with two out of three cases being convictions of administrative or low severity crimes. Furthermore, compared to a matched sample of offenders, the Spotlight clients refrained from reoffending for longer periods, with 74% of the Spotlight clients versus 60% of the matched group abstaining from offending after 60 days. Based on survey results from the Spotlight clients, the favorable results for recidivism may be tied to the positive attributes of the mentors as mentors were viewed as being reliable, good listeners, empathetic, and problem-solvers (Weinrath et al., 2016). Informal observations by the researchers also revealed that street mentors were engaging in positive behaviours, giving constructive reinforcement for good behaviour by clients, and able to

provide alternative ways of viewing the world. The researchers suggest that the success of Spotlight centres on the street mentors being adept at fostering good relationships with their clients, advocating on behalf of their clients, and assisting their clients in developing new skills (Weinrath et al., 2016).

In another approach, the "go for the money" strategy involves confiscating materials derived through criminal activities via civil forfeitures (Juhasz, 2019). Civil Forfeiture legislation has been enacted in most provinces across Canada (Willcocks, 2020). In British Columbia, the *Civil Forfeiture Act* was introduced in 2005 to provide the government and law enforcement with authorities to seize property that is presumed to be the product of the commission of a crime (i.e., obtained through illegally activities) (Willcocks, 2020). The purpose of this legislation is not only to deter crime, but to also redistribute the funds associated with criminal activity back into community programs, police agencies, and to compensate victims (Willcocks, 2020). Because gangs in British Columbia are driven by profit, they are often involved in a variety of illegal activities, including extortion, drug trafficking, and the sex trade (Dandurand et al., 2019). It is suggested that, because there are limited resources in the criminal justice system, civil forfeitures can provide another avenue for disrupting the illegal economic system, and removing the violence and the "glamour" associated with gang life (Willcocks, 2020). Essentially, civil forfeiture eliminates profiting through criminal activity and diminishes the perceived benefits of power and status often associated with the gang lifestyle (e.g., firearms and luxury items, such as cars, boats, and expensive trips) (Juhasz, 2019; Willcocks, 2020). In effect, the incentive to commit crime dwindles. By reallocating these funds back into the community, civil forfeitures may also provide an opportunity to reduce some of the burden of crime on taxpayers by re-investing these funds into important community services, such as rehabilitation, as well as policing efforts (Willcocks, 2020).

Cities have also made use of various crime prevention techniques, and other measures to restrict activities associated with gangs. Firearm policies that restrict bulk firearm purchases and outline requirements for sales records for non-restricted firearms are some mechanisms Canadian governments have put in place to curb gun violence (Public Safety Canada, 2018). Comprehensive background checks, including criminal history checks for gun buyers, have been effective in reducing gun violence by decreasing the number of gun sales to known offenders by licenced gun dealerships (Sherman, 2001). Permit-to-purchase licencing procedures that require in-person applications for permits are also believed to impede firearm purchasing among high-risk individuals, and, thus, impact gun violence (Webster, 2015). Other regulations that restrict gang activities in different places have also been implemented. Using nuisance abatement and zoning laws, cities can impose restrictions on the use of property, and disrupt problematic behaviours associated with gangs, including drug trafficking and trafficking in stolen goods (Bureau of Justice Assistance, 1998). These types of strategies may be most effective when coupled with a crime free multi-housing prevention program aimed at reducing and preventing crime and nuisance activity in rental properties, increasing safety, and reducing residents' fear of crime (Cohen & Osterberg, 2018). Allowing property owners to screen potential tenets provides a mechanism for preventing crime by excluding people who pose a threat to the security of the rental community (Cohen & Osterberg, 2018). Although there are several benefits believed to be associated with this type of

program, including increasing safety, building a sense of community and a sense of ownership, and improving residents' personal strategies to reduce their risk of victimization, there have been few empirical evaluations of crime free multi-housing programs (Cohen & Osterberg, 2018; Cole, 2015).

Some cities have also established curfew ordinances (O'Deane & Morreale, 2011) that are designed to restrict the use of public spaces during specified hours. Gang injunctions (i.e., civil lawsuits against gangs) have also been utilized as a proactive means of reducing gang crime and protecting residents who live in areas impacted by criminal gangs (O'Deane & Morreale, 2011). A court may order gangs to refrain from an act or acts, including being together in public view, displaying gang hand signs, and/or wearing gang specific colours in a specified area (e.g., a park). Gangs found in violation of a gang injunction may face criminal or civil sanctions (e.g., jail time, fines, etc.). An assessment of the use of gang injunctions in California revealed that its practice was associated with reductions in calls for service, including calls related to violent crimes (O'Deane & Morreale, 2011). However, because gangs vary in the degree to which they operate within any particular territory, injunctions may only prove effective when gangs are beholden to a specific geographic area (O'Deane & Morreale, 2011), which has not typically been characteristic of gangs in British Columbia (Osterberg, 2020; McConnell, 2015).

## PUBLIC EDUCATION CAMPAIGNS & SOCIAL MEDIA

### *The Problem*

Social media platforms, such as Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, and Facebook provide another space for gang members to occupy, and a mechanism for self-expression and self-promotion (Cohen, Lee et al., 2021). Many gang activities or risk factors may be presented online via social media channels. In a phenomenon coined "internet banging", gang affiliated individuals use social media and chat rooms to broadcast their gang status, brag about violence, recruit new members, conduct drug sales, incite dares, trade insults, or communicate threats of violence (Patton et al., 2013). Taunting on social media may be one factor contributing to rises in gang-related shootings (Patton et al., 2016a). In an examination of the content of twitter posts from a known gang member, Patton and colleagues (2016b) discovered communications of threats or violent retributions may trigger violent reactions among network followers that, in turn, may contribute to online aggression spilling into street violence. Due to street codes, online behaviour may spark additional opportunities for violence by creating a situation where physical confrontations must address and rectify online comments (Patton et al., 2016b).

Online posts may also contribute to broader feelings of a lack of safety in the community. In an examination of police calls for service that involved imitation firearm-related incidents in British Columbia between 2014 and 2018, Cohen, Lee, and Osterberg (2021) found that most of the incidents took place online or through social media and involved posting photos of individuals holding imitation firearms. Of concern is the fact that the police and the average citizen are often unable to distinguish between real and imitation firearms and, therefore, respond to the incident as if the weapon was real. Moreover, parents of youth with imitation firearms appear to lack concern

or understanding about the seriousness and potential outcomes associated with possessing, brandishing, or attempting to use imitation firearms (Cohen, Lee et al., 2021).

### *Potential Responses*

#### Educational Campaigns

In response to increases in imitation firearm use, the Edmonton Police Service developed an extensive public safety education campaign involving various methods of information dissemination on imitation firearm safety, including posters, brochures, videos, and comic books for kids (Cohen, Lee et al., 2021). Based on their assessment of imitation firearms use among youth, Cohen, Lee and colleagues (2021) developed an educational awareness toolkit that included a brochure with key information related to firearm safety and messaging around police response to weapons, posters focusing on the key message about the indistinguishability of imitation and real firearms, and a middle-school and high-school level presentation designed to foster a discussion about the myths surrounding the gang lifestyle, resolving conflict in a non-violent manner, and the importance of thinking before posting online (Cohen, Lee et al., 2021). However, it may be important to consider these campaigns as part of a larger anti-gang initiative, as marketing/publicity elements have not been shown to have a significant effect on crime outcomes (Hodgkinson et al., 2009).

#### Social Media

Social media provides an opportunity to utilize technology to intervene in and prevent gang violence (Patton et al., 2016a). Outreach workers can utilize social media to directly engage and build relationships with youth, to obtain knowledge about their clients' online behaviours, and to identify problematic situations and guide in-person interventions (Patton et al., 2016a). Utilizing social media platforms to build rapport with youth may also contribute to outreach workers being able to deescalate online conflicts (Patton et al., 2016a). Becoming digital interrupters, outreach workers can mediate electronic aggression by disrupting transmission from cyberspace to the street (Patton et al., 2016b). Many community-based organizations are increasing their online presence. With a strong online presence via Twitter and YouTube, Homeboy Industries shows how programs can utilize an online presence to reach high-risk and former gang members (Patton et al., 2015). Homeboy Industries highlights their commitment to community and possibilities for change, which resonate with many gang members who participated in the Homeboy Industries programing because of their desire to exit gang life (Patton et al., 2015).

Social media channels can also be an effective way of disseminating crime prevention information and updates to a large audience in a timely fashion (Cohen & Osterberg, 2018). Webpages can provide useful information that can be accessed by a wide audience. Providing QR codes on information sheets, posters, and other publicly disseminated educational materials can also increase access to online prevention and awareness "toolkits" (Cohen, Lee et al., 2021). Given that most of the public carry a mobile device, mobile apps can be effective for increasing community engagement, disseminating crime prevention information, and creating online communities of

citizens who can foster and coordinate participation in neighbourhood initiatives (Cohen & Osterberg, 2018).

## EXAMPLES OF LOCAL LOWER MAINLAND ANTI-GANG PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION INITATIVES

**Project Lavender** is a program that resulted from a collaborative effort between the Surrey RCMP and female youth from the Surrey School District. Geared towards students in grades five through ten, Project Lavender provides one-hour presentations designed to improve youth's confidence, build on youth's strengths, and develop compassion and resiliency to empower youth to make positive life choices (Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 2021). Created through direct consultation with female youth, the presentation focuses on topics that are relevant to the target population, including understanding sexual exploitation, drug and alcohol awareness, healthy relationships, and texting and 'sexting'. To further emphasize the presentation's themes, students are also shown videos featuring local young women who have been able to overcome adversity and follow their passions (Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 2021). Facilitated by Surrey RCMP members from the Youth Unit, Diversity and Indigenous Peoples Unit, and the Surrey Gang Enforcement Team, Project Lavender can be adapted for use outside of the school setting to suit the needs of different community groups and organizations who engage with youth (Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 2021).

The **Yo Bro | Yo Girl Youth Initiative** aims to prevent violence by reaching at-risk children and helping them find their inner strength and resilience (Yo Bro Yo Girl, 2021). The Yo Bro | Yo Girl approach focuses on supporting youth through three mechanisms: (1) social responsibility that involves encouraging and increasing positive behaviours in children and youth to increase their capacity to build health relationships and become positively contributing members of society; (2) high school graduation, encouragement to pursue higher levels of education (i.e., post-secondary), and training for employment; and (3) youth empowerment that involves having youth act as role models and leaders, where they share what they have learned and their success stories to prevent more children from going down the wrong path (Yo Bro Yo Girl, 2021). Through collaborative relationships with the School Districts in Surrey, Vancouver, and Chilliwack, the Yo Bro | Yo Girl Youth Initiative offers eight curriculum-driven programs delivered in the classroom, after school, and during school breaks. Designed to meet the Ministry of Education's Learning Outcomes, the programs foster the development of skills, attitudes, and beliefs that enable youth to confidently face life's challenges (Yo Bro Yo Girl, 2021).

**The Keep It Real** program aims to increase awareness about drug and gang issues using educational presentations delivered by ex-gang members, recovering addicts, law enforcement officers, current program participants, and Yo Bro | Yo Girl alumni (Yo Bro Yo Girl, 2021). The Team Yo Bro | Yo Girl afterschool and activity program provides youth with the opportunity to participate in physical fitness activities to develop physical and mental strength, flexibility, agility, relaxation, and personal safety skills. Students are also given the opportunity to engage in team-building exercises to build peer connections, acceptance, and confidence (Yo Bro Yo Girl, 2021). **The Know**

**Means No** program is a girls-only, in-school education program that involves mentors and law enforcement volunteers teaching young women about factors that put them at risk in relationships, and how to build healthy relationships by maintaining boundaries, controlling emotions, projecting confidence, and de-escalating tense situations (Yo Bro Yo Girl, 2021). The co-ed in-school education program, **Respectful Responsible Relationships** (R3) involves mentors and law enforcement volunteers teaching students about healthy relationships through hands-on workshops. **The Foundations for Leadership** program provides youth with the skills necessary to take on leadership roles within Yo Bro | Yo Girl Youth Initiative. Running once per week for one month, the introductory course covers concepts including personal vision and values, mindfulness, communication, and resiliency. During each four-hour session, students engage in workshops, participate in job shadowing, and engage with community agencies and leaders to prepare to become leaders in their own worlds (Yo Bro Yo Girl, 2021). After completing the introductory course, participants are placed in and supported in ongoing work experience to gain valuable opportunities and training, including first aid and certifications (Yo Bro Yo Girl, 2021). Recognizing the best way to inspire change is to connect those with lived experiences with at-risk youth, the Yo Bro | Yo Girl Mentors program involves senior members from the program leading workshops and after-school programs and connecting with at-risk youth to provide support and ensure youth do not head down the wrong path. The last program is the **Spring, Summer, and Winter Break Programs** that connect kids with their school and community, assist with developing skills, including confidence and physical literacy skills, and provide supervision during prime times when at-risk youth could get recruited by gangs or drawn in to experiment with risky sexual or drug-related behaviour (Yo Bro Yo Girl, 2021).

Following the CFSEU's End Gang Life program discussed above, the Surrey Gang Enforcement Team (SGET) developed an anti-gang presentation specifically for Surrey youth, parents, educators, and community groups, known as '**Shattering the Image**' (Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 2022). Made up of two modules, the presentation de-glamourizes gangs and provides youth with important information, including facts on gangs and drugs, and the dangers of dial-a-doping to help equip youth to make more positive choices and avoid the gang lifestyle (Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 2022).

Also mentioned above, the Abbotsford Police Department has created their own specific anti-gang strategy. The **PATHWAYS** program is a multifaceted, integrated, holistic approach to target youth and young adults (primarily 12- to 19-year-olds) identified as being at-risk for gang involvement and to suppress gang activity (Abbotsford Police Department, 2022). The PATHWAYS program team members, which include a civilian Gang Prevention Coordinator, police officers, and youth outreach workers, utilize an internally developed risk assessment tool to ensure the most appropriate participants are identified and selected for intervention (Public Safety Canada, 2023). The program provides a three-pronged approach that involves community engagement, prevention, and intervention. Community engagement represents the foundation for the intervention and prevention methods, as it builds community capacity to address and solve gang issues (Public Safety Canada, 2023). The prevention component involves providing educational materials concentrated on risk and protective factors to various audiences, including youth, community

members, families, and other stakeholders, while the intervention element focuses on providing services for at-risk youth and young adults (Public Safety Canada, 2023). The main purpose of the program is to prevent youth and young adults from becoming entrenched in the gang lifestyle and attempts to divert these individuals away from a criminal lifestyle. The program focuses on building positive relationships in the community, addressing risk factors, and strengthening protective factors through engagement, education, and empowerment strategies to prevent gang involvement and mobilizing resources and services to intervene in gang activities (Abbotsford Police Department, 2022).

Co-founded by two members of the Vancouver Police Department, Detective Anisha Parhar and Sergeant Sandy Avelar, the '**Her Time'** program was implemented in 2017 to specifically target girls in gangs. This program aims to raise awareness about the dangers associated with becoming involved with male gang members using presentations (Juhasz, 2019). In addition to targeting females who are already gang-involved, the program provides education and resources to young women and high-school-aged girls who are at-risk of becoming involved in or victimized by gangs and organized crime (Juhasz, 2019; Washington Kids Foundation, 2023). The program is organized into a playbook that focuses on positive relationships, healthy living, goal setting, financial independence, and personal safety (Washington Kids Foundation, 2023).

**Odd Squad Productions Society** is a charitable organization comprised of serving and retired police officers and volunteers to provide prevention programs for youth throughout British Columbia and across Canada (Odd Squad Productions Society, 2023). Based on the experiences of a group of beat officers who worked on the streets of the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver, Odd Squad works on the premise that "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure" (Odd Squad Productions Society, 2023). Using reality-based film work, presentations, and peer-to-peer work, Odd Squad members strive to educate youth, encourage positive goal setting, and empower youth to make healthy choices around risky behaviour. Drug and gang prevention for youth is provided through various film and educational materials, including documentaries, reality series, presentations, YouTube Videos, social media awareness, Podcasts, and peer-to-peer programs. The educational materials focus on the perils of drugs and addiction, the current drug trends for youth, and facts about gangs (Odd Squad Productions Society, 2023). The Odd Squad Junior Series provides educational and prevention-based topics for youth created by other youth. Odd Squad also offers physical literacy programs, including judo for juniors and adults, woodworking, and outdoor adventures (Odd Squad Productions Society, 2023).

As discussed above, **Bar Watch** is a voluntary program that involves a partnership between police and restaurant and bar owners (Griffiths, 2020). Under this program, patrons swipe their driver's license, and, sometimes have their photograph taken, and the information is then stored temporarily in an electronic database and shared amongst all participating Bar Watch Programs in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia. Undesirable, by virtue of their overt behaviour or involvement in serious and/or violent criminal activities, people may be refused entry or removed from the premises, and police are granted permission to enter and escort persons with known gang affiliations out of the premises (Griffiths, 2020). The goal of this program is to deter gang-associated persons from being in certain establishments, reduce the presence of gangs and gang

violence in bars and restaurants, and to contribute to public safety (Griffiths, 2020). It is estimated that more than 150 businesses participate in the Bar Watch program (Zeidler, 2018).

Finally, it should be noted that, at the time of the writing of this strategy, the Ministry of Public Safety & Solicitor General (PSSG) has issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) to gather information about the various ways that children and youth become targeted, vulnerable, or exploited by gangs and organized crime groups in British Columbia. Moreover, the RFP is interested in the development and delivery of services to "protect students in British Columbia from exploitation and serious crime involving gangs and organized crime groups through targeted support for school communities" (Ministry of Public Safety Solicitor General, 2022, p. 3).

### THINGS TO AVOID: WHAT DOES NOT WORK

Some programs simply do not work. Gun buyback programs have been found to have little to no effect on death rates or violent crime (Leigh & Neill, 2010). Even in countries with considerable restrictions on the availability of firearms and strict licencing requirements, the evidence suggests that impacts from gun buyback programs are tied to geography, as well as other initiatives that are in place (Leigh & Neill, 2010). For instance, gun buybacks were found to significantly reduce firearm homicides and suicides in Australia; however, the researchers were quick to point out that Australian borders are more easily controlled than countries with land borders (Leigh & Neill 2010). Furthermore, the gun buyback program may be more effective when tied to strict legislation and policy pertaining to gun licensing, as well as banning "high-risk" guns (Leigh & Neill, 2010; Sherman et al., 1998). In essence, gun buybacks appear to operate in a more indirect manner to reduce firearm-related violent crimes. Due to their cost; however, they are unlikely to be an effective use of resources in the effort to prevent firearm injury (Kuhn et al., 2002).

