

PARCA
**Provincial Association of Residential
and Community Agencies**

**STRENGTHENING
YOUTH JUSTICE PARTNERSHIPS
IN BC**

Vancouver, 22-24 November 2004

SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS

PARCA
Provincial Association of Residential and Community Agencies
c/o 3894 Commercial Street
Vancouver, BC V5N 4G2

Telephone: 604.871.0450

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ensuring significant participation from all parts of the Ministry**

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**Student and volunteer recorders from
Simon Fraser University, Kwantlen University College, Douglas College
and the University College of the Fraser Valley**

The Speakers, Workshop Presenters and Group Facilitators

Martha Joy and Stuart Alcock for preparing the Summary of Proceedings

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INTRODUCTION

Between 2000 and 2002, the Provincial Association of Residential and Community Agencies (PARCA) designed and delivered four events related to planning for the implementation of the *Youth Criminal Justice Act* (YCJA) in BC. All were in conjunction with the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) and the Department of Justice Canada and aimed to build and strengthen partnerships among government, community and non-traditional organizations, as well as promote effective youth justice strategies based on best practices.

Building on the previous successes, PARCA planned a fifth conference for the fall of 2004, the first event after the implementation of the YCJA on 1 April 2003 and after the restructuring of MCFD services at the regional level. PARCA hosted the provincial conference on 22, 23 and 24 November 2004 in Vancouver, British Columbia.

This conference aimed to:

- Assess the impact of the YCJA on policy, programs and community partnerships;
- Consider what changes to policies, strategies and programs may be needed in light of the new experiences; and
- Identify processes and participants to be involved in addressing needed changes and future developments.

Participants came from all MCFD regions and from provincial services. They came from MCFD, community youth justice agencies, and Aboriginal agencies and other non-traditional partners. For the first time Crown Counsel were present at the PARCA event. The detailed conference program is reproduced on pages 5 to 9.

Because this conference was largely devoted to plenary presentations and a range of workshops, it has proved impossible to document the vast amount and the wide range of material covered, especially in the interactive workshops. Presenters have been generous in sharing their notes and the other materials they used and some provided material directly to participants. As editors, we decided that we dare not attempt to condense the materials because we are convinced that we could not do so without introducing distortions of the presenters' meanings and intentions.

We had the additional dilemma that Dr. Corrado's very powerful presentation of his research findings is material that will soon be published and, therefore, cannot be reported here. We are assured that the reference will be posted on the PARCA website (www.parca.ca) once the material is in the public realm.

Unlike the last conference in 2002, participants only spent two and a half hours in regional discussions at this conference. A facilitator assisted each group and two note-takers recorded their discussions. It is clear from the notes that there was not enough time for participants to pursue the range of topics covered in depth or to arrive at

detailed plans. However, the notes also revealed that the participants in each regional discussion group were interested in addressing similar issues.

A reading of the notes prior to editing revealed that every group's comments could be sorted under several broad themes relating to: Prevention and Early Intervention; the Impact of the YCJA; Aboriginal Young People; and Program Design/Content. We have selected quotes from participants to illustrate the topics covered.

As in 2002, we observe that the process of engaging people from government, service agencies, First Nations, Aboriginal groups, and other youth serving fields in meaningful discussions is fundamental to the success of planning and change processes. This spirit of mutual engagement should be nurtured as an essential and ongoing feature of the service system.

*Martha Joy and Stuart Alcock
Vancouver, BC*

Editors' Note:

A number of abbreviations are used throughout these Proceedings as follows:

FASD:	Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder
MCFD:	Ministry of Children and Family Development
PARCA:	Provincial Association of Residential and Community Agencies
PTSD:	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
YCJA:	Youth Criminal Justice Act

CONFERENCE AGENDA

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 22	
YOUTH JUSTICE OUTDOOR/WILDERNESS PROGRAMS (closed session)	8:30 – 2:00
REGISTRATION & CHECK IN	1:00 – 5:30
OPENING PRAYER & WELCOME	5:30 – 6:00
BUFFET DINNER	6:00 – 7:00
PANEL DIALOGUE	7:00 – 9:00

“YOUTH JUSTICE: WHERE ARE WE NOW?”

