

Creating a Culture of Prevention June 24

A Summary of the Event

Opening Ceremony - Seis^^lom



Mayor's Welcome



- Gang Wars have been happening for many years now in Vancouver
- Medium/long-term solutions have to do with addressing root causes which the community is doing
- Looking for solutions that will be lasting
- Public perception of gangs is ill-informed
- What can parents, community deliver? They have a lot of power
- Felt consensus in the room around investment in 'our youth' 'community' 'education and recreation' 'engagement'
- We want to change the course of history in this City; we need tangible steps
- Need to offer youth positive alternatives that will make Vancouver a better City of Vancouver

Keynote: Michael Chettleburgh

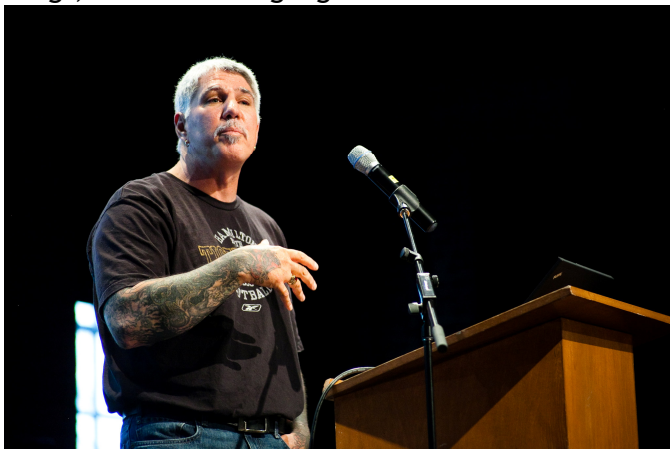


- Studying the gang situation since 1991
- Wrote federal policy on youth gangs
- Author: Young Thugs

Six Pillars - A Best Practice Model for Gang Prevention (powerpoint available)

- Vancouver and Ottawa Police are most forward thinking in terms of youth resources
- We know gangs are spread across the country - this is a Canadian problem
- This problem is not out of control - the steps we take in the next five years is important
- LA = 140,000 gang members; Chicago = 40,000 gang members
- Canada does not have a coherent, consistent anti-gang/gang prevention strategy
- Canada is falling into the 'get tough' approach
- BC has a BC Gang Strategy (in the absence of a national strategy)
- We need to take the long war - we need to be patient - because we're never going to get rid of gangs; we need to manage the damage
- Balanced Approach Model - 6 pillars (prevention, intervention, diversion, enforcement, suppression, reintegration)
- Balanced Approach also involves recognizing that not all youth are equally at risk (different propensities). It's important to differentiate.
- Three levels of Crime Prevention (see slide) to ensure a comprehensive approach.
- We all believe in prevention but we don't all fund it.
- The problem with prevention? Not a lot of evaluation; easier to attack symptoms; too much political rhetoric here (accused of being 'soft on crime' 'hug a thugger'); we've left prevention to the underfunded social services; we continue to work with programs that are ineffective (DARE, GREAT, Scared Straight...these don't work); the social services sector bears responsibility as well (too much turf, too little collaboration, too much turf protection etc.)
- Stimulating a culture of prevention
- We need to rationalize if we work in prevention
- We need to take lessons from the HIV/AIDS movement, for example
- We need to hold our politicians accountable, for example
- We need to engage individuals with experiential experience to share information with youth
- We need to engage youth with their peers - they have a powerful voice and other youth will listen
- Drug reform: need to pull all policy levers. This is the only option for minimizing the financial incentive to join gangs/get involved in drug trade.
- Drug consumption in Canada has doubled in the last 10 years

Michael invited **Rick Osborne**, former member of Outlaws Motorcycle Club, to speak a few words. Rick talked briefly about his childhood, leading up to his involvement with gangs, his 24 years in prison and finally his current work in gang prevention telling teens the truth about drugs, violence and gangs.



Panel

Amir

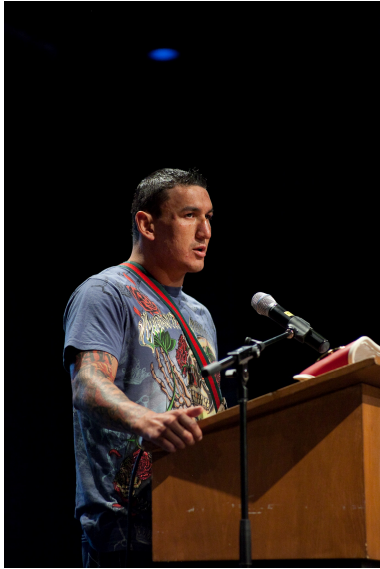


- Runs 'Real World Truth' an organization that helps youth get out of gangs
- Amir felt a void - sought out purpose - and met other young boys who wanted to belong to something
- Smoking heroin by grade 10
- Felt like life was pretty cool when kids identified him as cool
- As a youth you don't always know the scope of your choices
- Started 'Red Scorpions' with his brother
- Brother left the gang. Amir was still in the gang.
- Lots of death. Lots of threats. Not being able to sleep without fear overwhelming me. Found faith. And decided to be part of the resolution. Wanted to help even one person.
- Address gangs:
 - Help kids get out. People need to engage gang involved youth 'You're important. But let me tell you, you've got to step out of it. It's not worth your life.'
 - Prevention in schools and prisons. Speak to kids and provide education for prevention. (Bring along friend Dean who was shot and is now paralyzed)
 - Engage public to break gang culture. It's not an 'us vs. them' issue. Gangs impact everyone and we need to address it as a community.