Similarly, while many programs appear sound, there are often pitfalls in the design and implementation. Programs that are fear-based in their approach have been shown to be ineffective in meeting their goals (Parker et al., 2014; Russell, 2021). Scared Straight, Drug Abuse and Resistance Education (DARE), Operation Hardcore, and other juvenile awareness programs were designed to deter young people from gang involvement or violence using scare tactics and confrontational techniques that highlight the negative consequences associated with engaging in a particular behaviour (Russell, 2021; Wong et al., 2012). There is evidence to suggest that these types of programs are not only ineffective, but they may increase the risk of offending through mechanisms such as peer contagion (i.e., transfer of violence-related behaviour from one peer to another) (Russell, 2021). These programs fail because they assume that certain individuals are attracted to gangs solely based on poor life skills and attitudes (Wong et al., 2012). In effect, they do not consider the complexity of the various pathways to gang membership. More effective mechanisms for penetrating the naivete of young people involve education about risk factors and protective factors, as well as raising awareness about relevant, local examples of negative outcomes associated with the gang lifestyle (e.g., murders of young people in the community) (Squires & Plecas, 2013).

Afterschool programs and recreational centres operate under the premise that gangs and delinquency will be prevented by "getting kids off the streets" (Wong et al., 2012, p. 24). Sports programs and outreach initiatives that aim to provide youth with positive role models and a safe place for youth to hang out have not been shown to prevent gang membership on their own (Wong et al., 2012). Some of the problems with such programs are a lack of targeting the most salient risk factors or intervening when it is already too late (Wong et al., 2012).

Programs tailored specifically to youth already involved in gangs and universal programs that bring low-risk youth together with aggressive or antisocial youth may have unintended negative side effects as well. Bringing together antisocial youth may serve to increase social cohesion between them and generate more antisocial behaviours (Russell, 2021). Providing a mode of contact between at-risk youth and non-at-risk youth may also increase antisocial behaviour through deviancy training (Juhasz, 2019; Totten, 2009). It is surmised, for instance, that incorporating a peer-involvement component to anti-bullying programs, including peer mediation and peer mentoring, may increase victimization and retaliatory violence, rather than serve to prevent such behaviours (Home Office, n.d.; World Health Organization, 2015).

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EFFECTIVE PROGRAMS

The inconsistency in program implementation coupled with the lack of sufficient rigorous evaluations of anti-gang programs have precluded the development of best practices. However, there are several good practices and recommended strategies for developing and implementing anti-gang initiatives. The first step for preventing gang problems is understanding the landscape. Thus, to develop an effective gang prevention, intervention, and/or suppression programs, it is imperative that all key stakeholders understand the nature and extent of the local gang problem, the factors that contribute to gang involvement/exiting, and the resources that are available to address the gang issue (Burch & Chemers, 1997; Government of Alberta, 2010). This requires developing a clear definition of gangs and gang-related behaviours, as well as a profile of the gang members and their activities (Howell, 2010). Identifying the activities of existing programs and program gaps, as well as the community's capacity, in terms of the availability of appropriate agencies and resources required to target gang issues will assist with coordinating and mobilizing community and institutional/governmental resources required to implement an effective anti-gang program (Burch & Chemers, 1997; Howell, 2010).

A second step is taking a comprehensive approach to anti-gang strategies (Government of Alberta, 2010). Standalone strategies and those targeting single risk factors are not capable of addressing the complexity of community gang problems (Densley, 2011). Strategies combining prevention, intervention, and suppression components appear to be the most effective in combating gang problems (Hastings et al., 2011). More specifically, the most effective strategies will include punitive strategies to decrease gang activities, as well as supportive strategies that include incentives to build and strengthen protective factors (Hodgkinson et al., 2009; Makarios & Pratt, 2012). Focusing solely on the negative aspects related to gang involvement may lead to unintended consequences, such as increasing social cohesion amongst gang members, and eliminate the

inclusion of at-risk or gang-involved individuals who do not share the same risk profiles (Bhatt & Tweed, 2018). Thus, at their core, programs should ensure they are designed to make positive changes in the lives of the most vulnerable people (i.e., at-risk individuals), while also reducing risk factors by addressing the root causes of violence (House of Commons Canada, 2022; Russell, 2021). Development of good social skills, including communication, cooperation, personal responsibility, and community involvement help individuals build self-confidence, and decrease their propensity toward becoming involved in negative behaviours, such as joining a gang (Department of Justice, n.d.). To address the root causes of violence, initiatives should take a "holistic community" approach (Public Safety Canada, 2018). Based on lessons learned from comprehensive and holistic approaches; however, it is important to tailor the program to the most pressing issues rather than attempting to tackle broader social issues (e.g., all gang crime and gang membership) (Wong et al., 2012). In addition, the program must be designed to address the needs within the local context, including the existing lack of social opportunities (e.g., education, employment, housing, etc.) (Totten, 2009). Programs should be evidence-based and address the specific risk factors in the target population (Wong et al., 2012). Program flexibility is also crucial, as successful initiatives will need to be designed in relation to the resources available and structures in place (Wong et al., 2012).

The specific components of an anti-gang and gun violence initiative are also crucial. There must be an appropriate balance of strategies (i.e., prevention, intervention, and suppression), as well as dosage and continuity of services (Spergel et al., 2005). Furthermore, to be successful, each program component must, in and of itself, be effective (Wong et al., 2012). This necessitates that the institutions and organizations supporting each program component are well-functioning (World Health Organization, 2015). At its core, it is recommended that an effective program should contain three core components: prevention, early intervention, and suppression (Howell, 2000).

Successful gang prevention requires deglamourizing the gang lifestyle and providing young people and families with information about viable alternatives to gangs, educating youth, families, and community members about risks and protective factors affecting entry into gangs, providing effective support systems for young people, including increasing opportunities for life skills training, and ensuring accountability of young people to parents, schools and communities (Government of Alberta, 2010; Wyrick, 2006). Given that gangs often recruit young people, and the costs associated with offenders are the lowest during the early years of a criminal career, particularly for those under the age of 19 years old, early prevention efforts focusing on youth in high-risk situations before problem behaviours develop may be the most cost-effective solution (Howell, 2000; Magana, 2016). It is suggested that targeting at-risk youth as early as grade five or those aged 10 or 11 may prove the most effective for addressing the major risk factors for gang membership, including delinquent friends, non-delinquent problem behaviours, attitudes about breaking the law, parental supervision and monitoring, and commitment to negative peers (Cohen, Lee et al., 2021; Wong et al., 2012).

Recognizing that young people may already be involved in gangs or other forms of violent/criminal behaviour, it is essential that there are effective responses in place to reduce future offending and gang activity (Home Department Government, 2012). Early intervention programs need to target

high-risk youth at the earliest stages of gang involvement, and balance services and opportunities with supervision and accountability (Wyrick, 2006). Social and economic opportunities, including special schools, such as vocational schools, training, and job programs may prove useful for assisting older gang members to leave a gang, or decrease their level of participation in gang activities (Burch & Chemers, 1997). Programs that introduce new friends or mentors who act as role models (e.g., mentorship programs and public health models) may also increase social capital and provide positive reinforcement necessary to promote gang disengagement (Roman et al., 2017). Relentless, targeted gang outreach activities combined with connection to legitimate opportunities, including obtaining gainful employment and acting as mentors, allow gang members to forego delinquent opportunities, give back to their community, and disengage from the gang lifestyle (Densley & Pyrooz, 2017). Coordinated partnerships between agencies and service providers may facilitate intervention strategies that are tailored to the circumstances of gang-involved youth and adults by providing relationships and activities that fill the void for gang membership (Roman et al., 2017). Developing effective exit strategies is also key to enhancing intervention programs, particularly when offenders are leaving correctional facilities (Government of Alberta, 2010).

Suppression strategies need to target serious, violent, and chronic offenders who are gang-involved (Howell, 2000). Ensuring a strong enforcement response to an existing gang problem may increase the success of prevention efforts (Wyrick, 2006). Community awareness and education are important components for gang suppression (Squires & Plecas, 2013). To be effective, gang suppression efforts must involve collaboration and information sharing amongst community-based agencies and criminal justice agencies (Burch & Chemers, 1997). Support through legislation is also vital to the success of law enforcement efforts (Government of Alberta, 2010). Essentially, an effective response to gangs requires a balanced, multidisciplinary, integrated response that combines community collaboration, including information sharing, gang awareness, and education, crime prevention activities, targeted intervention strategies, and suppression tactics delivered by a cross-section of agency partnerships (Government of Alberta, 2010; Howell, 2000).

The design and delivery of the program and associated services are also crucial. Programs should be comprehensive, offered to smaller cohorts, be gender-responsive, age and level of development appropriate, and context-specific (Cohen, Lee et al., 2021). Essentially, it is important to ensure there is a range of activities that will actively engage youth and offer an opportunity to develop leadership (Akca et al., 2020).

Furthermore, to ensure a program addresses the unique needs of a multicultural community, such as British Columbia, Canada, programs need to be developed in a culturally sensitive manner (Ngo et al., 2011). This ensures that programs will be responsive to historical, social, cultural, and individual barriers (Akca et al., 2020). To create a culturally sensitive approach, members from the target population should be consulted to ensure the programs not only meet their needs, but that there is sufficient community ownership/support (Cohen & Osterberg, 2018). Primary prevention initiatives need to promote cross-cultural understanding and acceptance, social inclusion, and cohesion, as well as remove barriers to services and social opportunities for communities from diverse backgrounds (Ngo et al., 2011). Programs need to promote the availability of and access to

culturally responsive services in health, education, social services, and justice, and give priority to a holistic approach attentive to healthy childhood and adolescent development, individual growth, cultural and personal identity, family functioning, social interactions, and citizenship (Ngo et al., 2011). This requires building on cultural strengths and resources, and respecting families as knowers of their own experiences (Lee & Mjelde-Mossey, 2004). Secondary and tertiary prevention strategies should include family-based, community-based, and school-based support to ensure that those at highest risk for engaging in unlawful activities are supported, there is positive reintegration into communities, and families are also provided with appropriate services (Ngo et al., 2011). Some key activities at this level include outreach support, family literacy, parental training, culturally appropriate mentorship, community education, access to culturally specific programs, identity development, psychosocial support, and access to social opportunities (Ngo et al., 2011).

Utilizing a phased intervention model may also increase the success of program delivery. Determining program eligibility, building trust, and identifying individual needs within the first few months may ensure the appropriate population is targeted, there is sufficient community buy-in to the program, and the program services are addressing the most pressing needs (Akca et al., 2020). The second phase should focus on changing behaviours and attitudes through counseling, mentorship, and training. To ensure any changes made by clients after completing the program are sustained, the final phase of a program should involve a follow-up with clients for a specified period (Akca et al., 2020).

Strategies must also incorporate methods and approaches that will facilitate successful delivery of activities and services (Russell, 2021). Delivering a program through interactive sessions, for instance, provides the opportunity to include skills-based demonstrations and hands-on practice (Higginson et al., 2015; Russell, 2021). Programs are most effective when they offer long-term plans to build protective factors and deal with risk factors (e.g., poor education and life skills, lack of family and role model support, and employment opportunity) (Association of Chief Police Officers, 2007). Effective approaches are enduring, which necessitates consistent service delivery, having regular and frequent contacts with participants (e.g., meeting weekly), as well as providing ongoing support and resources (Russell, 2021; Smith & Egan, 2014; Squires & Plecas, 2013). Programs with a long duration and high intensity are more likely to capture changing images of the self and offer continuity of social ties outside of a gang, which is crucial (Higginson et al., 2015; Romanet al., 2017). Delivering services through one-on-one sessions as opposed to group sessions may also improve the effectiveness of a program by decreasing opportunities for cohesion amongst antisocial peers (Randhawa-Horne et al., 2019). Ensuring the right personnel are involved with service delivery is also essential. To that end, program facilitators need to be trained and experienced in working with the target population to ensure positive relationships are built and sustained (Dandurand & Heidt, 2023; Russell, 2021; Squires & Plecas, 2013).

Where programs are located may also affect their overall success. In cases involving youth, it is suggested that the program should aim to work with young people in their natural setting (i.e., school or home). Not only does this increase the probability that skills learned through the program will be maintained, but this also increases the safety of program participants by removing the

participants from acts of violence occurring in the community (Akca et al., 2020). Provided that many existing programs are centralized (i.e., held in a specific location) and require transportation to participate, this may create a barrier for youth to access a program (Howell, 2000). This may be a key reason programs experience attrition. More effective programs are developed and implemented in natural settings. Thus, having programs close to or inside of existing structures, such as schools, community centres, and workplaces may reduce or eliminate a key barrier to participation.

Who is involved in the design and implementation of the program can also affect the program's success and sustainability. Any single agency, including the police, should not be expected to assume sole responsibility for gang problems. Gangs are not just a school, family, or police problem (Department of Justice, n.d.). Community cooperation and collaboration, as well as multi-agency information-sharing and partnerships are essential for ensuring the development and implementation of effective solutions specifically targeted to a community's gang problem (Wyrick, 2006). Community-based approaches that incorporate family and community support will ensure a program is developed based on a full understanding of local needs, including the lived experiences of gang members, and provide an opportunity to deliver innovative, culturally responsive initiatives that incorporate key services to address vulnerability factors (e.g., mental health, addictions, and housing) (Akcaet al., 2020; Government of Alberta, 2010). Effective programs all have some form of community support, including financial, access to space for programming, and partnerships to provide participants with recreational, educational, leadership, and employment opportunities (Government of Alberta, 2010).

For a coordinated approach to be effective, leadership is key (Cohen et al., 2022; De Jager & Cohen, 2021). Each participating criminal justice and community agency must identify a person to take on the principal role (Spergel et al., 1994). This individual needs to have sufficient authority to make decisions within their home organization, as well as on behalf of their organization (Cohen et al., 2022). They must also be able to mobilize resources and create formal and informal networks of personnel who could be valuable in addressing the gang problem (Spergel et al., 1994). Due to the importance of agency leaders, it is also essential to incorporate a succession plan when developing a coordinated, multi-agency approach to ensure connections are maintained and program components continue to operate. Having a leadership/steering committee can ensure that all partner agencies are sufficiently supported to commit to the mission and purpose of the initiative (Cohen et al., 2022).

Finally, any effective program requires a clear theory of change with an accompanying logic model, policy framework, and evaluation framework (Russell, 2021). A program needs to have a clear mission statement, well-articulated goals, and objectives that are shared amongst all program stakeholders, specific written projected outcomes, reasonable timelines for attaining projected outcomes, a system for monitoring progress toward all individual agency objectives, demonstrate social validity through community buy-in and engagement, and be free from cultural bias and discrimination (Cohen & Osterberg, 2018; Howell, 2000). It is also crucial that programs are delivered as originally designed and intended (Russell, 2021). This will require strategically identifying partners based on what they are able to contribute, and building capacity, including

human resource capacity (i.e., proper training and developing of technical and professional skills), and collaborative networks (Cohen & Osterberg, 2018; World Health Organization, 2015).

## Guns and Gangs Prevention and Intervention Programs in the City of Richmond

The City of Richmond has numerous non-profit, faith-based, and government organizations that provide a substantial number of services. While some of the services overlap, it is critical to understand, at least at a high-level, the inventory of services offered within the City of Richmond so that consideration can be given to which strategies are best employed to fill any gaps and which strategies complement and enhance those programs currently being offered. The following summary highlights organizations and service providers that Potus Consulting Inc. consulted with or obtained information from (e.g., via their websites) that deliver services to youth at-risk for criminality, violence, gangs, or other related issues.

### TOUCHSTONE FAMILY ASSOCIATION

Touchstone Family Association's mission is "strengthening the social health and independence of families and children through effective intervention and support services". Their values are integrity, respect, and cooperation. Their stated guiding principles are to recognize strengths of families and individuals, the diversity of the population, and the effect of services, to respond to families with effective interventions, and address the needs of the community. A final guiding principle is to maintain a safe environment for clients, a sound working knowledge of the community, and provide responsible fiscal management and professional service. Touchstone Family Association offers various programs, including a Community Action Program for Children (CAP-C), Richmond Early Years Outreach Program, Family Preservation Programming, which includes a Chinese Support Group, Complex Developmental Behavioural Conditions / Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder, Men, Anger & Family, My Tween and Me, What is Needed to Make a Difference, and a Connect Parent Group. Touchstone Family Association also operates Francis House, which is a five-bed treatment program for youth located in Vancouver, the Pathways to Hope program, Front Porch Program, and the Supervised Access program. They also offer the RESET Youth Team delivering programming specific to youth and includes Breaking BARRiers, StreetSmarts Mentorship, School's Out, Transition to Independence, and the City of Richmond's Restorative Justice program. Touchstone Family Association is an accredited organization with the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF). Touchstone Family Association's website is: https://touchstonefamily.ca/.

### IMMIGRANT SERVICES SOCIETY OF BC

The Immigrant Services Society of BC is a non-profit organization that assists new immigrants to settle in Canada. They offer services in multiple languages and have relationships with multiple service providers in the City of Richmond. Their programs and services include settlement-related programming, English language training, employment assistance, business startup assistance, a job

board, digital skills and literacy assistance, and a language and career college. Their website is www.issbc.org.

### RICHMOND ADDICTIONS SERVICES SOCIETY (RASS)

Richmond Addiction Services Society is a non-profit organization focused on addiction prevention and education. RASS provides health promotion, prevention, and early intervention services for children, youth, and families. Richmond Addiction Services Society's mission is "with a focus on prevention, we provide our community with inclusive and innovative programs to support social and emotional resilience". Their values and beliefs include being understanding and compassionate, accepting and respectful, accessible and safe, responsive and timely, adaptable and creative, as well as collaborative. RASS provides services in English, Cantonese, Mandarin, and Serbo-Croatian, depending on the program and they have referral relationships with multiple Richmond service providers. Their programs and services include community prevention, supporting youth, School's Out, CATS (Constructive Alternative to Teen Suspension), Youth Peer Support, and Supporting Families. Their website is https://rassrichmond.ca/.

### RICHMOND FOUNDRY

Foundry is a province-wide network of integrated health and wellness services for young people 12 to 24 years old. Foundry locations offer integrated services for youth to access five core services in one convenient location: mental health care; substance use services; physical and sexual health care; youth and family peer supports; and social services. Youth can access Foundry's integrated services by walking into Richmond's location, which is one of 14 local Foundry centres. Youth can also explore Foundry's online tools and resources at www.foundrybc.ca, or connecting virtually through the free Foundry BC app. With Foundry's Integrated Youth Services (IYS) approach, a youth goes to one location and service providers, including physicians, nurses, counsellors, peer support workers, and others, collaborate to provide the care needed, all without requiring a referral from another agency. Foundry Richmond provides information in French, Punjabi, Traditional Chinese, and Simplified Chinese. Their services include physical and sexual health, youth and caregiver counseling, mental health and substance use supports, youth peer support, family peer support, and employment support through the Foundry Work and Education Program.