DEBORAH JOYCE, Manager of Residential Programs, John Howard Society of North Island

LES BOON, Regional Executive Director, Fraser Region, MCFD

KIM CAPRI, Executive Director, BC Crime Prevention Association

ANNE KIMMITT, Youth Justice Consultant, Youth Justice Policy & Program Support, MCFD

Moderated by **TIM AGG**, Executive Director, PLEA

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 23

CONTINENTAL BREAKFAST	8:00 – 8:30
PLENARY SESSION	8:30 – 9:30

“SUPPORTING SUCCESS WITH YOUNG ADULTS”

DR. LORNA WILLIAMS

Assistant Professor, Programme Director: Aboriginal Teacher Education
Faculty of Education, University of Victoria

All people thrive and grow in supportive relationships with family and community. We can learn from the traditional teachings to reconnect young adults with their place in community. Listen to what a group of Aboriginal young adults said about what supported their success. Although the context is school, what they said is broader than school experiences.

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 23 – Full Day Workshops

ABORIGINAL CULTURAL CONTINUITY - THEN, NOW AND TOMORROW? (A1 & B1)

BILL MUSSELL, President & Chair, Native Mental Health Association of Canada

For Aboriginal people transmission of culture, generation to generation, has suffered greatly and restoration efforts are receiving some attention today. What these efforts are, why they are important, and how collaboration between First Nations and non-First Nations organizations, agencies, and communities can contribute to this restoration will be explored in this day-long participatory session.

PRINCIPLES & PRACTICES OF EFFECTIVE YOUTH JUSTICE PROGRAMS (A2 & B2)

DR. RAYMOND R. CORRADO, Professor of Criminology, Simon Fraser University

DR. IRWIN M. COHEN, Professor of Criminology and Criminal Justice, University College of the Fraser Valley

This interactive workshop will address the themes of: (1) what are the risk factors for violent young offending, and (2) the criteria for evaluating the impact of youth programs in addressing these risk factors. In this workshop, participants will discuss the risk factors that they have encountered that contribute to youth violence and these factors will be compared with the latest research on identifying risk factors for serious and violent youth and the Krakow Instrument developed for risk management. During the afternoon session, participants will be asked to identify and discuss the program evaluation criteria they believe are valid in evaluating the various programs that they have been involved with. These criteria will also be compared to the most recent program evaluation criteria that have been used to evaluate actual programs in the research literature

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 23 – Morning Sessions 9:30 – 12:00

YOUTH & ADDICTIONS: PROGRAM APPROACHES AND BEST PRACTICES (A3)

MEAGHAN DOUGHERTY, Acting Program Manager, PLEA, Daughters and Sisters Program
TOM HETHERINGTON, Manager of Addiction Services, Pacific Community Resource Society
MICHELLE HAWCO, Program Director, PLEA

This session will focus on the need for community program development under the Youth Criminal Justice Act. Specifically, how the act enables widespread use of community programs (as extrajudicial measures) and how communities could develop various prevention, intervention and treatment programs to receive referrals at various points of formal processing. Panel members will share their knowledge and experience of current addictions service initiatives and discuss how such programs might operate in various communities.

DIALOGUE ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF YOUTH JUSTICE STANDARDS (A4)

ROBIN PIKE, Divisional Operations Manager, MCFD Provincial Services Division
TERRI RYPKEMA, Accreditation Consultant

This workshop will initiate discussions on the development of program standards for youth justice services in light of the current accreditation activities MCFD's Youth Custody Services and Youth Forensic Psychiatric Services are engaged in. For those familiar or involved with Council of Accreditation (COA) processes, the workshop will provide an opportunity to explore those areas of youth justice services that require service standards development. The anticipated outcome is the formation of a working group to actively focus on this task for the next 6 months.

WHU NEEH NEE (GUIDERS OF OUR PEOPLE) - CARRIER SEKANI FAMILY SERVICES

FAMILY TRANSFORMATIVE/DISPUTE RESOLUTION PROJECT (A5)

PERRY SHAWANA, Assoc. Professor & Chair, First Nations Studies Program, University of Northern BC
WARNER ADAM, TRAVIS HOLYK & MARY TEEGEE, Carrier Sekani Family Services

Carrier Sekani Family Services (CSFS), with the support of the Law Foundation of British Columbia, is utilizing innovative approaches to family breakdown in the First Nations communities it serves. Engaging the participation of a broad selection of participants including young parents, youth, Elders, and hereditary and elected leadership in discussions of family breakdown has re-ignited interest in community driven approaches to supporting youth and children through the incorporation of Carrier values and practices in transformative processes that seek to prevent youth and children from coming into contact with criminal and family law.