Sukh Rai

- Vice Principal at secondary school
- Had a mentor (basketball coach) who saw something in him and led him to get into education
- 'All kids need is a little help, a little hope and someone who believes in them'
- He brings presenters in who give a session on what real gang life looks like
- He does a more intimate presentation for youth that are more at risk
- Challenge: the world is much smaller; human contact is just a click away
- Has noticed that the kids involved in the criminal activity today are not necessarily coming from 'economic upheaval, rough homes'. Today it seems that there are kids with great families and parents who still choose the life.
- Vision: Have to give kids a second chance; can't write them off.
- In Surrey: SLOs, YES Workers, staff to take kids to clinics, Pathfinders, Youth Workers, the Wrap Program (wrap community services around individuals)

'Junior' Moar

- Grew up in Winnipeg; stayed out of trouble through sport/boxing
- National champion - great success
- Got involved in drugs, started losing fights, left original boxing coach where some of Hell's Angels were training
- Gang members had nice cars and treated one another with a great deal of respect
- Started selling drugs and getting involved; got a tattoo; involved in a shooting outside his house; four year sentence for shooting (27 months in solitary confinement)
- Was able to get out of Hell's Angels and is now moving back to boxing
- Won Canadian Champion last week
- Documentary featuring his life will be on 6 o'clock national news (CBC)

YES, VBE - Lisa Pedrini

- Youth Gang Prevention Initiative with VBE - Youth Empowered and Safe (YES)
- Context: VBE committed to prevention programming. Long running SLO program. The role of SLO is about building relationships with kids, help administration and teachers. Prevention programs at the elementary level that encourage social skills building. Featured social responsibility initiatives. But resources are stretched. The ability

of the VBE to reach out to very vulnerable youth is a constant challenge. Seven projects in BC funded as part of Gang Prevention. Also an Aboriginal Project here in Vancouver with VPD. CAAN - Community Action Assessment Network - developed steering committee with key stakeholders.

- YES background: Literature search. Evidence base found. Important to listen to youth - spoke with 200 youth in all kinds of setting (alternate schools, elementary/highschools, vulnerable youth). The result? Need to focus on youth at the elementary level; best influence attitudes at that early age. Youth also indicated that they wanted adults and mentors involved. Youth indicated that parents need more information and need to be aware of what's happening with youth in Vancouver. Youth also indicated that transitions were difficult - school connection. Focus groups help with parents from different Ethnic communities. Translations of resources into different languages.
- Develop focused project: Looked at south slope of Vancouver. Some schools identified as needing more support. Mentorship project - got some youth involved in leadership training. Giving youth alternative activities for after school. Partnered with the RSVP program of

Family Services (targeted intervention program for kids grade 5-7). 'Mentorship, positive after-school activities, hope for the future, community connections etc.'

Annie Smith



- ED of the McCreary Centre Society
- Overview of Youth Violence/Youth Gang data from the Lower Mainland
- Risk factors for gang involvement
 - Weapon carrying (physically attacked, racially discriminated against, teased at school, victim of cyber bullying)
 - Substance use (less youth are trying drugs and alcohol but the earlier they are starting the greater the risk)
 - Feeling unsafe (history of abuse and violence)
- School-related risk factors (negative relationships with teachers, low school connectedness)
- Peer risk factors (friends that use drug, friends' attitudes)
- Protective factors for gang involvement
 - Families (even just one adult made a difference on risk behaviours)
 - Schools (youth who like school - not necessarily be good at school)
 - Peers (friends with positive behaviours; friends who don't carry weapons)
- Final notes to support a culture of preventions:
 - Offer youth a viable opportunity to gangs
 - Comprehensive approach involving schools, families, justice system and community
 - Need to give youth opportunities at school
 - Need to not give up

to see presentation visit

<http://vancouver.ca/fourpillars/documents/McCrearyRiskProtectiveFactors.pdf>

Post-Break Panel Discussion and Q&A



Michael

- Lots of people here that 'get it'. Everything we need to know about gangs we know. No need for more studies. This is a community problem.

Katherine

- We talk about community and programs. Can we do both?

Amir

- The community will bring forward the individuals who will mentor
- The community will stand up and say no
- I think you can have both

Junior

- Would have liked a positive role model
- Some kids will see him as a role model. With his tattoos and all.