### CHIMO

Chimo Community Services is a non-profit organization serving people in crisis and transition. They serve individuals and families from different cultural backgrounds, age groups, family lifestyles, and economic situations. Through ten program areas, they provide diverse services in 12 languages. Their services span a continuum from community building, counseling, and individual crisis support to legal advocacy, housing support, and education. They engage in collaborative community planning and develop innovative resources to address emerging needs. Chimo's programs include crisis lines and counseling, the Nova Transition House, outreach and advocacy, housing programs,

transition programming for new immigrants, access to justice programs, newcomer settlement services, homeless prevention programs, educational programs on mental health awareness and emotional safety, as well as positively influencing the views and behaviors of the community. Chimo is an accredited organization with the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) for their counseling and Crisis Line programs. Their website is www.chimoservices.com.

### CONNECTIONS COMMUNITY SERVICES SOCIETY

Connections is a community based charitable organization that began as the "Richmond Youth Service Agency" with the goal of making sure that youth in the City of Richmond receive the support, resources, and opportunities needed to succeed. Connections has evolved during the past 40 years to work with children, parents, families, seniors, new immigrants, and specialized populations. Now known as "Connections Community Services Society", they work with the community to make certain that children, youth, and families in the City of Richmond thrive and are given every opportunity to succeed. Connections offers programs internally and with community and government partners. These include their after-school programs, volunteer and leadership programs, recreation, cultural awareness programs, health and wellness for youth and seniors, Indigenous family support, youth employment through their Youth Works program, childcare services, the Connections Kids Club and Camp, Generations Homework Club, and Station Stretch in partnership with School District 38. Their website is https://connectionscommunityservices.com/.

### S.U.C.C.E.S.S.

S.U.C.C.E.S.S. is one of the largest and longest running social service agencies in Canada that supports newcomers, seniors, youth, and families. S.U.C.C.E.S.S. offers dozens of programs across a very broad spectrum. These include community engagement, employment, entrepreneurship, family, health education, housing, language, seniors, settlement, and youth-related programming. Services can be found on S.U.C.C.E.S.S.'s website at https://successbc.ca/.

### RICHMOND MULTICULTURAL COMMUNITY SERVICES

Richmond Multicultural Community Service**s** (RMCS) began as an advocacy group to support newcomers facing barriers and challenges with settling in the City of Richmond, including discrimination and racism. RMCS offers support and programming in multiple languages and includes settlement services for newcomers, employment assistance, income tax clinics, a Business Owners Club, English conversation classes, inclusive community programs, LGTBQIAS2+ programs, multicultural women support groups, seniors' programs, and youth programs focused on leadership, English conversation, job readiness, and preparing for post-secondary education. Their website can be found at https://www.rmcs.bc.ca/.

### SCHOOL DISTRICT 38

School District 38 offers multiple school-based programs for youth and works collaboratively with social service agencies, government, and non-profit organizations. Of note, SD38 runs the Station Stretch Alternate Program out of SD38's Minoru Boulevard location in partnership with Connections Community Services Society. In addition to Station Stretch, this location houses four other District alternate programs: Horizons; Streetview; Outreach; and Hospital & Homebound. While each program is unique, all offer caring and supportive learning environments for youth facing challenges. More information about Station Stretch can be found at https://stationstretch.sd38.bc.ca/.

### FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS

Faith-based organizations have a significant physical and web-based presence in the City of Richmond, with more than 60 mosques, temples, churches, and religious schools of many denominations. This vast array of religions and spiritual practices come together in a collaborative interfaith community. While traditional brick-and-mortar places of worship exist throughout the city, a concentration of multi-faith locations, most notably located along the "Highway to Heaven", began in the 1990's along a section of No. 5 Road between Blundell Road and Westminster Highway, adjacent to Highway 99. Along this three-kilometer stretch of road are more than 20 houses of worship and learning, including the Tibetan Thrangu Monastery, Hindu Ram Krishna Mandir Vedic Cultural Centre, the Nanaskar Gurdwara Gursikh Temple, Ling Yen Mountain Temple, International Buddhist Society of Canada, Richmond Chinese Mennonite Brethren Church, Richmond Christian School, Shia Muslim Community Centre, and Richmond Jewish Day School. In addition to those located on No. 5 Road, the City of Richmond is also home to the Richmond Chinese Alliance Church and Gurdwara Nanak Niwas. Both these organizations, along with the International Buddhist Society and B.C. Muslim Association, have a strong web-based presence.

In the development of the BSCF strategy for the City of Richmond, Potus Consulting Inc. reached out to many faith-based organizations. The B.C. Muslim Association (BCMA) was the only one to reply to a request for a conversation or an interview. The BCMA, https://org.thebcma.com/, which has several locations in communities in British Columbia, offers a multitude of programs in the City of Richmond for newcomers, families, and youth. These include an Islamic studies program that runs after school and through the summer and is offered by teachers and a volunteer committee. BCMA also runs the award-winning BC Muslim School. Notably, the BCMA offers several year-round programs and events for youth, including basketball, ball hockey, ice hockey, and soccer leagues and tournaments, as well as camping, a Spirit of Islam program, and a pilgrimage opportunity for youth to travel to Mecca.

## Qualitative Information from Richmond RCMP Members

It is important to note that this document has been prepared for strategy and informational purposes only. Every effort has been made to ensure correctness. While all reasonable care has

been taken by Potus Consulting Inc. to ensure the accuracy of all information presented in this report, elements of it have been obtained from interviews and conversations with police officers, municipal employees, community organizations, and other stakeholders from the City of Richmond. As such, Potus Consulting Inc. makes no guarantees of any kind with respect to the veracity of the information received during these interviews and conversations. Any use of this information for any purpose other than this purpose should include independent research to verify the information presented below.

While enforcement strategies and efforts were mentioned by several participants, as the BSCF cannot be used to enhance or support police enforcement efforts, this was not a focus of the discussions. Each interview or conversation was between one to two hours in length, and the interviews were not audio or video recorded for the purposes of maintaining confidentiality. All interviews or conversations took place either in person, virtually, or by telephone. Detailed notes were taken for each interview. The interview phase was conducted between January 2023 and March 2023.

## THE GUNS AND GANG LANDSCAPE

While making money was, obviously, the primary objective, the main activities that gangs were involved in were drug importation/exportation, drug production, drug trafficking, human trafficking, the sex trade, illegal gaming, money laundering, and frauds. The idea was that, unlike groups operating in other municipalities, such as Surrey or Vancouver, the gangs in the City of Richmond did not specialize but were involved in a wide variety of criminal activity. As experienced in many cities, one of the main challenges was that, even if the City of Richmond was the main base for a gang or organized crime group, their business reach was national and international.

As will be discussed in greater detail below, similar to how most drug production, importing/exporting, and trafficking offences were believed to be associated with organized crime and gang activity, so were most homicides, attempted homicides, incidents of shots fired, kidnappings or forcible confinement offences, and human trafficking in the City of Richmond. Still, the general feeling was that organized crime and gangs were far less overt in the City of Richmond. For example, participants indicated that there were far less shootings in the City of Richmond compared to other cities in the Lower Mainland with gang issues. Moreover, there was less violent criminal activity and there were no specific areas of the city where there was public or visible gang criminality. However, as will be discussed below, the groups operating in the City of Richmond are far reaching in that their home base might be in the City of Richmond, but they have associates throughout British Columbia, Canada, and internationally. Participants indicated that many of the groups, at least in terms of their operations in the City of Richmond, at the time of writing this report, there existed in a state of peaceful coexistence. They tended to cooperate when necessary and there was not an active gang war or violence on the streets in the City of Richmond.

For the most part, participants indicated that the City of Richmond did not have a youth gang problem; however, several members did suggest that this was not always the case. In the past, there was a youth gang problem that was linked to more structured adult gangs related to dial-a-doping

and extortion. These members reported that, in the past, there was active recruitment of youth into gangs. Still, the sense was that this was not happening to any significant degree anymore. Again, youth were being used as proxies where their names were being used to obtain cars and other luxury goods as part of money laundering efforts, but there were not any street-level youth gangs in the City of Richmond. Nonetheless, some members suggested that there are small numbers of youth or a few groups of youth who have been seen associating with or hanging out with more established gangs. However, it is unclear if these youth are part of their own gang, part of a larger, adult, and more established gang, or something else. The main role of youth in these more established gangs are as messengers, couriers, or entry level dial-a-dopers.

It was also noted that, like the experience in other jurisdictions, youth involvement in gangs was typically associated with other family members or peers who were already in the gang. In other words, youth got connected and involved in gangs because they had siblings, parents, or peers in gangs. In effect, the youth most at risk of joining a gang were those who had family or peer connections to gangs. Another way that youth were being recruited into gangs was through social media.

In terms of some general characteristics, participants indicated that the more well-known gangs are predominately composed of males between the ages of 20 and 30 years old; however, the police do encounter some females acting as drivers in dial-a-dope operations. More specifically, it was reported that those who were running drug lines were more typically late teens to their early 30's; however, the more established gangsters are usually in their late 20's to their early 50's. These individuals might be involved in drug lines as well but were more likely to be involved in human trafficking, sexual exploitation, and the importation and exportation of narcotics. Some RCMP members indicated that the City of Richmond is a place where some gangsters come to hide out or hold meetings because the City of Richmond is considered a 'safer' city to live in and meet in. This is because the City of Richmond does not have an open drug market, has lower crime rates, and plenty of residential apartments and condominiums.

Among those Richmond RCMP members who work directly with youth, their general sense was that there have not been many violent incidents involving youth at school. While there have been a couple of incidents of youth using pepper spray and a few fights, participants did not think these incidents were gang related. While they would not rule out the possibility that there were youth gangs in the City of Richmond, they reported that youth gangs simply were not very prominent. Participants acknowledged that there was some drug dealing that occurred at or around some schools but not on a very large scale.

Members reported that when there was violence perpetrated by organized crime or gangs it typically involved a firearm, most commonly a handgun. In effect, these members believed that not only was the availability of firearms increasing, but the willingness to use them was increasing. Some members indicated that when they were interacting with a gang member on the street, in their car, or in a residence, they operated under the assumption that a firearm was present.

## PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION STRATEGIES AND APPROACHES

One of the strategies that Richmond RCMP utilizes to educate young people about the dangers of guns and gangs is to deliver talks in schools. This approach is generally a primary prevention strategy as it does not directly target youth who are at-risk for guns and gang involvement or those who are already connected with or participating in gangs. Instead, it is a general awareness campaign that addresses some of the common myths associated with the gang lifestyle, the criminal justice outcomes that young people can face because of gang involvement, and discussing the personal, peer, and familial risks and dangers associated with engaging with gang members. As youth can often get involved with gangs as money or drug couriers (dial-a-doping), the focus of the school presentations tends to be on the recruitment process, the legal consequences of dial-a-doping, and the potential for being a victim of violence because of their affiliation or participation with gangs. Of note, based on the unit or section that the member worked in, presentations to schools was either a formal part of their responsibilities or something that a member undertook 'off the side of their desks'. In other words, unlike other programs, such as DARE, there did not appear to be a formal arrangement between schools and the Richmond RCMP to receive guns and gang presentations. Participants also felt that presentations were most effective when delivered by RCMP members with experience dealing with gangs or by former gang members, and storytelling was perceived as a more effective approach than was a structured lecture or presentation style. It was also generally felt that the most appropriate age range to begin these discussions was with youth aged 10 to 12 years old and that it was very important to have these kind of presentations and conversations with students in Grades 11 and 12. Of note, participants did acknowledge that many of the youth who would most benefit from these conversations were not attending schools and were, therefore, hard to connect with.

It was felt by some participants that the youth at risk of getting involved with gangs are those youth reported to the police as missing. They are truant and hanging out with other at-risk youth during the day and at night. All participants stressed the value of being honest with youth about the risks and dangers associated with the gang lifestyle. In other words, while it was important to demystify the gang lifestyle, it was equally important to not exaggerate or lie about these things. Those who talk to youth must have experience in the field and be well equipped with 'the facts', have an ability to communicate and build rapport with youth, and be seen as truthful.

A more fulsome discussion of Richmond Restorative Justice is provided in the next section; however, Richmond RCMP participants who worked with youth indicated that they do refer some youth to restorative justice. It would appear that only first-time offenders or those engaged in very minor offending have been referred to restorative justice. The type of offences that have resulted in youth being referred to restorative justice are minor assault at school, schoolyard bullying, and online harassment.

Other outreach efforts in the community also focused on economic crimes related to crypto-currency scams and identity theft. There was the sense among participants that there was much more involvement of gangs with fraud perpetrated against the public. In response, the Richmond RCMP has used their Economic Crime Unit to send out newsletters and pamphlets designed to

educate the public about fraud and some of the scams being used. Importantly, this information is available in multiple languages.

Richmond RCMP has also recently implemented a version of Bar Watch or an Inadmissible Patron Program. Richmond RCMP calls it Patron of Interest Motivation Tactic and it consists of licenced restaurants or bars working in partnership with the gang enforcement team to notify them if there are organized crime or gang members in their establishment. When a call is received, members of the uniformed gang enforcement team will arrive at the location and talk to several people in the establishment before approaching the subjects of the complaint. Their main purpose is to prevent any nefarious behaviour from the gang members, to make the other patrons more comfortable, and to make it uncomfortable for the organized crime or gang members.

Several participants held the view that there were many multi-housing properties, such as condominiums and apartment building that had units that were rented out by organized crime and gangs and used for illegal activities. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Richmond RCMP had a version of the Crime-Free Multi Housing program, but it is currently dormant. Given the information presented on this issue in the literature review, the City of Richmond and the Richmond RCMP might consider reintroducing a robust crime-free multi housing program and exploring the use of a nuisance abetment policy to address organized crime and gangs renting apartments or condos for criminal activity.

Richmond RCMP are also involved in an 'adopt at-risk' youth program where, on a voluntary basis, Richmond RCMP youth officers spend time with a vulnerable youth, with the consent of the youth and their primary caregiver(s) that includes participating in after school activities, mentoring, and other outreach undertakings. There is no set length of time that an officer would remain connected to the youth, so it is up to each officer whether they participate in this program, how many youth they engage with, the nature of the engagement, and the length of time they remain connected to each youth. Richmond RCMP is also in the process of implementing Yankee 30, which is a program in partnership with MCFD that partners an MCFD youth probation officer with a Richmond RCMP member to ensure that the youth is abiding by their probation order conditions. While this is not a gang-related program specifically, it is a program designed to address at-risk youth. There is a similar program related to incidents of domestic violence that partners a Richmond RCMP member with a social worker that assists when there is a domestic violence incident where a youth was a witness or involved as a perpetrator or victim. The Youth Section also does follow up visits with youth in care that are on their case files. Again, while not specifically gang-focused, these are initiatives designed to address youth at-risk.

The Richmond RCMP also run a Youth Academy, discussed in greater detail below, which consists of 32 youth who participate in a range of activities over six days. To join the program, a youth must pass an interview process and physical testing. While having a negative police contact does not make a youth ineligible for the program, for the most part, this program does not have many at-risk youth who participate. Of note, the Richmond RCMP participants that Potus Consulting Inc. spoke to about the Youth Academy were open to the possibility of increasing the number of at-risk youth who could join the program, but felt that they would need one officer per higher-risk youth in the

program. They were also open to increasing the number of times per year that the program ran, but current resourcing only allowed for the program to run once per year.

Richmond RCMP Youth Section members try to visit as many elementary and secondary schools as possible to walk around the school and talk to teachers, youth, staff, and parents; however, members are not assigned to specific schools. In addition, when possible, they speak with teachers and students to identify at-risk youth that they can interact with. Members might ask to play soccer or basketball with youth on evenings or weekends, and members will ask for parents' or caregivers' consent to talk with their child and to have them participate in some activities with the members. From the perspective of the Richmond RCMP, the purpose of these efforts is to build a relationship with the youth, develop trust, serve as a positive role model, and help ensure that an at-risk youth does not go down a criminal or gang pathway. A related strategy is the work that the youth section does with faith-based organizations. Here, the focus is on developing trust between the police and the community so that the community will be comfortable approaching police officers about concerns they may have, especially with youth who are at-risk.

Another program that the Richmond RCMP participates in designed to address at-risk youth is as a standing member of the Complex Youth Table. While not implemented to address youth at-risk for gang involvement, this Table, which will be discussed in greater detail in the next section of this report, discusses the risks and needs profile of youth who come to the attention of the RCMP or community-based service or program providers. From the perspective of the Richmond RCMP participants who interact with youth, there has been a substantial increase in youths' levels of anxiety, depression, and defiance disorders, especially during and following the COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns. However, when schools have asked the Richmond RCMP to deliver presentations, they are typically about drug misuse, online safety, stranger danger, and frauds and scams. To that end, the Richmond RCMP are considering delivering these presentations at community centres and inviting youth and their caregiver(s) to attend.

Some members of the Richmond RCMP highlighted the benefits of being able to assist someone to exit the gang lifestyle. While they acknowledged the work done by CFSEU-BC in this area, some participants spoke of the value of offering a support system, someone to talk to, and someone who can direct them to local services or programs to assist with exiting a gang and relocation, if necessary. For those at-risk of joining a gang or feeling that they have no choice but to join a gang, participants indicated that they needed to be able to at least point to an alternative. While this might not work for everyone, there was a belief that there was a large proportion of at-risk youth who could be helped because they did not want to join a gang but felt pressure to do so. These participants admitted that there was not a lot that the Richmond RCMP was doing in this area, but they felt confident that there were programs and services in the community that could provide an alternative to joining a gang for many youth.

Another strategy that police agencies employ to deter and reduce crime is CPTED. As outlined in the literature review section of this report, CPTED is based on the idea that it is possible to prevent opportunities for crime by altering the physical environment in ways that deter offending and make spaces non-crime attractors. Participants were somewhat mixed in their attitudes towards CPTED

approaches as a gang prevention strategy. While there was the common belief that CPTED had some influence on gang activity, as cameras and well-lit areas could act as a deterrent, many participants highlighted the brazen nature of gang-related shootings that occurred in broad daylight and in very public spaces.