EDUCATIONAL & DAY PROGRAMS: NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES (A6)

RANDY ANDERSON, Contract Manager, Vancouver Coastal Region, MCFD
GORD IRVING, Manager, Youth Justice, Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Victoria, PARCA Board Member
JEFF SMITH, Administrator, Aboriginal Education, Vancouver School Board

BC'S CHILD AND YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH PLAN AND YOUTH JUSTICE ISSUES (A7)

CINDER WOODS, Senior Mental Health Consultant, Child & Youth Mental Health Policy & Program Support Branch, MCFD

This presentation will describe the Child and Youth Mental Health Plan, approved by Cabinet in February, 2003. It provides for a significant enhancement of mental health services for children and youth with mental disorders over a five-year period. The presentation will focus particularly on aspects of the plan that relate to the needs of adolescents and on the interface between mental health and youth justice services. Participants will be invited to ask questions and offer points for discussion throughout the presentation.

YOUTH FORENSIC SERVICES (A8)

ANDRE PICARD, Director, Youth Forensic Psychiatric Services MCFD

DR. PATRICK BARTEL, Psychologist, Youth Forensic Psychiatric Services MCFD

SUE WARD, Program Coordinator, Youth Forensic Psychiatric Services MCFD

This presentation will address the role of Youth Forensic Psychiatric Services in the treatment and management of high-risk youth. Focus will be on what research has shown to be effective in treating young people with multiple needs. The concept of risk-focused intervention will be highlighted as potentially the most effective approach for assisting these challenging young people. Case examples will also be presented to practically demonstrate the benefits and difficulties that professionals can experience in working with high-risk kids and the systems that impact them.

LUNCH & SPEAKER

12:00 – 1:30

ALAN MARKWART

Assistant Deputy Minister, MCFD

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 23 – Afternoon Sessions 1:30 – 4:00

YOUTH PARTICIPATION: WHY IT IS ESSENTIAL AND HOW TO DO IT (B3)

TREVOR COBURN, Leadership Council, Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks

NICOLE HERBERT, Director of Programs, Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks

In this workshop, participants will explore the benefits of youth participation (in local groups) to the young people, those working with them, and the community in general. Through the "One Stop Youth Participation Shop" participants will also learn tips and strategies for starting and sustaining a youth group and youth involvement in decision-making.

WORKING WITH VERY HIGH RISK CLIENTS (B4)

MARK GOSSE, Director, Youth Custody Services MCFD

MIKE JEFFREYS, Program Manager, PLEA

MIKE WHITE, Youth Services Manager, MCFD Vancouver Coastal

Participants will be provided with an overview of community and custody services for very high risk clients. In particular, the organizational, strategic and service factors affecting the delivery of the services will be presented. The impacts of and responses to the factors as it relates to high risk clients will be discussed.

WORKING WITH YOUNG WOMEN (B5)

TERRY DENIKE, Youth Probation Officer, MCFD, Kamloops

MICHELLE HAWCO, Program Director, PLEA

PAM MACDONALD, Youth Probation Officer, MCFD, Kamloops

This workshop is an interactive discussion/presentation which will;

- a) share research supporting the need and value of programs designed specifically to address the needs of girls;
- b) link the Philosophy and Principles of the Youth Criminal Justice Act with the research, supporting the design of girls' specific programs; and

c) describe effective programming for girls that focuses on the value of relationship building.

FIRST NATIONS APPROACHES TO YOUTH JUSTICE (B6)

QWI:QWELSTOM, Stó:lô Nation

HARLEY CHAPPELL, JEFF HUBERMAN, JOANNE JEFFERSON, RON PENNER, YVONNE TUMANGDAY, AMY VICTOR

In this workshop participants will learn about Stó:lô Justice and Xwe'a:yem, the Stó:lô Youth Healing Centre. The focus of both these programs is to help First Nations clients identify and address the underlying issues that have brought them to the criminal legal system. The common thread that supports these two processes is that the teachings are based on tradition and culture, and they are both supported and driven by the community. The goal of the teachings is to bring balance and harmony back to relationships that have been broken, to promote unity, respect differences and to heal and uplift the spirit. It's about taking responsibility for one's actions.

YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES: REALIZING RIGHTS, RESPONDING TO NEEDS (B7)

MARY CLARE ZAK Executive Director, Society for Children and Youth of BC

(with others from the disability community)

The Society for Children and Youth of BC is examining the rights of youth with disabilities under the Convention on the Rights of the Child. This interactive workshop will raise awareness of rights and needs of youth with disabilities in conflict with the law in BC, facilitate dialogue on the responsiveness of the youth justice system and related services to youth with disabilities, and identify opportunities for restorative justice and extrajudicial measures under the *Youth Criminal Justice Act*.