Katherine

- What about working from within schools?

Sukh

- Making sure that the resources that are out there get to the kids
- Incremental changes can make a difference

Lisa

- YES program can meet individual needs - flexibility is important
- Schools can't do it on their own - that's where kids are - but there need to be great after school programs with good staffing; adults need to make connections with youth and make them feel valued (vs. crossing the street to avoid teenagers)

Annie

- It's not that poor families are 'responsible' although many youth disengage because 'they don't have the sneakers'.

Michael

- How do we get governments to pay attention to getting at the root issues?
- Poverty is a challenge especially given the current political climate.
- Has to come from the community up.
- Not as simplistic as 'stopping the violence now'.
- We can mitigate the damage.
- Grassroots stuff is important but also important to 'get on our soapboxes' and get in the face of government

Amir

- It's not going to change until every person in this city comes to understand the issue and takes a stand

Lisa

- 'You have to start everywhere, all at once, right now' . Michael's Six Pillars model is a good one for that
- This issue is so complex and our society is getting more and more accustomed to sound bites and less aware that each individual can make a difference.
- Not that everyone has to take on 'one more thing' but it's really about doing everything a little bit differently. It's important that parents be there for their kids - but many parents can't. So, how can we structure things differently so this is more possible?

Sukh

- Drug dealers in school are now giving out business cards. It's so different now.
- Now things are organized along network lines vs. territories.

- Vancouver is a port city. BC bud grows in southern BC. This is a perfect storm - Vancouver. It's a tough place.
- The key is intervention - knowing how kids get involved. You have to be connected to what's happening on the ground so that you can know how best to intervene.

Questions & Comments from Participants:



Comment

- Sopranos on TV. Pressure that youth be clever capitalists. We send youth a very powerful message. Public policy - after school care is not paid for. So, if we ignore the policies that don't support families, we're creating marginalized kids.

Amir

- Popular media poses a huge obstacle to this issue. Media tells kids it's cool, do it. He takes a lot of money and throws it in the air and kids scramble for it. 'Money only has worth if you give it worth. What about the truth.' Kids can understand it.

Michael

- Television shows do influence some youth but there are studies that show that media effect is limited. There are precursor influences that are much more powerful than popular media: poverty, dangerous neighbourhood, etc. Top ten influences from gang members probably wouldn't be media. As adults we all have responsibility - we - the boomers - have created the idea that 'I want it all and I want it now'. We have all created this culture where we feel we can get what you want by taking shortcuts.

Question

- Biggest problem is reaching the community that would benefit most from the problem solving. Typically the most at risk people are the people that we don't reach. How do we provide an environment where people can feel safe to talk about these issues?

Amir

- In Britannia, talked to Latino Services, there are many people in the community who feel alienated by the issues because they only know what they get from TV. Started educating parents on the issue - parents want to learn but the fear factor holds them back. Try to break fear for parents so they can step forward and be part of the resolution.

Comment

- Run into the problem of fear with Seniors - put on a forum and got youth and adults together. Nuts and bolts. Breaking down the barriers down between the two groups.

Question

- Struggle in the urban Aboriginal community - fear around police brutality. Stereotyping and racism is still ongoing... What do you see can be done in terms of making a difference in terms of making sure police focus on individuals?

Junior

- You've got to have some trust in the justice system and police force.

Michael

- Tough to change the culture of policing.
- Key is to educate police officers. Make sure that the HR policies in the agencies reflect the people that the agency is going to serve. It's a long process but it starts with education.
- There's a huge demographic shift happening in the police force...we have an opportunity to hire more police officers that have more sensitivity to the issues.

Sukh

- I think the change is already happening. In schools, police are actually getting involved with youth workers and collaborating. This helps to come up with a more realistic solution and helps to change culture.

Michael

- Montreal has half of the gang involvement of Vancouver/Toronto. The Montreal context has been more about Italian mafia, organized crime.
- In part Montreal has an underreported gang issue. The number is probably a little higher. Probably the same as others.

Question

- What is the potential for the American system to move our way?

Michael

- Beds for 40000 inmates. All penitentiaries operating at full capacity.
- Where do we take new inmates? No room? Talking about building new prisons.
- Again, need to get on your soapbox and learn from the US context which is evidenced as a failure.

Final comment from each panellist to the question: What needs to be done now to create a culture of prevention?

(Amir had to leave early)

Lisa

- Speaking same language about resiliency and asset building - time to connect with each other is important

Annie

- Take individual responsibility and connect with other organizations
- Early childhood work definitely

Sukh

- Early intervention - elementary schools
- Bring ex-gang members into schools

Junior

- Living and experienced role models is the way to go

Michael

- The role of parents - really starts in the home
- All kids are at risk
- Early prevention yes, but also working with parents and getting them aware of the realities
- In the absence of parents, takes a village to raise a Family
- Need to talk to the other community that is not involved: the politicians....have the conversation...preach to the non-converted