There are several other programs and initiatives that Richmond RCMP were engaged in designed to address at-risk youth, problem properties, and offenders that might have a nexus to guns and gangs. In addition to the work undertaken by the Youth Officers, the Richmond RCMP Community Engagement Team visit elementary schools to play sports and participate in other activities with children. This is typically done out of uniform and the selection of which schools to attend is a mix of where they have not been yet and schools that like having the police there. In 2023, six schools have been visited. Approximately once per month, officers try to attend drop-in programs, like basketball or other activities, at one or two community centres. While participating in activities, these officers talk to youth about drug misuse and answer questions they might have on a range of issues. The Team is also engaged in the Block Watch program where there are just over 300 block captains throughout the city. In addition to educating the block on CPTED concepts, other crime prevention strategies are taught and discussed. Community Engagement Officers also hold community events and deliver presentations and workshops on fraud and online scams. Finally, Richmond RCMP is reintroducing the Auxiliary Volunteer program that is expected to have 40 to 50 volunteers who can be in the community a few times per week. It is expected that they will have 10 to 20 auxiliary members in 2023 that can attend community events, serve as information officers, and assist the public and Richmond RCMP.

### FINAL THOUGHTS

A general assessment made by most participants was that it was necessary to target at-risk youth in schools and in the community to prevent recruitment or these youth becoming entrenched in a criminal lifestyle. There was also general support among participants for the reintroduction of SROs that could assist in the identification and diversion of at-risk youth. While many members indicated that, for some youth, enforcement and incarceration are the only viable solutions, they were optimistic that, for many youth, mentoring, developing employment skills, education, and demystifying the gang/criminal lifestyle would be effective strategies. When asked if there were any organizations that were doing a good job of addressing youth gangs and gun violence prevention and intervention in the City of Richmond, as will be discussed in the next section, some of the organizations mentioned were The Foundry Richmond, Touchstone Family Association, and Vancouver Coastal Health.

## Qualitative Information from City of Richmond Stakeholder Interviews and Conversations

The purpose of the interviews and conversations with a wide range of non-law enforcement stakeholders within the City of Richmond was to better understand their unique portfolios and

service delivery models, and hear their insights as it relates to at-risk youth and the nature and extent of organized crime and gang activity in the City of Richmond more broadly.

Each interview or conversation was between one to two hours in length, and the interviews were not audio or video recorded for the purposes of maintaining confidentiality. All interviews took place either in person, virtually, or by telephone. Detailed notes were taken for each interview. The interview phase was conducted between January 2023 and March 2023. For each interview or conversation, Potus Consulting Inc. used a comprehensive, community-oriented focus to create a custom interview guide. Approximately 60 questions were designed and asked to participants that covered a wide array of areas, such as agency profile and services offered, staffing levels and employee backgrounds, funding models, office facilities and geographic location, profiles, volume, and types of clients, referral mechanisms, strategies and tools utilized, partnerships and collaborations, what was working well and what could be improved, marketing and advertising, barriers and impediments to effective and efficient service delivery, opportunities, emerging themes and areas of concern, and views on the gang and gun landscape in the City of Richmond. Participants provided their best practices, step-by-step processes, real-world case studies, candid challenges, opportunities, and more.

In total, 20 formal non-law enforcement stakeholder interviews were carried out by Potus Consulting Inc. with the City of Richmond, local area school district, community and non-profit agencies, and health organizations, among other entities. There was a total of 31 participants in these sessions. Through this consultation and engagement process, many areas were explored with the aim of addressing guns, gangs, and at-risk youth using prevention and intervention initiatives, such as but not limited to mentorship, counseling, rehabilitation, skills development, recreational opportunities, and faith-based approaches. More specifically, interviews and conversations were carried out with the following stakeholders who held the following position titles at the time of writing this report (in alphabetical order):

Stakeholders

- BC Muslim Association
- Chimo Community Services
- City of Richmond - Arts, Culture and Heritage Services
- City of Richmond - Community Social Development
- City of Richmond - Recreation Services
- Complex Youth Table
- Immigrant Services Society of BC
- Richmond Addictions Services Society
- Richmond Fire and Rescue Services
- Richmond Foundry
- Richmond School District No. 38
- Touchstone Family Association
- Vancouver Coastal Health

Position Titles

- Acting Executive Director
- Acting Manager
- Area Coordinator
- Captain, Community Relations Officer
- Clinical Supervisor
- Community Facilities Coordinator
- Director of Instruction
- Director of Services
- District Administrator & Safe Schools Coordinator
- Executive Director
- Fire and Life Safety Educator
- Manager
- Operations Lead
- Prevention Specialist
- Program Coordinator
- Program Director
- Program Lead
- Program Manager
- Supervisor
- Vice President Youth & Development Services
- Youth Development Coordinator
- Youth Outreach Worker
- Youth and Family Counselor

In addition to the formal interviews and conversations, numerous meetings took place between Potus Consulting Inc. and other key contacts to help advance the development of the BSCF strategy and add important strategic and contextual guidance. These included The City of Richmond Community Safety, Community Services, Recreation and Sport Services, and Planning & Development Divisions, Public Safety Canada, Touchstone Family Association, and Foundry Richmond. In addition, discussions with a small sample of at-risk youth who are accessing services and programs in the City of Richmond took place to better understand their perspectives on programming and what was serving them and not serving them well. Lastly, subject matter experts outside of the City of Richmond (within British Columbia and/or Canada) as well as international associates who specialize in the areas of gang prevention and intervention were also consulted, such as representatives of CFSEU-BC's End Gang Life and Exiting program and evaluators from the Gang Reduction Initiative of Denver (GRID).

The information in this section represents Potus Consulting Inc.'s interpretation based upon detailed notes made during the interviews, conversations, and meetings. The focus on this section is on the common themes and findings that surfaced with a few illustrative quotations. To capture the results, a thematic analysis was conducted on the qualitative data that involved reading through the data set and identifying patterns and meaning across the data to derive themes in a semi-structured

manner. The method revealed 17 overarching themes across all interviews and conversations. Themes capture environment insights and specific system-related areas, as well as general practitioner opinions and views. Below is a synthesis of findings from across all the interviews and conversations under the main overarching themes.

## GENERAL FINDINGS – WHAT WE LEARNED

Overall, the City of Richmond is a municipality whose service providers are positive and proud of the work they perform and who were very helpful and supportive during the development of this strategy. There was broad consensus that most agencies in the City of Richmond work well together and support each other where possible. They all expressed their passion for helping those in need, particularly youth and young adults.

Across many interviews, participants reported satisfaction with their organization and the role they played in it. Participants expressed how they tried their best to stay ahead of emerging threats and proactively reduce community risk. To that end, they cited many success stories. Interviewees concluded that they operated in a great system that was robust compared to other communities and which was interconnected and uncompetitive. The general conclusion was that the City of Richmond already possessed a strong foundation to support a future guns and gang strategy. They hoped to see something that was inviting and trustworthy, as well as ready, integrated, and agile to respond to future challenges. They were open-minded to any next steps that may be recommended and felt that whatever was endorsed and actioned would likely lead to broader tangential benefits for the community.

The findings discussed in this section highlight the complex and dynamic role these program and service providers play in the community and examines the services and systems that respond to the needs of diverse and vulnerable groups. Interviewees did not view themselves as merely a "cog in the machine" but as a key piece of a larger safety system; however, there were opportunities for enhanced symmetry and synergy across these multi-agencies that have a nexus to youth who engage in gang-like activities, such as group violence, weapons carrying, and dealing drugs.

## THE CITY OF RICHMOND'S GANG LANDSCAPE IS A CONTINUUM

As stated above in this report, the context of guns and gangs in the City of Richmond is multifaceted. It is best described along a continuum, with much of it being viewed as "underground", "below the radar", and "less loud", from the perspective of practitioners, when compared to other municipalities in the Lower Mainland. Some participants stated that, anecdotally, they have been hearing more and more about local gang-related activities over the years, such as shootings, stabbings, and crime vehicle arsons, largely due to media reporting on the subject. Some also noted that through personal experience and information disclosed in confidence from clients, that there are an estimated 50-80 local youth involved in gangs at some level who were between the ages of 15 to 25 years old.

On the contrary, others suggested that in the last 20 or more years, they have not observed much gang-related activity, and that gangs were more of a "1990s thing" in the City of Richmond. In effect, there were interviewees who believed that gangs did not operate much in the City of Richmond and that it was more of a City of Surrey phenomenon. However, there were other respondents who stated that some youth who have aged out of the City of Richmond care went on to get involved in gang violence, and that gangs, drugs, and sexual exploitation was a "trifecta in Richmond" and is bigger than ever. One respondent shared that a client's parent once stated: "*My son doesn't come home for 3 days. He has cash. He has new friends. He has a $60,000 car. I'm concerned*." Conversely, other respondents believed that there were young gang "wannabees" who lived and operated in the City of Richmond, but who were not very coordinated and were not full-fledged organized criminals.

Potus Consulting Inc. heard that a small population of criminal youth lived in the City of Richmond who carried knives and bear spray for their own protection, and who were potentially getting groomed by gangs to perform low-level drug trafficking. Participants also discussed how the City of Richmond is viewed as a big city but also a little city, and troubled kids tended to find each other and gravitate toward each other forming delinquent, deviance, and criminal groups and a sense of belonging. Often, staff who worked in the system will not acknowledge this as a gang per say, rather troubled teens. And, while the label might be a matter of semantics at times, the activities of these youth are not.

Generally, based on the information collected in these interviews and conversations, there are not too many gangs in the City of Richmond; however, it was acknowledged that people are mobile. Respondents spoke about circumstances in which City of Richmond residents would join gangs in other jurisdictions. Though, certain young people in the City of Richmond are believed to have connections or loose associations to larger crime groups, most participants believed that these youth were not hardcore members, in terms of their involvement with the branded gangs. However, experienced staff also noted that the City of Richmond could be at a precipice, as they have observed recent and rapid shifts in increased youth drug use, aggression, and weapons carrying. Respondents felt that the city needed to be prepared and not reactive when it comes to tackling current and future gang problems in the community.

One way to look at this subset of the population is that there are pre-gang affiliated individuals that exist in the City of Richmond and interface with service providers. These people are on a harmful trajectory, with links to diverse and early criminality, and are at a higher risk of being more fully entrenched into the gang lifestyle if not responded to through wraparound programming. Interviewees believed that certain youth were at risk of interacting with gang members and that these youth did not have the necessary skill sets or resiliency to walk away.

### EMERGING ANTI-SOCIAL THEMES ARE PLENTIFUL

Several troubling insights were derived from the words and experiences of participants. Prominent themes were identified and specifically cited numerous times by a wide range of service providers who operated in different geographic locations within the City of Richmond and targeted at-risk

youth. It is difficult to tease apart whether these were genuinely new and emerging or merely topics that have persisted adolescents and young adults for years in the City of Richmond. Regardless, the participants reported the following anti-social themes that plague the City of Richmond's at-risk youth and which warrant attention:

- Mental health issues (e.g., anxiety, depression, suicide ideation, trauma, isolation, absence of hope); some brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions. There was also a concern with the co-occurrence of mental health with "something else", such as criminal history.

- Substance misuse that included experimentation and addiction. Popular examples included vaping THC, pharmaceutical pain pills, such as OxyContin and Percocet, and the mixture of Codeine cough syrup and soda. To some extent, it was felt that youth were using drugs to manage mental health issues. Of note, participants did not report seeing as much alcohol use compared to previous years. It was also reported that Methamphetamine was the drug of choice for adults in the City of Richmond. In terms of organized crime or gang activity, participants were concerned that youth were at a high-risk of recruitment by their drug suppliers.

- Participants indicated an increase in general worrisome behaviour, such as vandalism, graffiti, mischief, shoplifting, out late at night, and missing school. These behaviours were believed to begin with youth as young as 12 to 13 years old.

- There was an increased concern about youth missing and being found in the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver.

- Violence and weapons were also a growing concern. Here, concern was raised about an increase in aggression, assaults, group fights, threats of violence, including threats around school shootings or blowing up schools, and weapons carrying, including knives, bear spray, and imitation firearms.

- A developing trend was an increase in social media addiction, online bullying and harassment, and negative influencers. It was believed by participants that this was now beginning at the elementary school age.

- Female youth are at-risk more and more. Participants reported an increase in females getting involved in crime and that there were more women with addiction issues than before.

- Related to this issue was the issue of sexual exploitation and human trafficking. Participants indicated that the City of Richmond's "hidden homeless" or the ones who were chronic couch surfers had an elevated risk for being trafficked and exploited in a sexual nature. Of note, there were a total of 85 people who were counted as experiencing homelessness in the City of Richmond in the 2020 Vancouver Region Homeless Count. Of the 68 individuals who provided their age group, four individuals (6.0 per cent) reported they were youth under 25 years of age. Experts suggest that youth are expected to be a particularly undercounted segment in homelessness counts as they are more likely to be hidden (i.e., staying with friends, family, or strangers) and less likely to agree to participate in these counts.

- It was felt that cultural differences were creating generational conflict within a Canadian context in the sense that discord arises when parental values and beliefs clashed with those of their children.

- General cost of living in the City of Richmond was seen as an area of risk. Participants reported that youth were concerned with affordability in the City of Richmond, and that young people did not feel optimistic about future opportunities. It was reported by participants that young people saw their parents experiencing financial hardship and layoffs, and it was causing them stress. In effect, families were struggling to find housing, pay rent, and to put food on the table. Contributing to the levels of stress and anxiety was the need for youth to contribute financially to their families at an early age. Of note, the City of Richmond ranks as the fourth most expensive city to rent in Canada (Campbell, 2022). As such, local clients are moving to other communities, such as Maple Ridge, Langley, and the Tri-Cities, for more affordable housing and leaving their services behind.

- There are youth in the City of Richmond who were not in school and not accessing supports. Participants were concerned that there was very little visibility on this group. As stated by one participant: "*The youth that we can't find are the most at risk*".

### HIGH-RISK YOUTH CLIENTS ARE DIVERSE

The City of Richmond has undergone enormous change over the last several decades with significant growth in both population and urbanization. Today, the City of Richmond is a dynamic, multi-ethnic community. Much of the recent population growth has been made up of Asian immigrants. As discussed above, people of Chinese or South Asian ancestry represent more than half of the City of Richmond's residents today. At present, the City of Richmond is an ethnically diverse and growing urban centre with a unique mix of residential and commercial property, as well as agricultural lands.

When practitioners were asked about their client backgrounds and profiles, most stated that they mirrored the make-up of the City of Richmond. Youth in their caseloads comprised a range of different social and ethnic backgrounds, genders, and sexual orientations. Said differently, these youth were representative of the diverse community found in the City of Richmond. Of note, one topic that surfaced specifically was clients who came from first generation immigrant families. Participants stated that this presented unique challenges, both linguistically and culturally for service providers. The languages and dialects that most often came up were Mandarin, Cantonese, Arabic, Tagalog, Farsi, Dari, Spanish, Japanese, as well as Ukrainian and Russian more recently. It was reported that, at times, translation availability could be a significant gap.

Respondents consistently reported that they often had youth clients who spoke better English than their parents and were, therefore, navigating the system and paperwork on their parent's behalf. One respondent stated that this could sometimes lead to "*the wool being pulled over the parent's eyes*". Also, some clients and families experienced pre-migration trauma from their homelands that created an additional dynamic to manage. Interviewees stated that they have observed client

backgrounds with exposure to war and combat, prolonged previous stays in refugee camps, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), family breakdown and single parenting, and domestic violence.

Often, these parents worked night shifts and were working very hard to provide a better life for their children; however, consequently, the youth often had little supervision, especially after school hours, or were in the care of an elderly grandparent. In addition, some parents were still overseas, and the children were being raised exclusively by grandparents in Canada. One result of this was a cultural clash and detachment issues. LGBTQ2SI+ youth clients also expressed a clash between their sexual or gender orientation and the traditional, more conservative values and belief systems of their newly immigrated parents that created significant tension and could lead to behavioural problems.

In terms of socioeconomic status, according to participants, there were essentially two classes: the haves and the have nots. One respondent stated: "*There's lots of wealth in Richmond. The student parking lot had Bentleys when I was doing outreach. 16-year-olds with thousands of dollars in their pocket. Lots of wealth, but also lots of needs. There are two tiers*". However, other practitioners felt that a portion of their youth clients came from families that were economically vulnerable. The newcomers, in their own countries, were highly educated and highly professional, so it was intimidating for them when they arrived in British Columbia and had, in many cases, to accept employment unconnected with their education and previous professional experience. It was felt by participants that this had a significant negative effect on self-esteem and could create turmoil, stress, and anxiety within the home.

## THE CITY OF RICHMOND STAKEHOLDERS ARE COLLABORATIVE

As expressed in the General Findings, it became obvious quite quickly that the City of Richmond-area stakeholders operated in a very collaborative, non-competitive setting. Collaboration improves the way these distinct entities worked together and solved problems. The level of collaboration led to more innovation, efficient processes, increased success, and improved communication. By way of listening to and learning from partner agencies, it was felt that everyone helped each other to reach common goals. Interestingly, respondents felt that injecting additional funding would not hurt the overall safety net in place in the City of Richmond but would put additional focus on making existing teams and programs within the City of Richmond stronger. It was viewed that this approach would be more beneficial than building something new from scratch.

Interview participants stated they had longstanding and good relationships with most other community service providers, and that, for the most part, they were all very cooperative and focused on assisting and protecting those in need. The Complex Youth Table was specifically mentioned as a shining illustration of this. Participants noted that this Table was as collaborative as possible and shared as much information as they could. However, it was acknowledged that there were confidentially issues that, at times, inhibited full and frank discussions. It was also stated that good working relationships existed with Community Corrections and the Richmond RCMP, particularly with the youth officers.

### THE PRESENCE OF SYSTEM ROADBLOCKS AND CULTURAL STIGMAS

Despite best intentions, working in an exceptionally complex environment can unwittingly present the occasional systemic hindrances and cultural barriers. The City of Richmond is home to an immigrant heavy population, so cultural values, norms, attitudes, and beliefs will vary greatly and play an important role in the broader discussion. Still, participants felt that diverse clients were receiving equal access to services and often minimal wait times. It is also important to acknowledge that diverse clients often experience culture stigma from their families while receiving services. For example, some practitioners disclosed that youth have described perfectionism, high academic demands, and university admission expectations as pressures they faced that caused high levels of stress and anxiety. It was also reported that there was stigma surrounding educational assistance in general, and, at times, immigrant families were hesitant to have their child in alternate educational settings versus a traditional setting due to their culture. These sentiments were also expressed with acknowledging and seeking assistance related to mental health. As an example, it was reported that some parents inquired whether allowing their child to receive a mental health treatment plan would be on their child's school record, and if this would negatively affect their chances of going to university. Interestingly, it was also noted that the Foundry Richmond model was a great model to counter some of this stigma because there were many different services offered in one place, which concealed the specific purpose of the visit to onlookers.

By way of more systemic or organizational barriers, several interviewees expressed concerns with the lack of resources for emergency safe housing for youth or youth detox facilities. The interviewees suggested that this should be "owned" by the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) and Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH) given the health and youth protection aspect of the service.