WORKING WITH YOUTH WITH FETAL ALCOHOL SYNDROME (B8)

RAY HARTLEY, Program Manager, PLEA

PAM MUNRO, Family Nurse Clinician, The Asante Centre for Fetal Alcohol Syndrome

This presentation will describe the PLEA/Asante Centre for Fetal Alcohol Syndrome 2-year pilot project funded by the Youth Justice Renewal Fund of the Department of Justice Canada and MCFD. The goals of this unique pilot project are (1) to enhance knowledge about fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD) within the larger service delivery system, (2) to identify, screen and assess youth suspected of having FASD who are on an adjudicated probation order, and (3) to develop and demonstrate an integrated service delivery model to meet the individual needs and characteristics of youth with FASD who are involved in the criminal justice system. The presenters will also describe the goals and activities of an accompanying research study aimed at increasing knowledge and understanding of this target population. These dynamic, ever changing, ever challenging youth have provided many valuable lessons for the project and community partners.

YOUTH PRESENTATION

4:00 – 5:00

JABULANI

JABULANI is an East Vancouver based musical ensemble that creates cultural and educational projects to link youth with their peers for the purpose of enabling young people to acquire and transfer cultural understanding through music.

Live concerts are where Jabulani really shines. Pasi's approach of teaching the songs and then making the group responsible for presenting them gives the young artists ownership of the music. The ensemble has no one leader. They switch instruments on each song and take turns in introducing the repertoire, with no adults in sight to direct them. For school age audiences, seeing other kids on stage running the show themselves is very empowering.

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 24

CONTINENTAL BREAKFAST	8:00 – 8:30
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PLENARY SESSION	8:30 – 9:30
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“MOVING FORWARD - KEY THEMES AND CRITICAL ISSUES”

Dr. RAYMOND R. CORRADO

Professor of Criminology, Simon Fraser University

REGIONAL GROUP DIALOGUES AND REPORT BACK	9:30 – 12:30
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LUNCH, GUEST SPEAKER & CLOSING	12:30 - 1:30
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SHEILA DAVIDSON

Child & Youth Advocate, City of Vancouver

THE REGIONAL DISCUSSIONS

Unlike the last PARCA conference in 2002, each of the regional discussions was recorded by two volunteer note takers, a feature that allowed for cross-checking of wording and emphasis. As a result, the record of the discussions is probably more accurate than previously.

The major difference between the 2004 and 2002 conferences lay in the frequency and amount of time participants spent in regional group discussions. At this event, the time was a short two and a half hours on the last morning and discussion was further limited by the need to cover introductions and the participants' wishes to reflect on the conference experience and present the concerns they had brought from their areas of practice. Consequently, there is less sense of resolution in the notes about proposals for regional initiatives.

It is also clear from the notes that the discussions were significantly influenced by the participants' responses to the powerful information, statistics and observations presented by Dr. Corrado immediately beforehand. And yet it is also clear that people carried forward information they saw as important from other plenary sessions and the workshops.

The following summary attempts to sort participants' observations around a number of common themes: Prevention and Early Intervention; the Impact of the YCJA; Aboriginal Young People; and Program Design/Content.

Common themes emerge. Most of them require further work within the regional networks of police, justice and youth service providers. It is also true that a number of recurrent issues require coordinated policy and planning initiatives at a provincial services level. This is already occurring with Mental Health services to youth. These discussions lead to the view that provincial planning will be necessary to deal with other matters. In this regard, FASD and PTSD are notable themes – and both are usually seen as lying outside the mandate of Mental Health services and, therefore, are deserving of special attention.

While all the groups expressed appreciation for the opportunities to get together that the conference offered, they all wanted follow up. Some regional groups were fairly clear in their resolve to pursue matters beyond this conference. Others may need someone to take the initiative to generate next steps. It may be necessary for PARCA to consider how it can provide leadership in encouraging follow up activity, both regionally and provincially.

THEMES RELATED TO PREVENTION AND EARLY INTERVENTION

The notes from the discussions of the various regional groups include comments that reveal, perhaps a little surprisingly, that the participants drawn from fairly intensive youth justice services wanted to see services in place that would, if successful, reduce the numbers of youth requiring their assistance. The comments seem to be based in two areas of care: for the reduction of the impact of crime in our communities; and the reduction of the negative consequences of crime for the youngsters who are involved. The service ideas discussed included:

1. Community action to prevent crime

"Try to mainstream good influences during the day through peer group counseling in the schools."

The suggestions included a range of public education and security measures to minimize the likelihood of crime and echoed observations made by Kim Capri of the BC Crime Prevention Society on the opening evening of the conference, such as proactive policing, citizen patrols, municipal planning and individual measures like devices to prevent car theft. Also, there was recognition that the evidence cited by Dr. Ray Corrado that youth crime occurs in areas close to schools indicates that introducing a variety of forms of activity and adult supervision in and close to schools would be of value to youth and communities alike.