Organizational barriers can also occur among different employees who represent different organizations and might not have full awareness of the support each agency can offer one another. For example, it was reported by several participants that the eligibility for Restorative Justice (RJ) programs could be expanded to allow broader intake of troubled youth for intervention. Restorative justice involves bringing together the victim, offender, and some members of the community to discuss the effects of the crime and how to resolve it in the best interests of everyone. In a restorative justice process, everyone involved must agree to the meeting, at which point they talk about the impact of the crime and how to address the harm that was done. Based on the interviews and conversations, there is both the capacity and desire to accept more referrals from the Richmond RCMP and the community, but the referrals have decreased since the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, to the knowledge of the practitioners, no youth gang members have been referred to the City of Richmond's restorative justice program as an alternative approach to traditional enforcement and prosecution.

## THE EFFECT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON SERVICES AND PROGRAMS

Put simply, the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted most service providers in various ways but particularly in terms of client referrals. Certain respondents discussed how client numbers were cut in half during the pandemic, and how just recently numbers had begun to reach back to pre-pandemic levels. While community organizations creatively adapted to maintain service delivery, for example by switching to online virtual appointments, adequately providing services and programs remained very challenging. Most service providers deployed home equipment, such as laptops with VPN connections, smart phones, and tablets for the first time. In-person meetings switched to online video conferencing platforms and/or the phone, but not all youth clients enjoyed this change, stating that computers and mobile devices were distractions to them. Moreover, for some clients, they did not have the necessary equipment to allow for this transition, such as computers or high-speed internet. While some agencies attempted to address this concern by providing their clients with the necessary technology, there was limited supply to allow for all of them to receive equipment on loan from the community organization.

There were also effects on youth emotional well-being and learning. Emotional difficulties among young people may have been exacerbated by extended social isolation, loneliness, and family stress. The nationwide school closures in Canada caused disruptions to students' education and alternative methods for curriculum delivery, such as online learning, were introduced. Certain intervention clients who were highly anxious enjoyed elements of the pandemic as they did not have to attend school and did not have to see the people who were victimizing them. However, this caused them to detach from life and society more broadly, and, while stuck at home, interviewees stated that their youth clients would have an abundance of free time that led to trouble and experimentation with drugs. As well, when the youth were instructed to go back to school, their anxiety elevated. Many interview participants reported that their clients were still dealing with the mental health aftermath of the pandemic.

## PROGRAMMING FOR AT-RISK YOUTH NEEDS TO HAVE A LOW-BARRIER FOR ENTRY

Various participants stated that low-barrier services for younger people are critical. This model is important to allow youth to discover new interests and build connections in the community in a seamless and user-friendly manner. For instance, summer programs are still out of reach for many children. Certain types of summer camps or experiences can generally be inexpensive, but even a small cost is still a barrier for some families. As the summer of 2023 begins, many students and families are struggling to recover from the disruption and instructional loss of the pandemic. Summer programs could help this, but, for low-income families, the cost is a real barrier.

In another example, interviewees cited that many organizations had too many rules to screen out clients, and that rigid screen out criteria, such as age or risk level, could be problematic. As well, they felt that the overall system was very bureaucratic and difficult for parents to navigate. They noted that even their experienced professional staff had a difficult time navigating it. Respondents stated that the system was designed for parents to do many of the steps, such as complete and sign forms, but for some at-risk youth, these steps were a real challenge, as a parent might be part of the

underlying problem or issue. Informed minor consent to programming or treatment was offered as a possible solution as it was believed that clients were experts in their own change.

As well, participants opined that professionals tended to ask adults what youth wanted and did not ask the youth themselves. These same participants also felt that agency staff should be expected to travel to the youth as it was often very difficult for youth to travel to the service provider as public transportation is not free and certain services are located far from where the clients were. In addition, some youth clients preferred to interact and receive support via text message, but some agency's policies only allowed for phone calls. This was presented as an example of how things could be modernized to assist in becoming low-barrier access solutions.

In another example, a youth client was looking to find volunteer opportunities, but because of extensive paperwork, rules surrounding time commitments, parents needing to be involved to co-sign, and excessive bureaucracy or adherence to formalities, the opportunity did not become realized. The interviewee suggested that this could have been an easy win that provided the youth with an opportunity to discover a new passion in life and sense of purpose, but the barriers and red tape contributed to this opportunity not occurring.

With respect to the larger system, it was stated that staff outside of support services needed to have a better understanding of the basic resources that were available to young people in the City of Richmond and its surrounding areas, and that this would contribute to a low-barrier pathway to help. For example, suppose that a youth tells the employee at the front desk of a Community Centre that they are hungry and have not eaten in a long time because their parents are absent. Ideally, the person at the desk should have a basic toolkit available to them to know what to do and where to seek assistance. Whether it is a school janitor, a bus driver, or a librarian, staff who work in the larger system should know what resources are available in the City of Richmond and how to get in touch with them in support of the youth. This is even more critical for those who interact with youth daily as certain youth will not always approach someone directly for assistance. The so called "outlier kids" that participants hear about, the ones who are not connected with any agencies and who operate on the margins, are the youth who require a simple and straightforward entry point for support. According to many of the service providers who participated in an interview or a conversation, this is not always available.

### TOUCHSTONE FAMILY ASSOCIATION AND FOUNDRY RICHMOND ARE PRAISED

There were several agencies and individuals that emerged from the interviews and conversations as continually doing excellent work to support at-risk youth throughout the City of Richmond. These agencies have a reputation for being flexible and giving more than is required, especially in a way that exceeds expectations in terms of positive client outcomes. In this section, Potus Consulting Inc. will highlight two agencies, but there are others that should also be viewed as unsung heroes.

Touchstone Family Association is a non-profit community-based social service agency that was repeatedly and consistently identified as a key organization in supporting at-risk youth through a wide variety of professional services. They have been providing services to the City of Richmond

residents and nearby areas since 1983, and their services have primarily focused on preserving and enhancing family relationships. Their time spent in the community offers great brand recognition. Participants stated that Touchstone Family Association staff show up to court with clients, attend appointments on their behalf, and search for missing youth on the street when they are missing.

Another entity that was applauded was Foundry Richmond who, while relatively new, offers a co-location and storefront of services focusing on free and confidential support for young people ages 12 to 24 years old. Services include mental health care, substance use services, physical and sexual healthcare, youth and family peer supports, and social services. Their services are available online and in-person. There are 13 Foundry centres open throughout British Columbia in Vancouver-Granville, North Shore (North Vancouver), Campbell River, Ridge Meadows, Abbotsford, Kelowna, Prince George, Victoria, Penticton, Terrace, Comox Valley, Langley, and the City of Richmond. An additional 10 new Foundry centres are in development across British Columbia. Touchstone Family Association and Foundry Richmond were repeatedly commended and can offer an essential triage and urgent response for high-risk youth clients that have a nexus to criminality, such as drug dealing, gang entrenchment, and parental gang involvement.

### THE CHALLENGE OF PHYSICAL SPACE, GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION, BUDGET, AND CAPACITY

In terms of physical space, there is a division or contrast between organizations that appear to have space and capacity to expand operations and programming (at least 15 per cent more growth potential) and organizations that report operating at their limits. Some participants said that they operated out of newer, modern facilities while others cited that their buildings were older and have constraints to providing services as they were not built to suit current programing or service needs. Community centres appear to have space available depending on hours and current programming schedules. Still, it was noted that the multi-purpose spaces needed to be appropriate to host at-risk youth. The space should be neutral in the sense that certain rooms were presently used for senior programs as well as toddler programs, so the environment needed to be appropriate for the type of programing being offered to teenagers. Everything from the technology to the furniture needs to cater to youth clients. One significant benefit in the City of Richmond is that most community centres are also close to or attached to secondary schools, which is a natural pipeline and feeder system for referrals.

In addition, it should be noted that the City of Richmond has experienced a great deal of population growth, particularly in the City Centre, and that the City of Richmond has opened new Community Centres, expanding existing ones, and is planning for additional community centres to be constructed. Within the core, the Richmond Caring Place was also noted as a local example of a facility that provided office space for several non-profit organizations in one location that worked well as it is a “one-stop-shop” for clients and could support some future programming if required.

Pertaining to geographic location, there was a clear preference among participants for new gang prevention and intervention services to be offered near City Centre. The reasons for this included ease of transportation for youth and their parents or caregivers, and the proximity to other services, community partners, and stakeholders. It was emphasized that the facilities where

programming occurred for youth needed to be close to public transit, such as buses, the SkyTrain, or where the youth were. To that end, participants noted the importance of outreach workers and case managers travelling to the youth as much a possible because travel, parking, and rush hour traffic were barriers for some youth and their parents or caregivers.

With respect to funding for the City of Richmond community organizations, this tended to come from various streams. Examples included funding from the City of Richmond, Vancouver Coastal Health, the Provincial Government, United Way, as well as grants and donations. Unlike municipal or provincial entities, a nonprofit's funding is often restricted for a certain program or use. As such, budget flexibility and planning for a nonprofit organization can be tricky because of different compliance issues. It was suggested that increased discretionary funds would be helpful to service delivery. For instance, most funding does not have much money allocated toward client food and refreshments, which is often what brings people together. Public transit tickets are also helpful, as are gift cards. These small incentives can go a long way in building trust and rapport, as well as offsetting some of the other expenses associated with participation in a service or program.

In addition to these potential challenges, funding is often time limited, which can create issues with legacy and continuity. This can also present problems with staffing instability at times. Of note, most experienced organizations are accustomed to funding time limits and have the financial literacy to forecast and manage this and to create a work environment that supports staff retention despite uncertainty. It appears that local area agencies do a tremendous job of this.

With respect to staffing and recruitment, there is also a dichotomy present. For some service providers, it was stated that they had a difficult time attracting experienced people into certain roles. Some participants reported that these positions were emotionally heavy and taxing roles with entry-level salaries. This combination not only creates turnover but also creates high caseloads and burnout that can negatively affect the quality of service. Some participants noted that caseloads could also be carried for a very long time. For example, some participants indicated that clients could remain on their caseload for two to four years, while others indicated that some clients remained on their caseload well into adulthood.

Others suggested that there was limited interest in working with at-risk youth compared to how it once was. One respondent asserted: "*I have been here 16 years, and it used to be like 1,000 applicants, now we are begging. Is it the cost of living? I hear this across the board from other places, other cities, social work too… We have had positions opened for the last 6 months*". On the other hand, other organizations reported that they were not struggling with recruitment and have high retention rates. However, even these participants indicated that staffing the right people for the job was critical and suggested that a 19-year-old staff member might have a difficult time managing a 25-year-old high-risk gang member. As such, talent acquisition was a key area for many individuals.

### TRAINING

Robust training programs help prepare professional employees for taking on greater responsibilities and assisting in their career growth. By offering education and training on role-

specific skills, organizations help prepare individuals for advancement and provide an opportunity to strengthen an employee's existing skills, as well as learn and practice new ones. This was well illustrated by a range of comments from the interviews and conversations.

Potus Consulting Inc. spoke with many supervisors, managers, and directors across several organizations. Participants reported that training was a point of pride for them and was "part of their DNA". Their staff had taken specialized training in areas, such as trauma-informed practice, violence de-escalation, interviewing, and cultural sensitivity, to name a few. In addition, their staff generally had a bachelor's degree, while clinicians and counselors commonly had a master's degree. Agency and program staff were diverse and represented various professional backgrounds, age, and ethnic demographics, as well as being able to speak foreign languages. As accredited agencies through the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF), specific training and annual hour requirements are part of that certification to ensure quality of services and the best possible outcomes for clients.

As for the "boots on the ground" staff, there was broad consensus that they would welcome additional training opportunities. Some suggested that they were struggling and were desperate for meaningful continuing education opportunities. They noted that there were few new courses and workshops available, and that many of the conferences offered were not that relevant to their specific roles in the field. They also felt that online training was not a preferred medium for their line of work. Participants reported that they ended up purchasing lots of books and reference materials in lieu of on-going training. Staff at community centres noted that most of their training was administrative, recreational, or leadership based, and that they did not have much exposure to more advanced workshops, such as mental wellness counseling, which they believed would be beneficial and something that they would like more information and education about. Staff also felt that when their youth clients became too high risk, these youth tended to get pushed out to MCFD or VCH. Today, cities like Los Angeles and Chicago are trying to create "Outreach Academies" to professionalize Youth Outreach Training as it is a common issue that staff lack proper training while managing a lot of risk.

### SMALLER ORGANIZATIONS OFFER SOME ADVANTAGES

Smaller organizations generally have less red tape and protocols to wade through compared to larger organizations. This often means projects are completed more quickly and with less obstruction. On this issue, participants stated that there were several advantages in having a more boutique approach when dealing with at-risk youth. It was felt that with large organizations, there was often a "one size fits all" mentality, whereas small agencies could offer a more personalized and individualized service. There are also intangible benefits like easy access to senior leadership.

Respondents offered that community organizations had the ability to move more dynamically compared to big public institutions that can be inflexible and slower to adapt. Interviewees also stated that, while relationships were strong in the City of Richmond between smaller organizations and the larger ones, such as Vancouver Coastal Health, the School District, and Richmond RCMP, there was continual turnover in staff in these organizations that resulted in a loss of continuity,

trust, and momentum. At an individual level, big system staff are invested and motivated, but the larger system is not designed for the maintenance of long term, stable, and consistent relationships and client management. Client management can be a multi-year endeavor at times that requires the establishment and maintenance of trust, rapport, and consistency; things that might be more difficult to achieve with larger organizations.

Admittedly, there are certain limitations to smaller organizations as well, such as having less access to funding and perhaps a narrow range of expertise compared to what one might find in a larger organization. Nevertheless, many practitioners believed that being small, responsive, agile, and nimble was a value-add in the context of high-risk youth care, particularly among those with a nexus to guns and gangs.

### INCREASED FORMALIZATION IN KEY AREAS

As stated, community service organizations and other stakeholders, such as the Richmond RCMP, have existing relationships and processes that appear to work well, according to participants. Still, the idea of increased formalization at a system level was addressed by some participants as an area that could enhance the existing work that is already taking place across the City of Richmond. A moderately formalized structure of integrated partners in the field of at-risk youth prevention and intervention has merit. As discussed in the literature review, multi-disciplinary, coordinated, and comprehensive case management planning that is community-led has been effective at reducing gang violence. Participants often stated that service providers "stay in their lane in Richmond", and that there is not a lot of co-programming taking place. Adding formalization to existing meetings, processes, and workflows could support joint strategy execution as it creates clarity for organizational members, puts systems in place, and helps crystalize a united vision in writing. In the words of one participant: "*There are lots of great little pieces, but they are not integrated. Right now, it is all done on good will, but we need a formal system*".

Many participants suggested that their arrangements and partnerships were informal, and that Memorandum of Understandings (MOU) were not utilized very often. Although a formal document, MOUs are not legally binding. They merely show the willingness of each concerned party to take action to move the contract forward in good faith. That said, an MOU also brings definition of purpose and outlines the scope of work to be performed. Given this, an MOU serves as a foundation to establish or improve ownership and accountability among parties. Put simply, an advantage of formalization is that it makes most things more predictable. Whenever high stakes situations arise, staff and partners alike know to turn to a well-defined protocol or an agreed upon procedure. Consequently, there is a consistent and adequate level of response to problems, and activities are often tracked that can be evaluated at a future date. The right formalization strategy allows organizations to cut ambiguity and drive tangible value. It can be an enabler for quickly connecting new information and operationalizing it across the entire system for a shared responsibility approach to tackling common priorities. Essentially, it is a force multiplier and is encouraged.

Within organizations themselves, certain ones were quite formal in their operational philosophy. Many have undergone previous evaluations and have maintained repeated performance metrics

over time. They use and promote formal frameworks, such as the 40 Developmental Assets and the Five Dimensions of Holistic Health, as well as use Violence Threat Risk Assessment (VTRA) to identify and intervene within potential pathways to violence. They also deploy empirical tools, such as the North Carolina Family Assessment Scale, the World Health Organization Disability Assessment Schedule (WHODAS), the Functional Status Scale, and other safety planning guides. Conversely, there are other organizations and participants that do not track their activities or outcomes and do not use formal instruments or intake questionnaires. They offered that they did not have the time to engage the community through structured client feedback to ask the community what worked and what did not in the spirit of continuous improvement. It must be stated that this could be the byproduct of heavy caseloads and a lack of training.

Based on the comments of participants, one interesting opportunity to explore enhanced formalization and integration is the Complex Youth Table. This group is made up of representatives from Vancouver Coastal Health, Touchstone Family Association, the Richmond RCMP, MCFD, School District 38, and recently added Car Yankee 30, which features a Richmond RCMP youth officer and a provincial youth probation worker who work together to reduce the number of young people involved in the criminal justice system and help observe their curfews. These are the standing members of the Complex Youth Table, but occasional guests can be invited to discuss specific issues. Many interviewees celebrated this model as a great concept, but there were identified areas for development.

At present, the group meets roughly once every four to six weeks. Youth names are submitted from partners in advance of the meeting and pre-research is conducted by the Chair on that roster. At the meeting, attendees go through each name and discuss what the issues are and what each partner is doing, explore strategies and options, and next steps. The progress/status on previous submissions is also reviewed at this meeting. Generally, five to six names are discussed at each meeting. One of the benefits of this Table is that it brings continued awareness around an at-risk youth who may be involved with multiple agencies and systems. These are not case management or planning meetings, as they are more high-level. The hierarchy is flat, and the meeting is administered by a Chair. Each meeting is approximately one hour in length and no meeting minutes or action items are recorded in a formal way. It is acknowledged that all partners who attend the Complex Youth Table are busy. Still, the purpose behind the suggestions above could in fact save time downstream as complex or uncertain situations can be front-end loaded with an increased frequency of meetings and heightened focus toward exceptional or escalating situations. This path is about challenging the routine slowly to overcome smaller goals and reach higher targets over time.

## MODERNIZING DIGITAL MARKETING AND BRANDING FOR THE CITY OF RICHMOND

Interview participants suggested that their employers had a reasonable online presence. Most listed a webpage and Facebook as the most common marketing tools, aside from word-of-mouth, which many felt was the most prominent method for advertising their services. Everyone agreed that their organization needs to be easily searchable on the internet and their website easy to navigate; however, many suggested that this was an area that needed improvement. Several

organizations have begun exploring the use of Twitter and Instagram in recent years to complement their webpage. Some noted that they had occasionally been featured on television and had hosted tours from international partners who had heard about them. Others also shared that they were not allowed to use TikTok for security purposes, and that they had been attempting to shift from narrative words to more video content for their target audience. In effect, there is a wide range of different approaches and philosophies when it comes to digital marketing across the service providers.

Many acknowledged that marketing was not one of their organization's strengths and that existing efforts could be modernized and made more youth friendly. Participants believed that small, modest agencies generally lacked the resources, time, and expertise to create appropriate campaigns to fully promote the breadth of their work. Some stated that they were the "best kept secret". Many asserted that their respective websites had dated information on them and might not have the best or most intuitive web design. Given this, they believed that their referrals were still largely due to word of mouth. To compensate for limited advertising and marketing activities, organizations worked very hard to attend community events and market the work that they did. Many service providers indicated that they attend each other's events to learn what their partners were doing. Interestingly, some community organizations stated that they did not aim to boost advertising due to capacity limitations. They believed that an increase in marketing would lead to more referrals and clients that, in turn, will turn a "two-month waitlist into a six-month waitlist".

Below, in this report, a strategy blueprint will be presented. It provides a specific roadmap and tactics to promote the BSCF Strategy and drive traffic to websites/social media channels specifically tailored to the strategy's target audience. However, this roadmap can also be applied to specific agencies and their daily work outside of the larger BSCF Strategy. It can be utilized to help encourage ideas for new campaigns, new brand logos and designs, and other creative content to advance marketing efforts, improve exposure, and speak to target audiences.

Lastly, several practitioners mentioned their desire to establish iPad/tablet "Lending Libraries" to allow for youth to continue to advance their digital literacy and education, as well as homework outside of business hours, which can be limited. One such example is the Richmond Media Lab that offers cutting-edge equipment and instruction that normally would not be available to vulnerable youth given the high costs. A future collaborative opportunity that could be explored with the Media Lab is the creation of anti-gang public service announcements geared toward high sensation seeking audiences (i.e., gang affiliated youth) with the support of external consultants and the Odd Squad Productions Society, which provides drug and gang prevention for youth through film, documentaries, and reality series.

### EXISTING PROGRAMMING IS MANY AND VARIED

Participants described the City of Richmond as having a broad menu of youth services. The City of Richmond offers a diverse collection of programming for the community, providing support and education through presentations, workshops, one-on-one sessions, and facilitated groups, to name a few. Local agencies are continually finding ways where they can make a difference in the lives of

those most in need. While success can be difficult to enumerate in this space, as there have not been many formal evaluations of the programs and services provided in the community, participants truly believed that most clients were benefitting from the programs and services available in the City of Richmond. This can include anything from desisting from criminality, going back to school, finding steady employment, or overcoming a mental health or addictions challenge.

Existing programming addresses nearly the entire spectrum of services and crisis lines, with a wide age range of offerings along a continuum of support. For instance, Touchstone Family Association's Pathways to Hope was highlighted for improving the overall wellness of children ages 0-6. The Safe Bodies Strong Kids program was discussed as being an evidence-based child abuse prevention program for Grade 1-3 students that was developed by the BC Lower Mainland Child Abuse Prevention Educators and is based on the most recent child abuse prevention research. The Richmond Art Truck is another community-based initiative that includes physical literacy and healthy eating and aims to engage kids with additional school outreach. Another program is the Leadership Skills Group (LSG) that is part of the United Way School's Out initiative aimed at delivering after-school programming for children Grades 5, 6 and 7.

As youth get older, the programming is continued. For example, RESET is dedicated to supporting youth aged 13-19 and their families in partnership with the Richmond School District. RESET is helping youth on their path through individual and family counseling, group work, school support, and advocacy. In addition, the RCMP Youth Academy is another popular option designed for high school students aged 16 to 18 years who are interested in potential careers in police work, law enforcement, or corrections. Often, local Fire Services will also participate in these events to show support. Students who attend the RCMP Youth Academy experience a variety of activities that a police cadet would experience, including fitness training, defensive tactics, application of the law, emergency response, and K-9 demonstration. In one final example, Touchstone Family Association has operated an initiative called the Transition to Independence Program since 2015. Life Skills Counsellors provide services and support for youth aged 16-19 who are in care, transitioning to independent living, or on youth agreements. Please note that the above is not an exhaustive list and is meant to give an idea of the range of supports available.

In terms of the number of referrals, counts differ greatly across programs and services, and can be a matter of specialization or the time of year. For example, service levels can spike in summer months when youth are out of school. Based on the interviews and conversations, there were dissimilar average referral totals ranging from one referral per month to several dozen per month. Moreover, some professionals were a team of one while others had 40 to 60 full-time and part-time staff and upwards of 100 volunteers. The scope of the operation was largely reflective of the size of the demand, among other factors.

### THERE IS NO YOUTH HUB IN THE CITY OF RICHMOND

Participants expressed the need for a Youth Hub in the City of Richmond. A Youth Hub model offers drop-in support services to at-risk youth and provides a safe and welcoming environment for youth to learn about community resources, access crisis and goal-orientated counseling or talk to a youth

worker about issues relevant to them, such as alcohol and drug misuse, family conflict, relationships, and school. Services often include access to teachers, counsellors, youth workers, nurses and doctors, and an emergency food bank. It should be an integrated resource centre that offers one-on-one and group supports in the areas of cultural supports, education, family support, employment, housing, physical education, volunteering, substance use, and youth justice services. The closest thing offering Hub-like services at present is Richmond Foundry with a general emphasis toward health and wellbeing.

Several other points of interest from the participants included the use of program alumni to be junior leaders or "guests of the program" to come back and help inspire current youth participants. Program alumni could be used with youth exiting custody or could focus on working with Grade 8 and 9 youth, as it was stated by many that these were key years to spotlight in the context of early deviance and anti-social behaviours. Future services could also offer free tattoo removal in partnership with a local area artist, as some former gang members or those interested in exiting a gang have insignia tattoos that might pose a problem for future employment.

Practitioners also offered a range of different ideas of what might be included in any new or expansion of existing programming targeting gang affiliated clients, such as a mix between recreational and instructional activities, homework clubs, job skills or vocational training, Co-Op/apprenticeship opportunities within the City of Richmond programs, resumé/interview practice techniques, entrepreneurial programs with local business leaders, digital media literacy, computer programming, DJ or music-based skills, health and wellness programs, addictions counseling, dietician and personal training, and leadership, self-esteem, and team building skills, to name a few. It was also suggested that many of these could be situated in a mobile unit that roamed the city, attending high-risk locations, such as specific parks or housing complexes to build trust and connections, while offering free services and referrals.

### NO GANG-SPECIFIC PROGRAMMING IS OPERATING IN THE CITY OF RICHMOND

Currently, there are no community-based prevention or intervention programs in the City of Richmond that specifically and overtly targets gang members. The closest programs available will target youth and young adults who have a nexus to criminality and generally high-risk behaviour. As described throughout this report, gang behaviour resides along a continuum. One such program that currently exists that orbits this clientele is Touchstone Family Association's StreetSmarts. Last year, Touchstone Family Association had 25 youth engaged in this program as per their 2022 Annual Report. Participants indicated that between 2006 to 2010 the program was gang-specific, but the mandate was subsequently broadened to expand the eligibility criteria. Prior to the mandate expansion, the StreetSmarts program once specifically supported youth who had a history of violence, use of force and/or use of weapons, had shown an interest in gang involvement or engaged in "gang-like" activities, had a history or interest in dealing drugs, and could benefit from mentorship and support. The eligibility criteria for the program were that the youth had to be aged 13 to 18 years old, be a resident of the City of Richmond, and would participate in one-to-one mentorship.

As mentioned above, StreetSmarts evolved from the Community Assessment and Action Network (CAAN), which was a working network of government agencies and service providers to address issues of gang violence in the City of Richmond. The StreetSmarts Youth Leadership Program was developed by the Richmond CAAN to support youth who were at risk of gang involvement. The objective of the program is to support at-risk youth to recognize the impact of their current choice of lifestyle and, in turn, empower them to make better life choices. Participants felt that the program worked well at the time, and the services of an ex-gang member were used to help facilitate the program. Something similar could be revisited as a part of the City of Richmond's BSCF strategy. However, it was also noted that information sharing can be problematic when dealing with gang intelligence held by law enforcement agencies. Information sharing agreements could be beneficial in this regard.

### FINAL THOUGHTS

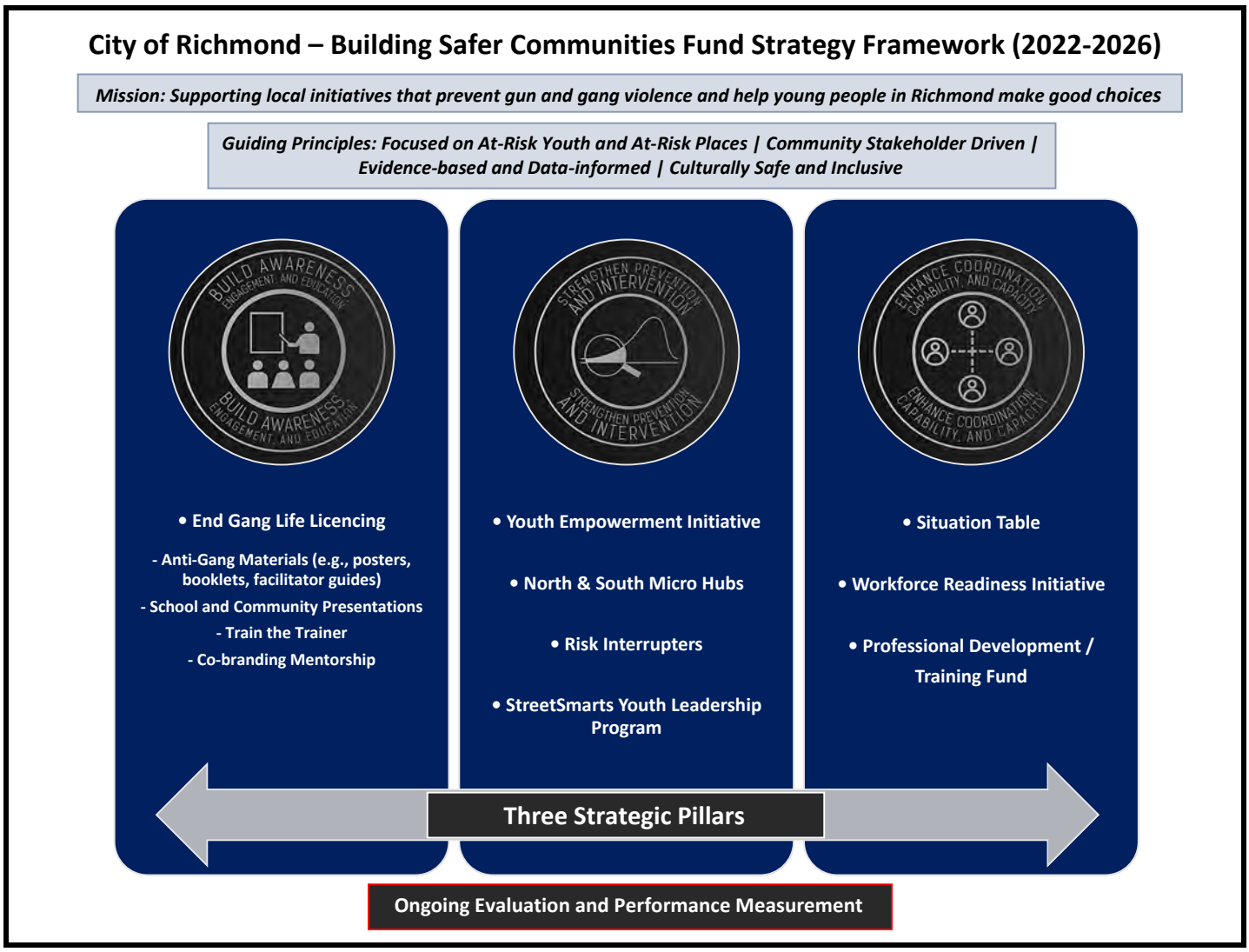
The dynamics at the intersection of gun violence, at-risk youth, and gang affiliation are highly complex and often very fluid. Practices that address them are constantly evolving and being innovated around the globe. The interviews and conversations conducted for the BSCF strategy provided current and local knowledge on addressing at-risk youth who are on a pathway to gang activity. It also provided a strong foundation from which to build and refine practices through the BSCF.

While effective practices in this area cannot be easily summarized, findings about the state of interventions in gun and gang violence generally are that approaches should be multicomponent and coordinated around broad strategies, targeted toward people and places where risk is concentrated, focused and informed by locally specific analysis, guided by community priorities and needs to produce wellbeing and safety, and evaluated to ensure strategies are implemented as planned and producing the desired and intended outcomes. Many of the insights revealed in this section of the report echoed the themes identified in the literature review section. While everything suggested above might not be feasible to implement under the BSCF, some likely represent low-hanging fruit that can be implemented with limited system effort or costs, and which would be consistent with the promising practices found in the literature.

## Recommended BSCF Strategy for the City of Richmond

Based on the data collected from the Richmond RCMP, the qualitative interviews and conversations with Richmond RCMP, the City of Richmond, and numerous stakeholders, Potus Consulting Inc. has developed the following strategy framework based on three main pillars: (1) building awareness, engagement, and education; (2) strengthening prevention and intervention; and (3) enhancing coordination capability, and capacity (see Figure 1). This section will provide a detailed description of each of these pillars and the various initiatives or activities that will support each pillar and the overall strategy.

**FIGURE 1: CITY OF RICHMOND BSCF STRATEGY FRAMEWORK**




The BSCF Strategy for the City of Richmond is a multi-component, multifaceted roadmap. There are many moving parts and different stakeholders that will require attention, engagement, and management. To support the City of Richmond's BSCF Strategy, it is recommended that the City of Richmond hire one (1) project coordinator to be the central coordination entity during the entire life course of the BSCF.

The Program Coordinator will plan, coordinate, and oversee all the components of the City of Richmond's BSCF strategy, ensure key organizations and staff are implementing and delivering the programs, initiatives, and projects, and make sure funding goals are achieved in an efficient and effective manner. The position will monitor various new projects and/or programs in terms of their implementation progress, budget, and service delivery. The position will establish a vision and

tactics for the success of the City of Richmond's strategy and will develop and execute activities related to end-to-end project management and relationship building with all key stakeholders involved.

The position is responsible for maintaining overall budget records, procurement, and forecasting information pertaining to program expenditures in conjunction with other City of Richmond staff, detailed progress reporting for the City of Richmond and Public Safety Canada, collaborating with external subject matter expert consultants, and organizing the roadmap and agenda for the BSCF strategy's implementation and execution. The position will also establish specific project plans and schedules between stakeholders, schedule and organize meetings, and will oversee the overall components and direction of strategy activities and deliverables. The Program Coordinator will be required to travel to key locations and sites frequently.

## BUILDING AWARENESS, ENGAGEMENT, AND EDUCATION

The first pillar is to **Build Awareness, Engagement, and Education**. The elements that comprise this pillar are entering into a licencing agreement to print and distribute End Gang Life educational materials for youth and adults, delivering school and community presentations, establishing a train-the-trainer model for presentations, and establishing a co-branding mentorship program with the City of Richmond Media Lab.

### *End Gang Life Licencing*

It is recommended that the City of Richmond request to obtain, customize, and distribute End Gang Life material through a Limited Licencing Agreement (LLA) between the City of Richmond and the OCABC, who has trademarked and copyrighted all End Gang Life-related material and intellectual property. There is no cost associated with this LLA. With the LLA in place, the City of Richmond can request OCABC' and the CFSEU-BC's support for the City of Richmond's strategy. Of note, the use of End Gang Life material is consistent with the findings of the Literature Review and the utilization of prosocial messaging, empowering youth, collaborating with community agencies, and providing education and training opportunities.

### *Train the Trainer*

OCABC and CFSEU-BC will facilitate 'train the trainer' sessions with the hired BSCF Risk Interrupters (to be discussed below), City of Richmond's Youth Outreach Workers, Richmond RCMP, and others, such as Touchstone Family Association, to share End Gang Life, gang prevention, education, and youth empowerment messaging. OCABC and CFSEU-BC will provide ongoing support behind the scenes as necessary.

### *End Gang Life School and Community Presentations*

OCABC and CFSEU-BC has agreed to deliver, dependent on availability, up to four school and community presentations per year during the period of the BSCF strategy. The End Gang Life educational video modules, including the school-based videos, along with the *End Gang Life Myths*

*and Realities - Facilitator's Guide* will be provided for the Touchstone Family Association's Risk Interrupters, Youth Outreach Workers, Richmond RCMP, and identified partner agencies to utilize and deliver. CFSEU-BC has done over 200 End Gang Life presentations in communities and schools across British Columbia, Canada, and the United States to over 100,000 students, parents, law enforcement, and community partners. Using the materials provided by CFSEU-BC and the train the trainer model, age-appropriate presentations will be made to all elementary schools, high schools, and community events that wish to have presentations that will deliver End Gang Life and other prosocial, youth empowerment messages and content.

### *End Gang Life Material*

OCABC and CFSEU-BC will provide End Gang Life Public Service Announcement videos and posters, the *StreetLights* gang education comic book series, the *Myths and Realities of Gangs* educational video series, and *Understanding Youth in Gangs* booklets, which is also available in an Indigenous version and in multiple languages, including those most commonly used in the City of Richmond. Digital versions will be provided to the City of Richmond to cobrand, print, and distribute the products.

The *Myths and Realities of Gangs* video modules and accompanying facilitator's guidebook was released by OCABC and CFSEU-BC in 2015 after CFSEU-BC approached the Odd Squad Productions, a documentary film and drug education group, to help the CFSEU-BC create a first-of-its-kind gang awareness and education video series. With their strong law enforcement background in developing reality-based content and creating dialogue about drug and gang-related issues, the Odd Squad was a natural choice for this partnership. The result of that collaboration was the *Myths and Realities of Gangs* video series. This set of six video modules explores the leading myths and realities of gangs and features former gang members, parents who have lost children to gang violence, and police officers who have been involved in the fight against gangs.

The Understanding Youth in Gangs booklets are a cornerstone product of the End Gang life initiative. The booklets are beneficial to parents and caregivers as they help them learn to recognize the signs of potential gang involvement in their children, how to prevent young people from getting involved with gangs, and to guide children back to a positive path while creating resiliency. The booklet is primarily meant to be a resource to parents and caregivers and focuses on street level drug dealing, commonly known as "dial-a-doping", as a main entry point for many youth to enter gangs or organized criminal activity. In addition, this booklet is also valuable to police officers, teachers, community workers, and others and will help them take the important first steps towards playing a significant role in understanding the issue of gangs and recognizing the warning signs of gang involvement in youth and young adults. A new version of the booklet was released in 2022 that contains updated graphics, risk information based on CFSEU-BC's Gang Intervention and Exiting Team client feedback, and details regarding opioid safety.