2. Programs for children, youth and families to prevent crime

"We need to build families over the long term."

"Early prevention is a challenge we are all facing."

"We need programs closer to home."

Participants' observations included comments about the value of programs for entire population groups such as:

- early support for families with newborn infants to assist them to develop sound parenting skills
- ensuring that all children, especially Aboriginal children, are welcomed and affirmed in schools and other places they attend
- the Success by Six program introduced by the Provincial Government
- the introduction of problem solving and restorative justice models in schools and reducing/eliminating patterns of "expulsion" and moving children/youth in difficulty to new schools
- roles for police and probation officers in outreach and intervention in schools

These views clearly reflect some of the commentary made by Dr. Lorna Williams and are reinforced by additional observations made by Dr. Ray Corrado.

3. Early intervention programs

"There are long waiting lists for unfunded early intervention programs."

"We need funding for programs not connected to YCJA."

Early interventions are intended to assist particular children/youth and their families at the point that there is emerging evidence that things are not going well. These necessarily involve teachers and other people in positions to observe children/youth in identifying potential problems, and making referrals or supporting families who seek help. There is a long history of research evidence that such observations are possible and frequently most accurate.

"Families need services provided without fear of oppression."

"Some schools are taking initiatives with restorative justice, social responsibility and community resources."

Conference participants were quick to point out that early intervention programs must be seen by children/youth and their families as helpful and not threatening to make it possible for them to "buy in" comfortably. As a result they must be operated in settings or arrangements that are "away from" any perception that they could result in children being taken into care, or other intrusive actions.

Several participants identified the KidStart Mentoring Program, operated by PLEA, as a good example of this kind of program. However, the details of other programs were not well established in these short regional group discussions but repeatedly suggested the involvement of families, schools, other services, and new roles for police and probation officers.

THEMES RELATED TO THE YOUTH CRIMINAL JUSTICE ACT

Successive PARCA conferences have focused on understanding and preparing for the implementation of the YCJA. This conference was the first since the implementation. While there is evidence that trends in youth justice in BC continue in the same direction as before the YCJA, there was also a sense from participants that issues have emerged that are yet to be resolved and that there may be some anomalies and even contradictions to be addressed.

1. Official statistics

"We cannot escape these messages any longer. We must listen to the data. Locking kids up for a long time is not the answer."

"Caseloads going down doesn't mean that crime is going down."

The statistical information available from the Province of BC continues to show trends towards lower numbers of youth on probation and in custody, a trend that started prior to the YCJA. The Province states that the budget allocations for youth justice have remained stable as this reduction has occurred, and that this is projected to continue.

2. Reduction in referrals to programs

"I'm hearing about busy programs becoming empty."

"RCMP not charging youth so referrals are down by 60%."

Some representatives of contracted service providers in some regions were quick to inform the conference that they were encountering significant difficulty in filling the available places in their programs with the result that there were vacancies while the number of youth in trouble appears not to have decreased. A number of contributing factors were cited as possible explanations:

- Poor understanding by police forces of the provisions of the YCJA means that police do not believe that there is any particular value in pursuing evidence and recommending that charges proceed, resulting in fewer youth appearing in court.
- The requirement of a court disposition as a pre-condition for admission to many programs means that potential clients are "lost" as a result of the increased use of police diversion and other extra-judicial measures.
- Key personnel in the system, including police and Crown Counsel, do not have good information on the service possibilities available to youth and, therefore, do not pursue matters with these goals in mind.

3. Programs at capacity

"It does not feel like the amount of work has gone down."

For other programs, a number of participants were concerned that the number of youth being served was at or approaching capacity and that MCFD appears not to have any ability to fund expanded capacity.

When juxtaposed with the MCFD statistics showing reductions in pressure on probation caseloads and custody centres, these contracted services are inclined to contest the MCFD presentation that there is comparative ease in the system. This gives rise to a further concern that programs with sound reputations will be under pressure to serve more youth with the same resources, thus reducing the quantity (intensity) of service and potentially compromising service quality if program staff are under increased stress and, perhaps, more likely to take time off or leave.

4. Requirement of court adjudication as condition for program entry

"Why do we need to charge kids to get services?"

A number of discussions raised questions about whether there should be some relaxation of the requirements of court adjudication as a condition for receiving service. It was observed that the plea or finding in a court may bear little relationship to a youth's need for service or capacity to be assisted. There was some mention of the basis on which the Province receives youth justice funding from the Government of Canada which has the effect of establishing the court's disposition as a pre-condition, but there was also some sentiment that this is a bureaucratic problem and probably amenable to a bureaucratic solution.