The Myths and Realities of Gangs series has been viewed over 100,000 times since its release and has been shared with police agencies and community partners across the globe. Over 150,000 of the Understanding Youth in Gangs booklets have been distributed since they were first published in 2015. A part of the cobranding with the City of Richmond will include contact information that will

direct youth to the City of Richmond's Risk Interrupters and other relevant agencies working with the BSCF strategy. As will be discussed below, as facilitated through the train the trainer sessions, the City of Richmond's Risk Interrupters, Youth Outreach Workers, and others will deliver End Gang Life and other prosocial, youth empowerment messages and content to students, families, and the community. All the material discussed in this section will also be distributed to all secondary schools in the City of Richmond and featured on the social media channels of the City of Richmond.

### *Mentorship and Sponsorship of Richmond-Focused End Gang Life Content*

It is also recommended that the strategy leaders with the City of Richmond and partner stakeholders create mentorship opportunities and have OCABC and CFSEU-BC partner and provide leadership and expertise to have youth create customized Richmond specific gang prevention, intervention, awareness, and education content. The City of Richmond Media Lab will facilitate this element and referred and identified youth will learn video production, photography, graphic design, video editing, and post-production skills. Identified youth and Media Lab facilitators will mentor and include other youth in peer-led creative development so that youth voices and ideas are included in new customized content that addresses the issues related to gangs and guns from the perspective of youth from the City of Richmond.

Related to this aspect of the City of Richmond's BSCF strategy, some of the BSCF funding should be allocated to the Richmond Youth Media Lab and Richmond Youth Media Program (RYMP) to increase programming and services, as well as media hardware and software, to at-risk youth. The RYMP is a free program for all Richmond youth that began in 2010 and which is presented in partnership with Richmond Addiction Services Society (RASS) and supported by the Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH) Sharon Martin Community Health (SMART) Fund. Both RASS and VCH are community stakeholders that currently have participatory involvement in the Foundry Richmond and partnerships with Touchstone Family Association and will be connected to the recommended Youth Situation Table that will be discussed below.

The RYMP currently operates at, or near, capacity, with its space highly utilized by Richmond youth, with youth sometimes being denied or restricted access due to the RYMP workspace and its hours of operation. While the Media Lab is moving to a larger location in the Fall of 2023, it will still have somewhat restricted hours because of staffing issues. Currently, the Media Lab operates on an RSVP and referral basis (self or other), with drop-ins allowed if the referral is completed should the youth wish to participate. The additional funding recommended in this strategy will allow the Touchstone Family Association's Risk Interrupters to bring referred or identified at-risk youth to the Media Lab where a variety of structured skill-building, mentorship, and vocational readiness sessions will be provided. In these sessions, at-risk youth will learn a variety of media literacy skills under the supervision and mentorship of the Risk Interrupters, City of Richmond Youth Outreach Workers, and Richmond Media Lab staff. RYMP currently has partnerships with the Richmond Arts Center's Fabric Arts Studio, Richmond Museum, and Richmond Public Library, which would continue to be leveraged for additional at-risk youth who participate in sessions or programming.

The proposed dedicated funding will provide currently unavailable opportunities for at-risk youth to be either referred or brought to the Media Lab to participate in new RYMP programming.

Community stakeholders and partners, including, but not limited to, the CFSEU-BC's/OCABC's End Gang Life initiative, Odd Squad Foundation, City of Richmond Arts Centre, Touchstone Family Association, local artists and professionals, and others will be able to support mentorship and skill-building sessions in the Media Lab. The youth will not only learn valuable media literacy and vocational skills, such as photo and video production, graphic design, photo and video editing, and music production, but will also be able to access new media-related hardware and software to support school projects and homework. The youth will, under the supervision of the Risk Interrupters and RYMP staff, along with mentorship from stakeholders, create City of Richmond-specific media focusing on gang and violence prevention, awareness, education, and youth engagement. These products would be intended to create a legacy post-BSCF funding and could be used in schools, community organizations, the media, and by the City of Richmond.

While the Media Lab is expected to receive a large grant to support infrastructure and capital costs, to facilitate an increase in at-risk youth utilizing focused RYMP programming, the purchase of media-related hardware and software may occur, such as creating a lending library of Apple iPad tablets with a variety of digital creation, movie, music, and photo editing software will allow youth to edit and create video, photo, graphical, and audio content, as well as complete homework and other tasks, when the Media Lab is closed.

## STRENGTHEN PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION

The second pillar is designed to **Strengthen Prevention and Intervention** in the City of Richmond. The elements that comprise this pillar are implementing a Youth Empowerment Initiative, the creation of two youth hubs in designated Community Centres, hiring three Risk Interrupters, and expanding and enhancing Touchstone Family Association's StreetSmart Youth Leadership Program.

### *Three Risk Interrupters*

The Literature Review and Scan of Practice presented in this report found that the best community-wide gang and gun violence prevention programs typically utilize outreach workers or violence interrupters to intervene and prevent conflict with high-risk young individuals. The prevention and intervention activities of these roles generally include establishing and maintaining positive and supportive relationships with members from a target population, connecting clients with local services, and engaging in follow-ups. The Risk Interrupters roles are highly regarded as crucial to a comprehensive gang prevention and intervention model and provide an avenue for connecting clients to positive opportunities, supports, and resources in the community, including employment, housing, education, and recreational activities through referral networks. The programming that the Risk Interrupters deliver is designed to meet the individual interests and needs of their at-risk clients, and focuses on character and leadership development, health and life skills, arts, and sports and fitness. The evidence presented in this report also suggests that these approaches can reduce gang activity, mediate aggression, prevent retaliatory gun violence, and decrease re-entry into the criminal justice system.

As part of the City of Richmond's BSCF strategy, it is recommended that three (3) new full-time Risk Interrupter positions be created within Touchstone Family Association to deliver a series of activities across the community in support of the overall strategy. This component is an integral part of the larger BSCF strategy. The Risk Interrupters would be responsible for promoting engagement of at-risk youth (12 to 24 years of age) and their families in the community, delivering programming, and increasing youth access to a wide range of prosocial opportunities. These activities will generally occur off-site in high priority communities and neighbourhood locations or settings.

More specifically, the Risk Interrupters will identify and recruit at-risk and high-risk youth clients for coordinated case management services. Clients may include youth with criminal associations or youth on gang pathways, such as having a nexus to group-based crimes, weapons possession, drug dealing, or facing multiple vulnerabilities. This position will collaborate with City of Richmond's two Youth Outreach Workers and other frontline workers to coordinate and synthesize the delivery of youth programs, events, and opportunities offered at City of Richmond facilities and beyond. This position will build and foster relationships with agencies in the City of Richmond, such as School District No. 38 (Richmond), Foundry Richmond, Richmond Addiction Services Society, Chimo Community Services, the RCMP, and other partners to support the development of assets in youth. In conjunction with Touchstone Family Association and other partners, the Risk Interrupters will manage referrals from youth-serving agencies for youth to participate in intentional programming opportunities, including hosting introductory meetings with youth and their parents or guardians. The Risk Interrupters will also provide leadership, direction, and feedback to program volunteers, and develop and implement strategies to promote city-wide youth resources and services.

### *Youth Empowerment Initiative*

As part of the BSCF strategy, it is recommended that the City of Richmond support the expansion of Touchstone Family Association's existing Leadership Skills Group (LSG) program to include an early prevention mentorship program for at-risk youth in elementary schools. The purpose of this initiative is to connect at-risk youth at the earliest opportunity to prosocial role models to build essential competencies for resisting involvement with gangs or gang activities.

The Touchstone Family Association's LSG program is funded through the United Way's Schools' Out program and aims to provide social and emotional learning to children in grades five through seven. Participating in various afterschool programs and activities, including a Circle, games and exercises, and different projects, the students in LSG are provided with opportunities to build positive relationships with prosocial mentors and other youth, find inspiration in learning, explore their creativity, and to have fun. Touchstone Family Association runs this program two days per week at participating elementary schools in the Richmond School District.

The Youth Empowerment Initiative will expand on this existing framework by focusing resources on individuals in grades five through seven who are identified as being at-risk for gang involvement or violence. Operating as a mentorship program, the Youth Empowerment Initiative will bring together high achieving, prosocial high school students and qualified and vetted City of Richmond volunteers with at-risk elementary school students to assist these children with addressing

problem behaviours, while also bolstering their positive attributes. In addition to modeling prosocial behaviours and helping at-risk youth navigate building positive relationships, the mentors and volunteers will help with homework and other school assignments and activities and engage the youth in various recreational activities designed to develop prosocial assets and resiliency.

The Youth Empowerment Initiative will be piloted in two of the elementary schools currently offering Touchstone Family Association's LSG initiative. At-risk youth will be identified and referred to the program by teachers, other school staff, or the student's primary caregivers. The secondary school student mentors will be identified and screened by teachers and other school staff from the secondary school that a connected to the selected elementary school. These mentors will be supervised and assisted by trained adult City of Richmond volunteers who have a specific skillset and interest in working with at-risk youth. The program will operate directly out of the selected elementary school and run one day of the week.

The Youth Empowerment Initiative offers an evidence-based early prevention initiative for addressing gang involvement. Based on the extant research findings and recommended good practices, it is beneficial to initiate prevention efforts during the late elementary school years as risk factors for joining gangs are beginning to emerge. By focusing on at-risk youth in grades five through seven, the Youth Empowerment Initiative provides the City of Richmond with a dedicated early prevention effort to reduce the risk of gang membership. As suggested in the Literature Review above, the use of older, prosocial adults/peers as mentors has the potential to reduce anti-social attitudes about gangs, improve one's commitment to school, and increase involvement in prosocial extracurricular activities. Providing prosocial mentorship in elementary schools, the Youth Empowerment Initiative will create opportunities to build key protective factors early in a youth's developmental trajectory through the enhancement of social skills, increased engagement in prosocial opportunities, strengthening of bonds to prosocial peers, and the creation of a more positive environment that will help at-risk youth develop knowledge, skills, and resiliency.

### *Youth Micro Hubs*

A key finding in the literature is that the location of a program can have a large effect on its overall success. Offering services in a youth's natural setting, such as their home or school, not only increases the probability that the skills learned through programs and activities will be maintained, but it also ensures that program participants are removed from the dangers that exist in their community. Part of the expansion of StreetSmarts will include the creation of designated community youth micro hubs. Placed strategically in areas with higher populations of at-risk youth, the community youth micro hubs will provide an accessible, safe, welcoming, and inclusive space. Based on crime hotspot maps for the City of Richmond, conversations with community stakeholders, and the proximity of secondary schools identified as having at-risk youth populations, the recommended locations for the two youth hubs are the South Arm Community Centre and City Centre Community Centre.

It is the general intention that the two youth micro hubs will be a 'one-stop-shop' for youth to access drop-in resources. The hubs will be open to youth to access food and beverages, use

facilities, such as showers and washrooms, receive assistance with homework and other school activities, and engage in fun/creative unstructured activities, such as video games, table tennis, and art. Run by trained Risk Interrupters, the youth hubs will have outreach services built in that will provide a direct route for identifying additional services for all youth who attend the hub. Extending access to key resources and supports for youth in the City of Richmond increases opportunities to contribute to a higher quality of life for the youth that will contribute to a healthier community.

The two youth micro hubs will also provide structured anti-gang education and programming during specified hours on certain days of the week. Where relevant and necessary, programs will be offered to specific groups of youth during different time slots to ensure the educational materials and program activities are age and gender appropriate and address the specific risk factors associated with different groups of youth. For example, targeted anti-gang programming for youth in grades eight through ten might take place on Tuesdays and Thursdays after school, while youth in grades 11 and 12 will have designated programming on Wednesdays and Fridays. When appropriate, an added block of programming for youth who identify as female will be added to address the risk and protective factors that research suggests are unique to this population. All activities and programs offered at the youth micro hubs will be supervised and delivered by the Risk Interrupters or experts in the field, who will be supported by appropriately skilled and trained City of Richmond volunteers. Integrating resources from various community partners, the hubs will be positioned to address gaps in the current system and provide wrap-around support for at-risk youth. The significance of the youth micro hubs is that they will be able to provide at-risk youth with help and support when they need it most, in a safe, welcoming, and inclusive environment, while not requiring youth to travel far.

The youth micro hubs also provide a unique opportunity for reciprocity through a collaborative learning environment. Reciprocal learning encourages individuals to consider their own thought processes and develop a deeper level of comprehension of the material they are being exposed to. In the youth micro hubs, not only will youth have opportunities to engage in group work, activities, and discussions with each other, they will have the opportunity to ask questions and interact with the Risk Interrupters and other experts. This interactive process will contribute to assisting at-risk youth to better understand their needs and take a more active role in developing and revising their own individualized intervention plan. Providing services in this environment has the potential to increase at-risk youths' connections to make positive changes in their lives. Furthermore, receiving feedback from the youth themselves will enable Risk Interrupters, service providers, and key community partners to continually reassess the resources and supports required to fully address at-risk youths' needs in the youth micro hubs.

In addition to allocating some of the BSCF for honourariums for guest speakers, it is recommended that some BSCF money be used to update one room in each community centre to be designated the youth micro hub. This would include painting the rooms and buying equipment and furniture to make the space more inviting and operational for the purposes of the two youth micro hubs. Bringing youth into the design and uses of the youth micro hubs will also ensure that these hubs have culturally and meaningful décor, and that the spaces are not exclusively aligned with the needs

for the services being offered. In effect, the renovations to the space should ensure that the youth micro hubs are both purposefully designed, but that they will also resonate with the youth and the community. The goal is to create spaces that remove key social and institutional barriers to at-risk youth, while increasing opportunities for youth to access resources and interact with professionals who can assist these youth in furthering the development of healthy, caring, and prosocial relationships and prosocial assets.

### *StreetSmarts Youth Leadership Program*

It is recommended that the City of Richmond invest BSCF funding to expand on Touchstone Family Association's StreetSmarts program to further enhance early intervention for at-risk youth between the ages of 12 and 24 years old. The purpose of this program is to increase access for at-risk youth to targeted gang prevention and intervention related education and programming in a safe, welcoming, and inclusive space.

Touchstone Family Association currently offers several programs dedicated to supporting youth and their families. StreetSmarts is an open access youth leadership and mentorship program that provides outreach, educational, and recreational activities, and a supportive environment for youth aged 12 to 19 years old. Based on the developmental asset approach, StreetSmarts provides individualized mentorship to referred clients or existing Touchstone Family Association clients who require extra support. In addition to offering access to Touchstone Family Association's in-house programs that provide learning opportunities, emotional management, and school readiness, youth in the StreetSmarts program are also connected with other community services providers when needed, including Foundry Richmond for mental, physical, and sexual health care services, and Richmond Addiction Services Society for substance abuse issues. Designed to meet the youth where they are at, the program is largely unstructured, and the activities take place primarily out in the community (i.e., not at Touchstone Family Association).

StreetSmarts accepts referrals from any source, with schools, probation, and MCFD being the primary referral agencies. However, currently, StreetSmarts is operating at capacity with 25 youth accepted into the program in 2022. Additional funding will allow StreetSmarts to expand their existing program and provide targeted mentorship, supports and programming for a larger number of at-risk youth in the City of Richmond, and to those specifically between 19 and 24 years old. Based on the existing research, one key to successful prevention and intervention is providing youth with opportunities to make positive changes in their lives, while also simultaneously reducing their risk factors. Providing connections to prosocial mentors and opportunities to participate in activities and programs designed to assist at-risk youth in developing essential skills, including communication, cooperation, conflict resolution, problem-solving, leadership, resisting peer-pressure, and positive coping, help youth to build self-confidence and decrease their likelihood of engaging in antisocial behaviours, such as joining gangs.

Adding to StreetSmarts existing programs, specific anti-gang educational materials will be adopted from existing sources, such as the End Gang Life educational video series and booklets. Partnering with supporting agencies, including Foundry Richmond, CHIMO, and RASS, youth will be provided access to presentations and information sessions that focus specifically on health-related factors

that put youth at increased risk for gang involvement. New trauma-informed, culturally appropriate activities and programs will also be developed to target the risks and needs of at-risk youth in the City of Richmond and build socio-emotional skills to support positive prosocial development. The recommended three Risk Interrupters will also play a key role in identifying and mentoring the at-risk youth, as well as delivering the anti-gang programming.

In addition, the literature on gang members' mental health and emotions finds that gang members may be at increased risk of suffering from mental illnesses and negative emotions, such as anger. Findings consistently demonstrate that gang involvement relates to a range of problems, such as antisocial personality disorder, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, and paranoia. Compared to non-gang youth, young gang members also typically experience elevated levels of violent victimization. In addition to the physical trauma that many of these injuries would cause, mental suffering can also incur. Clinical Counselors can offer personalized, flexible, strength-based approaches, and specific anti-gang programming aimed at assisting at-risk youth by addressing mental and physical health conditions, as well as providing strategies to handle aggressive behaviour, violent tendencies, and household-related issues. As such, it is recommended that one (1) new full-time Clinical Counselor position be created within Touchstone Family Association to deliver a series of activities across the community in support of the overall strategy, including the StreetSmarts program.

The Clinical Counselor would provide clinical counseling after assessing a client's social, psychological, emotional, and behavioural issues and then develop and deliver therapeutic programs and interventions. The Clinical Counselor is expected to provide outreach and work in non-traditional settings. They will join the team at Touchstone Family Association and their part-time other Clinical Counselors. They will also work with the Risk Interrupters to support youth clients emerging from the new Youth Situation Table to be discussed below. The intention is that high-needs youth would have both a mentor (Risk Interrupter) and a youth clinician (Clinical Counselor) simultaneously. The clinician will work on the clinical issues from a trauma-informed lens, while the Risk Interrupter would work on actualizing the plans and aspirations of the at-risk youth. This would be an intensive short-term wrap around service for the youth that will result in minimizing overall risk and supporting the development of internal strengths and assets in clients.

## ENHANCE COORDINATION, CAPABILITY, AND CAPACITY

The third pillar is designed to **Enhance Coordination, Capability, and Capacity** in the City of Richmond. The elements that comprise this pillar are adapting the current Complex Needs Table into a Youth Situation Table, implementing the Workforce Readiness Initiative, and creating a Professional Development and Training fund.

### *Youth Situation Table*

Currently, the City of Richmond operates a Complex Needs Table. It is recommended that this Table be transformed into a Youth Situation Table with an expanded membership of standing members to address Acute Elevated Risk (AER) in youth between the ages of 12 to 24 years old. Situation Tables

are an increasingly popular means of addressing crime and several co-occurring social problems, including guns and gangs. Situation Tables represent a holistic approach to individual and community well-being and safety and are premised on a model of social service collaboration that aims to identify vulnerable individuals and connect them in a timely fashion with appropriate resources and services. Moreover, the creation and implementation of situation tables across the province is a key initiative of the BC government.