5. Need for accurate information about YCJA

"The police do not understand the new Act."

Almost all of the regional discussions made reference to the patchy understanding of the YCJA by police personnel. However, police forces were almost unrepresented at the conference and it is not possible to assess the validity of these observations. However, there was a report of an outreach information initiative to the police detachment in one community that the people involved said was successful in correcting misperceptions of the YCJA.

6. Need for accurate and comprehensive information about programs

"Maybe we could use an electronic newsletter to improve communication?"

“Crown Counsel works well with youth probation but would like to get to know the other players.”

Given the amount of change in recent years and the reorganization and retendering of MCFD contracts, it is understandable that there is some confusion about what services are available to youth, under what conditions, how referral processes work and which agencies are providing the services – as well as a continued awareness of service shortfalls and gaps. This information was thought to be of particular interest to police and Crown Counsel as an aid to their consideration of what might be appropriate interventions with particular youth.

In all the regional discussions at least one person identified the need for sound information about programs. In addition, a number of people commented on how useful the conference had been as a starting point in identifying people associated with programs. Two regions started to plan follow up actions to maintain momentum started at the conference.

7. Possible changes in roles and relationships

“More networking and collaboration outside the youth justice stream.”

Another recurring theme in the discussions emerged around the changing statistics and dynamics which suggest that people in the service system may well need to rethink their roles and relationships.

The group mentioned most frequently were the probation officers who, with reduced caseloads, may be well positioned to focus time on prevention and early intervention programs, including new roles in reaching children and youth in the K-12 school system.

Another concern related to the integration of Children’s Mental Health into MCFD in order to provide better service to youth initially identified by the justice system.

“We need more integration of knowledge and services, such as mental health, FASD, schools and other service providers.”

Some of the commentary indicated that agency personnel might well need to make specific local efforts to reach out to police and members of the legal profession to make their services better known and understood. There was also frequent discussion of the need for approaches that integrated youth justice with other services and, therefore, require the reworking of relationships with MCFD child protection social workers and developing relationships with personnel in the Health Authorities, in view of the need for better access to drug and alcohol programs for youth.

8. Effect of having more youth diverted or with non-custodial decisions

“Redefine success for clients.”

“They fall back into old ways and lose everything from the past six months.”

“Measuring recidivism is not enough.”

“Restorative approach when dealing with mental health issues is not sufficient – particularly for youth with serious problems.”

While this topic was not fully explored in any of the regional groups, concerns were voiced about the effect of increased use of extra-judicial measures and non-custodial dispositions. People see this as resulting in programs dealing with youth with the most intractable problems, including developmental problems, perhaps related to FASD and a range of other long-standing difficulties, such as PTSD. As a result, this raises questions about whether expectations of programs are realistic. Some participants felt the need for a critical re-examination of the current focus on “outcome measures”.

“We are sending kids back to environments they were in before without follow up.”

“Intervention ends after six months.”

The data presented by Dr. Corrado on a sample of over 500 youth in custody centres in BC is quite compelling in documenting the extent to which repeat young offenders have multiple disadvantages – by their home backgrounds, interrupted lives, limited education, and exposure to alcohol, drugs and violence.

People are sensing a danger that programs may be seen as “failing” to “cure” offenders when, in fact, the youth are so disadvantaged beforehand that success will be elusive, at best. Also, given the emerging evidence that the time in programs is getting shorter and that there is no adequate provision for “after-care” perhaps the most that can be expected of youth justice programs is a short period of incapacitation?

THEMES RELATED TO ABORIGINAL YOUNG PEOPLE

Several Aboriginal participants commented that although hearing the statistics about Aboriginal youth was quite disturbing, they believed that it drew much needed attention to the issues they face in their work. They appreciated being invited to the conference and saw it as an opportunity to both have a voice and to learn from others.

Dr. Ray Corrado's research confirming that approximately half of the youth in custody are Aboriginal seemed to be a touchstone for every regional group's discussion. The notes suggest that there was a consensus that the criminal justice system is indeed failing Aboriginal youth for a variety of reasons. Participants in one group suggested that they thought the numbers were actually much higher in their region. All groups noted that there was an under-representation of First Nations among participants at the conference, although there was very positive feedback on both Dr. Lorna Williams's presentation and the workshops that focused on Aboriginal approaches to youth justice.

1. The need for effective programs

"The community has to give support to the kids or they will end up back in custody."