Critical goals for Situation Tables are to mitigate risk for vulnerable people and families, in part, by identifying individuals who meet the threshold for AER and to address the risk factors that are contributing to AER by developing intervention plans that involved multiple agencies and services. Situation Tables can also be effective in breaking down barriers between agencies and enhancing the degree to which agencies and service providers share information and communicate with each other to better promote meaningful partnerships that result in the delivery of appropriate, timely, and wraparound services to clients. In addition to taking a non-punitive approach to addressing risk factors, building resiliency in the community is another goal and potential outcome of Situation Tables.

Another benefit of Situation Tables is that it formalizes the collaborative process and can increase interagency cooperation, especially in service delivery. The Situation Table model is designed to improve information sharing and communication between agencies and service providers and can contribute to a greater sense of shared responsibility among partner agencies and service providers for clients.

Currently, the Complex Youth Table is viewed by stakeholders as a nucleus that serves both as a container of at-risk youth information and as a quasi-control centre for strategic inter-agency case assessment and planning; albeit, in an informal manner. The BSCF provides an opportunity to enhance this table in several ways through the establishment of a Youth Situation Table. The BSCF would provide the funding to provide training to all Situation Table members that can be delivered by the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General BC. Training would also be provided to the Chair of the newly formed table. The government would also provide the Risk Tracking Database used by Situation Tables and would offer, for free, ongoing analysis support of the database. The Chair of the Situation Table would also become part of the Collaborative Public Safety Program Team that meets monthly to discuss the operation of the Situation Tables in British Columbia. Additional benefits and opportunities derived from the establishment of a Youth Situation Table include but are not limited to:

- Establishing an MOU that holds standing members accountable to the commitments they make with respect to delivering services or programming to youth in a timely manner.
- Establishing a Coordinator role to take meeting minutes, maintain the Risk Tracking Database, and handle meeting logistics.
- Meeting more regularly, such as every two weeks.
- Creating additional standing members who serve at-risk youth.
- Developing SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time-bound) action plans and goals for at-risk clients.

Of note, Situation Tables are not programs, but rather formal collaborations of organizations, agencies, and service providers designed to mobilize services in situations of AER to reduce risk quickly. The establishment of a Youth Situation Table in the City of Richmond provides an opportunity to expand the mandate of the Complex Youth Table, increase the membership of the Complex Youth Table through the addition of needed service providers and agencies, develop intervention strategies to address current and emerging trends in the profile of AER among community members and their families to enhance the lives of clients, as well as contributing to public safety and wellbeing, and joining a broader group of communities throughout British Columbia that have already established Situation Tables to address their population of youth suffering from AER.

### *Workforce Readiness Initiative*

The Literature Review and Scan of Practice presented in this document found that a major resilience factor to prevent gun and gang activity is economic stability related to the availability of quality employment opportunities, availability of living wage jobs, and skill building trainings that serve to stabilize the economic structure of the community while promoting healthy living and decreasing rates of poverty. The research has shown that criminal associations can lead to disengagement from school, and this lack of education can limit access to jobs, income, and other resources. Comprehensive gang models commonly reach out to youth in gangs or those who are at-risk for gang membership to connect them with opportunities, such as education and job training. Evidence suggests that providing at-risk youth with meaningful employment and mentoring to assist with obtaining jobs into adulthood has merit. Along with a variety of job preparation and educational opportunities, job placements and job-training sites are also very important to disrupting an anti-social life course. Results from studies show that participants in these types of programs have lower arrest rates and that providing jobs may be an effective intervention strategy.

As part of the BSCF, it is recommended that a new Workforce Readiness Initiative be established within Touchstone Family Association. The aim of this initiative is to provide access to vocational training and other job-related supports to at-risk and gang-involved youth to redirect their lives and become contributing members of the community.

Touchstone Family Association's new Workforce Readiness Initiative will pursue the development of employable skills for at-risk clients across the City of Richmond. Staff will help create education pathways for specific clients, including specialized certifications and credentialing. Staff will develop training offerings, including classroom modules and on-the-job coaching opportunities, to help at-risk clients build soft and technical skills in alignment with their personal interests and career aspirations. Staff will provide employment counseling to clients to help them source part-time and full-time jobs and volunteer opportunities.

This program provides disadvantaged youth with integrated academic, vocational, and social skills training that they need to gain independence and secure quality long-term jobs or further their education. Staff will help secure and provide employment-related support for at-risk young adults, such as job search tips, job readiness skills, resumé development and interview preparation, workplace communication skills, and other supports as required (e.g., outfitting, transportation).

Staff will develop Individual Employment Plans for participants to assess each client's education level, work history, strengths, challenges, and desired career pathways. They will connect participants with Co-Ops, apprenticeships, internships, and volunteer opportunities, and monitor their progress while playing an important role acting as intermediaries between employers and clients. Staff will seek out career opportunities that allow clients to learn, grow, and create sustainable career growth opportunities with pre- and post-placement support. Touchstone Family Association will develop and manage a network of employer partners to achieve these objectives.

Key partnerships will be explored within the City of Richmond and beyond. For example, for more than 40 years, Kwantlen Polytechnic University (KPU) has provided students with the skills they need for the careers they want. Kwantlen's Richmond Campus offers a wide variety of programs and industry recognized technical trainings in several areas, such as automotives, sustainable food systems, fashion design and marketing, 3D animation, and gaming development, to name a few. In addition, entities such as the Skilled Trades Employment Program (STEP), which focuses on finding motivated candidates for construction employers with jobs and apprenticeships to fill in British Columbia, could also be leveraged. The STEP team can help by creating an action plan to build client careers in the skilled trades without any eligibility requirements. BladeRunners is another local program that has been helping unemployed, at-risk young adults prepare for and find employment since 1994. BladeRunners provides life skills, job readiness skills, work experience/on-the-job training, job coaching, and ongoing supports to unemployed or precariously employed young adults at risk. The BladeRunners programs are delivered throughout British Columbia and provide a variety of skills training options that Touchstone Family Association can look to access in the City of Richmond context. This Initiative would be beneficial for the broader City of Richmond community as any City of Richmond agency working with the at-risk youth population could access the BSCF under the guidance of Touchstone Family Association and the BSCF Project Coordinator for the above stated purposes. This approach would act as force-multiplier for achieving the goals of the BSCF Strategy.

### *Professional Development/Training Fund*

It is recommended that the City of Richmond invest BSCF money to provide training and professional development for the Risk Interrupters, Touchstone Family Association personnel, the City of Richmond's volunteers, as well as personnel from participating community agency partners, such as the Richmond RCMP, Foundry Richmond, and the Richmond School District, to build and enhance their knowledge-base and skillsets necessary for dealing with youth at-risk for guns and gang involvement.

There is a myriad of complex individual, familial, school, and neighbourhood risk factors that influence an individual's propensity for joining a gang. As detailed in the Literature Review in this document, youth at-risk of gang involvement or gun violence are more likely to be associated with delinquent peers, have high externalizing behaviours, low social competency, engage in alcohol and drug use, have low attachments to parents, have low commitment and attachment to school, and live in higher crime neighbourhoods. Further complicating matters, there may be additional risk factors that are unique to specific groups. For instance, female youth are particularly vulnerable to

joining a gang when they have a history of sexual abuse, have an unresolved history of trauma, are experiencing a gap in love or attention, and/or need protection. Identity issues tied to cultural background often leave newly immigrated youth vulnerable to joining gangs, and intergenerational trauma stemming from colonization elevate Indigenous youth's risk for gang involvement. To be able to accurately identify a youth's presenting risk factors, develop an appropriate intervention plan, and deliver appropriate programming, the Risk Interrupters, the City of Richmond volunteers, and all frontline staff from agencies supporting the City of Richmond's BSCF Strategy must be well-trained on several key topics to ensure they have the requisite skillset to identify and manage at-risk youth and their families. Based on the type of risk factors associated with gang involvement, the frontline staff will receive, at minimum, training on equity, diversity, and inclusion, cultural sensitivity, trauma-informed approaches and best practices, risk assessment, and violence and de-escalation. More specific gang prevention and intervention education and training is also recommended. Supported and facilitated by OCABC/CFSEU-BC, the Risk Interrupters, City of Richmond volunteers, and the Richmond RCMP will also receive training on End Gang Life materials to ensure they are able to deliver the basic modules and provide low-level End Gang Life messaging.

### ADVISORY ROLE, PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENTS, AND EVALUATION OF THE BSCF STRATEGY

Throughout the timeframe of the BSCF funding, Potus Consulting Inc. will offer ongoing support and advice to the City of Richmond to ensure that the BSCF strategy has been implemented as intended. This will include providing an orientation to the City of Richmond's BSCF Project Manager, monthly meetings with the City of Richmond's BSCF Program Manager, supporting the City of Richmond with the development and delivery of a communications strategy, developing the evaluation framework, performance indicators, and evaluation instruments to assess the BSCF strategy, and conducting all evaluations related to the various components of the City of Richmond's BSCF strategy. The evaluations will not only assess the overall success of each component of the strategy and the overall outcomes of the strategy but will be used to make changes to the strategy throughout the life cycle of the BSCF.

## City of Richmond Communications Plan

As part of the BSCF strategy, the City of Richmond will engage and educate the public, community partners, and stakeholders through a variety of communications strategies to raise awareness and fulfill the mandate of the new gang and violence prevention programming. The communication strategy will involve approaches that include the design and delivery of the medium, embracing multiple languages, and that will be delivered across a full spectrum of avenues, including but not limited to mainstream, ethnic, and social media, and that will leverage the communications strengths of the project's partners and stakeholders.

When communicating about an issue that directly involves the public and services delivered to the public, it is critical to be as inclusive of the community as possible and consider ways to

communicate that will be the most impactful and, at the same time, allow the project to achieve its goals. This includes not only the content of the project, but on how the information is distributed.

The delivery methods through which the content is delivered, and strategies used to deliver the content, should include ways in which the content will be well received by the community. At the forefront, consideration needs to be given to how community or target populations can get a true understanding of the issue. While still important and relevant, it needs to be recognized that it is critical to have less reliance on the media to deliver the message and focus on building internal communications strategies and content so that the message(s) can get to people who may not depend on traditional media for their news and information.

Creating plain-language communications available directly to the community makes it easier for the community to educate themselves. There needs to be an appreciation for the diversity of the City of Richmond and every effort needs to be made to provide information in languages that are relevant and requested by the community. Likewise, there needs to be an appreciation for how young people take in and absorb information and use social media. Efforts should be taken to work with the City of Richmond's young people to develop and deliver information that speaks directly to their concerns and creates a sense of ownership and awareness for the role they play in the success of the programs and ultimately the long-term reduction in gang and gun activity and related violence. The communications strategy recommended is a balanced approach between sound communications strategies and recognizing that communicating and engaging the public, especially youth, is an ongoing and evolving exercise.

The objectives of the communication strategy are: (1) to facilitate the sharing of project information, the type of resources available, and educational material; (2) to create engagement with the public, target populations, and stakeholders about gangs, gang prevention, and related services available in the City of Richmond funded by the BSCF; (3) to use communications content to foster increased collaboration between the City of Richmond, the public, and stakeholders in connection to the gang, gang prevention, and related programming funded through the BSCF; and (4) to create and deliver on strategic communications objectives and content that will be impactful and result in positive evaluative outcomes that assists in the possibility of longer-term funding to continue services beyond the term of the BSCF.

Of note, every communications plan or initiative has challenges. These include, but are not limited to: changes in community, partner, or stakeholder staff and engagement levels; limitations of community, partner, or stakeholder capacity, resources and budgets; unpredictable evolution of technology and delays in learning and/or implementing that new technology; and lack of interest or competing interests with the media, partners, stakeholders, and others. Based on the conversations that Potus Consulting Inc. had with the City of Richmond and its Corporate Communications and Marketing Department, the City of Richmond is committed to ensuring that timely, open, accountable, and respectful communications will take place with the community, project partners, and stakeholders. The City of Richmond is further committed to doing everything possible to ensure that any constraints are mitigated to the best of its ability and will work with the project partners through any challenges they may be experiencing. The strategy elements presented in Table 5

provide a roadmap for the City of Richmond and partner stakeholders to consider at various points throughout the BSCF strategy.

**TABLE 1: PROPOSED CITY OF RICHMOND COMMUNICATIONS APPROACH**

| Communications Strategy | Owner | Key Message(s) | Audience | Evaluation Considerations |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Key Messages document and Fact Sheet for City of Richmond and Partner Agency staff | City of Richmond – Communications | Key Messages and Fact Sheet documents would assist City of Richmond staff, Mayor and Council, partner agency staff, and others when proactively or reactively speaking about the project, programing, funding, etc. Shared both internally with City of Richmond staff and partner agencies. | City of Richmond staff, Mayor and Council, key partners, and stakeholders.<br><br>Fact sheet could be shared on website and externally if properly vetted. | Follow-up with those who receive it to measure if they used it, found it useful, etc. |
| City of Richmond website | City of Richmond – Communications/IT | A source for up-to-date information on the BSCF project, who the partners and stakeholders are, have links to partners and stakeholders, as well as external resources and information, share literature and resources, etc. | City of Richmond residents, schools, families, at-risk youth, partners and stakeholders, Public Safety Canada, and other government agencies. | Website and links measured using web analytics and metrics (# of hits, retention rate, click through, etc.).<br><br>Question and measure whether people are aware of and/or use the site/page as a resource. |
| Website(s) of partner agencies who receive funding to deliver services | Partner Agencies - Communications/IT | A source for up-to-date information on the BSCF project, who other partners and stakeholders are, have links to City of Richmond, partners, and stakeholders, as well as external resources and information, share literature and resources, etc. | City of Richmond residents, schools, families, at-risk youth, partners and stakeholders, Public Safety Canada, and other government agencies. | Website and links measured using web analytics and metrics (# of hits, retention rate, click through, etc.).<br><br>Question and measure whether people are aware of and/or use the site/page as a resource. |
| Website(s) of partner and stakeholder agencies who do not receive funding, but are connected due to mandate | Partner Agencies - Communications/IT | Summary information about the project and links to City of Richmond and main project partners. Likely that these agencies will have multiple links to cities and agencies who have received funding via BSCF. | City of Richmond residents, schools, families, at-risk youth, partners and stakeholders, Public Safety Canada, and other government agencies. | Website and links measured using web analytics and metrics (# of hits, retention rate, click through, etc.).<br><br>Question and measure whether people are aware of and/or use the site/page as a resource. |
| City of Richmond social media accounts (Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat, TikTok, LinkedIn, podcasts, etc.) | City of Richmond - Communications | Content created to promote and update the project, create engagement, drive traffic to partners, etc. | City of Richmond residents, schools, families, at-risk youth, partners and stakeholders, Public Safety Canada, and other government agencies. | Utilize built-in social media analytics (e.g., Twitter Analytics) or social media analytics (e.g., Hootsuite) to measure metrics. |
| Partner Agency (funded) social media accounts, such as Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat, TikTok, and LinkedIn. | Partner Agencies – Communications/IT | Content created to promote and update the project, create engagement, drive traffic to partners, etc. | City of Richmond residents, schools, families, at-risk youth, partners and stakeholders, Public Safety Canada, and other government agencies. | Utilize built-in social media analytics (e.g., Twitter Analytics) or social media analytics (e.g., Hootsuite) to measure metrics. |
| Create pamphlets, booklets, photos, | City of Richmond, Staff specifically | Content created for use on the various platforms, to | City of Richmond residents, schools, families, at-risk | Utilize any analytics depending on platform |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| videos, and other content for website, social media channels and to share with media, public, and partners. | funded to support strategy & Partner/Supporting Agencies | share with media, public, and partners. Showcase elements of the program, highlight key City of Richmond and partner messages, and share successes. | youth, partners and stakeholders, Public Safety Canada, other government agencies, and media. | used (e.g., YouTube or social media).<br><br>Consideration for any pre-viewing/post-viewing attitude or perception surveys if able.<br><br>Track distribution, requests, and financial costs. |
| Media Opportunities (mainstream, ethnic, podcast, blog, etc.) | City of Richmond - Communications | Leverage media contacts to create opportunities to inform about the project, raise awareness, deliver program messages, and content, and create referrals for program providers. Identify key spokespeople from City of Richmond and partners to deliver message(s). | City of Richmond residents, schools, families, at-risk youth, partners and stakeholders, Public Safety Canada, other government agencies, and media. | Track proactive and reactive media opportunities (e.g., # of requests for comment, # of interviews, views, or listeners, if possible, etc.). |
| Content specific to youth and/or target demographic of programming | City of Richmond, Staff specifically funded to support strategy & Partner/Supporting Agencies | City of Richmond and funded program provider to develop and/or source content specific to program mandate, goals, messaging, and distribute using partner collaboration or traditional means. Consider also partnering with schools and community and/or law enforcement partners to have youth create content that meets the mandate of the program. | Youth or target population in City of Richmond, families, parents, and partners. | Track distribution and demand.<br><br>Consider pre/post viewing survey to measure impact and effectiveness on attitude, perception, etc. |
| Presentations, Town Halls, and training sessions | City of Richmond, Staff specifically funded to support strategy & Partner/Supporting Agencies | Presentation with program information prevention and education messages, and other content delivered by partners, law enforcement (e.g., RCMP School Resource and/or CFSEU-BC), and others to schools, parents, service providers, etc. | City of Richmond youth, parents, schools, teachers, partners, and stakeholders, etc. | Track attendance, distribution of products, and consider pre/post surveys. |
| City of Richmond Annual Report, Strategic Plan, etc. | City of Richmond - Communications | Include program information and City of Richmond Annual Report, Strategic Plan, or other reporting document. | Public, media, partners, and stakeholders | Track any analytics if posted online and/or distribution. |

## Conclusion

The fundamental components of a good strategy framework include design, alignment, execution, and enablement. The design stage is about translating the overall vision of the strategy into several actionable elements with specific targets and goals. The alignment phase is a time to ensure that all organizational and operational elements are compatible with the overall strategy and that key accountabilities and interdependencies are identified. The execution component is where the implementation of the strategy takes place and is adopted, along with regular tracking and analysis.

Finally, the enablement period is when the strategy is delivered though leadership and a culture has been created to ensure objectives are being reached. This framework typically also has many important sub-components, such as: planning and scoping, prototyping, incubation, and performance management. This strategy recommendation document captures the first component of the broader City of Richmond BSCF framework (Design), while subsequent years of the BSCF program (Years 2 to 4) will tackle the other aspects (Alignment, Execution, and Enablement). Ultimately, for any strategy to be effective, including this one, it will require executive governance, ongoing prioritization, and careful orchestration.

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