Finding more effective ways to work with Aboriginal youth was identified by most groups as one of the critical issues that they needed to address in their communities. In groups where there were representatives from Aboriginal organizations there seemed to be more specific references to meeting the unique needs of Aboriginal youth. These included comments such as:

- understanding the importance of cultural continuity – youth need to understand and be involved in their culture
- recognizing that their thinking and learning processes are different – experiences need to be meaningful and connect to the reality of their lives
- using holistic approaches that embrace the young people, their families and communities over the long term
- treatment needs to start in the community, currently there is a lack of services and support for everyone

2. The need for prevention and early intervention programs

"It doesn't matter what the population is – we need early intervention."

"We're missing the boat – starting too late – there should be a primary intervention strategy starting at young age."

Other groups focused on the strong theme of the need for considerably more attention to prevention and early intervention programs inclusive of all youth and their families – including those who are Aboriginal. There was also consistent

commentary on the need for more resources for youth who are already involved in the youth justice system including:

- having to wait for court dispositions before programs available
- need to involve school boards and develop more school based programs instead of the exclusion/expulsion policy of schools which is not a solution
- communities need to be more involved in restorative justice initiatives
- we need to build families long term as opposed to “dropping into” their lives
- need to assist families and communities, and need to provide kids in custody with something to go back to – post program support and follow up services

This last comment seemed to resonate through every group’s discussion. There was a strong sense that many young people were cycling back to custody because there were few, if any, resources in their communities to meet their needs. Safe and stable housing seemed to be the most pressing need. This was particularly true for Aboriginal youth. The evidence cited by Dr. Ray Corrado that approximately 70% of the youth involved in his research said that they were not living at home underscored this concern.

3. Developing relationships with Aboriginal communities

‘We need to work differently, better with First Nations people.’

In some groups there was recognition that Aboriginal communities were becoming more responsible for their youth but that they often face long standing and complex issues that defy short-term services/solutions. There seemed to be some concern that developing youth justice services was secondary to dealing with child protection issues in some of these communities. There were also some questions raised regarding what funds may potentially be available to develop services that would specifically address the needs of Aboriginal young people.

Finding ways to develop stronger relationships with Aboriginal communities and organizations based on collaboration was identified as an important first step. Reducing the number of Aboriginal youth in custody requires a significantly better understanding of Aboriginal perspectives and needs now – both on and off reserve.

Dr. Lorna Williams’ presentation provided some useful places to start. She encouraged participants to look for the strengths that exist in all communities and to provide opportunities for youth to learn about their culture and identity from their Elders.

THEMES RELATED TO PROGRAM DESIGN/CONTENT

In every group there was repeated comment about the need to address the multiple and complex issues that some youth are presenting. FASD, PTSD, mental health issues and addictions were all cited as “huge factors” that are not currently being addressed adequately or effectively in the youth justice system. It may be that these factors are becoming more apparent as youth who are seen as less “problematic” are diverted.

Although there was not much detail provided in the notes from the discussions regarding the particulars, it was clear that participants were deeply concerned about the lack of programs in their communities to both assess and treat youth with these issues. There was also discussion in some groups about their need for significantly more training and research to better understand and respond to these problems.

“Kids need, deserve safe places to live.”

Although already mentioned previously in this report, it bears repeating that finding safe and stable housing for youth involved in the justice system was identified as extremely difficult in every region. Needless to say, for those youth who present with mental health issues and/or drug and alcohol problems, finding suitable placements is even more challenging. Several regions reported that these youth are difficult to live with and that finding surrogate families who are able to manage their extreme behaviours is really problematic.

1. FASD, trauma, and mental health issues

“Put FASD at the top of the list when creating programs or shifts in programming.”

FASD was by far the issue identified most persistently by all the regional groups. There was considerable discussion about the need for prevention and early intervention programs to address this issue proactively, and great concern expressed that most communities lacked the expertise to assess FASD properly. The results are that some youth are cycling through the court system and custody more often and their behaviours are escalating while their real service needs are unrecognized and/or unmet. According to some participants many of these youth are also estranged from their families and/or their communities. These circumstances further complicate the process of planning services and accessing resources.

“It is difficult to rehabilitate youth as many problems are really entrenched.”

“Mental health issues are very prevalent.”

Participants also commented on the additional challenges of working with increasing numbers of youth who are suspected of having FASD but also present drug/alcohol

abuse problems and/or mental health issues. The discussions identified a range of concerns that seemed to be common to all regions including:

- mental health issues are a huge factor and the ability to connect with suitable services is lacking
- there are no support networks for some youth
- it is difficult to get youth with both addiction and mental health issues into drug treatment
- services are seeing more youth who are high risk and who require significantly more time and resources
- youth need more aftercare, and support beyond YCJA – 6 months is inadequate
- we need funding for programs not connected to the YCJA

Many participants commented on how much they appreciated the information presented by the Asante Centre for FAS/PLEA pilot project team in their workshop. The need to extend funding and expand access to this or similar programs was identified as an important need in all regions. Consistent with Dr. Ray Corrado's research findings, several participants noted that not only is FASD under diagnosed in their experience but is frequently misdiagnosed. Many of the indicators are very similar to PTSD, which is increasingly prevalent among young women involved in the youth justice system.

Dr. Corrado suggested that the numbers of young men with PTSD may indeed be significantly higher than those reported. He believes that young men are underreporting abuse due to a high level of shame. They will not talk about these experiences unless they trust. The result is that we are responding to their behaviour rather than treating the underlying problem. It is important to note that PTSD is a mental illness that is treatable. However, successful treatment requires an approach that is considerably longer than the 6 months that is typical of most court orders.

The need for improved access to mental health assessments, treatment and services was clearly identified in all the regional discussions. Although there was some optimism expressed by participants that Mental Health is currently developing new services, there were also questions raised about whether these services would improve the capacity of local communities to serve youth with mental illnesses. Again the concern seemed to be the need for more early intervention programs and services for youth with serious disorders and multiple needs.

2. Drug and alcohol

"We are trying to do relapse prevention in-house because we no longer have the resources."

At some point each of the regional discussions noted the lack of resources for youth requiring treatment for their abuse of drugs and alcohol.

The relative lack of detail about the nature of these resources and programs is likely a reflection of the limitations of the time available for careful discussion of options.

3. Parent/teen conflict

One of the regional groups reported that “assault of parent” was by far the most frequent crime that they have been seeing in some programs for the last two years. Although circumstances vary, it appears that in many of these cases the youth must be removed from their homes at least initially due to the level of risk they present. There is a need for more programs that address parent/teen conflict without resorting to charging the teens with assault.

4. Training

“More addictions training and education for employees throughout, e.g. compassion vs. enabling.”

“More integration of information and cross training on mental health issues.”

“Include all people involved with treating youth in training sessions.”

“P.O.’s do get training in mental health issues – but don’t know to what extent.”

“Need to balance access to training resources by government and non-government service delivery workers.”

Without exception every regional group commented on the need for significantly more training on the various issues participants are facing in their work. Several suggested that finding opportunities to share the knowledge and expertise that exists among different programs would be very helpful. These training opportunities would contribute to a better understanding of effective approaches to working with different issues and would strengthen the relationships among different workers and programs. FASD, PTSD, mental health issues, and addictions were all cited as topics that participants wanted to learn more about.

5. Research

“There is no effective way to tell what is working and what is not.”

“Need to link the research to programming and assessments.”

“We need people to understand what we are doing.”

"It was great to put statistics to anecdotal information."

All of the regional discussions made some mention of research. Participants clearly appreciated the feedback provided by research, including the fact that it often confirms their own impressions. However, concern was expressed that not enough research is conducted and that it often focuses on special issues or particularly difficult youth. Additionally, participants were interested in program evaluation that included less "specialized" work and services that are not examined, especially outside larger urban centres.

6. Consolidate, co-ordinate, collaborate and communicate

"Not just changes – but smart changes."

Although one regional group specifically identified this theme as the direction they needed to take to build on the conference experience – it was echoed in every group's discussion. Suggestions for how this could be more effective included:

- involve youth in discussions and decision making
- create support networks for those youth who lack natural supports
- have different conversations about what we define as outcomes
- need for longer term services
- promote and utilize Integrated Case Management – remove barriers and invite non-traditional participants
- include all people involved in treating youth in training sessions
- build resilience in families through integration and long term intervention
- connect with schools – they may do good work but family dynamics are not supportive
- improve integration of services with non-MCFD programs
- focus on building stronger relationships between community organizations, programs and other professionals involved with youth, not just youth justice

"Integration of services may result in greater continuity of resources."

"Consolidation of services is a real concern – must get into communities."

It is important to note that the one issue that seemed to garner very different comments among the regional groups' discussions was the level of integration among services and programs. In some regions there seemed to be a sense that there was "solid integration" within the Ministry and in parts of the agency sector, and the need is to now develop more integration between the two.

In contrast other regions identified real and problematic gaps between Child, Family and Community Support Services and Youth Justice Services. They questioned the apparent lack of connection between the two mandates and the inconsistency of services provided when there are both social workers and probation officers working

with the same youth. Similar concerns about different mandates prompted another region to identify finding ways to lobby government to bring Drug and Alcohol Services back to MCFD as one of the priorities for further action.

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