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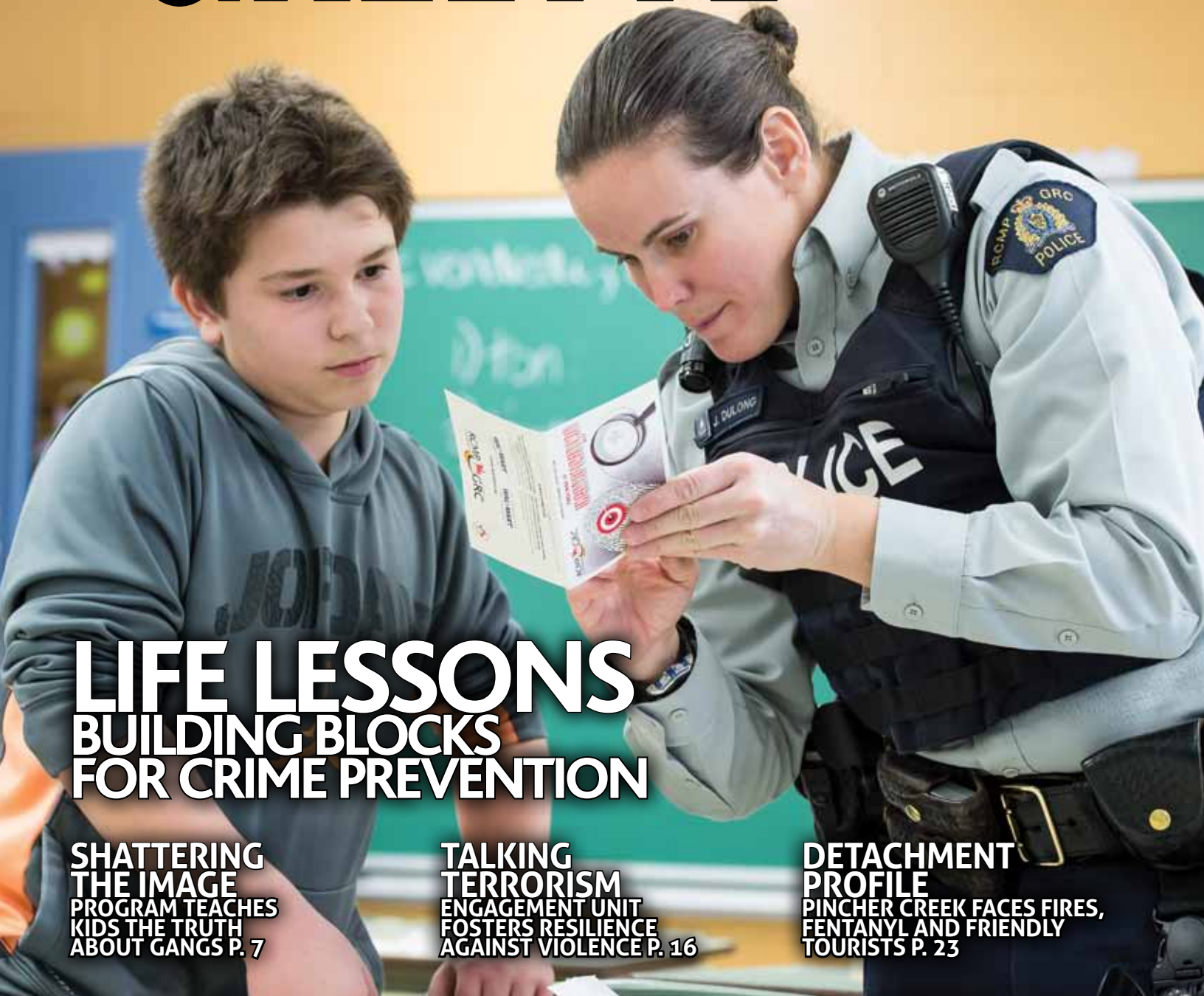
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# GAZETTE

**2017 MARCOM  
PLATINUM  
AWARD WINNER**



VOL. 80, NO. 2, 2018



## LIFE LESSONS BUILDING BLOCKS FOR CRIME PREVENTION

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### ON THE COVER:

From classrooms to communities, the RCMP works to foster life skills and to prevent crime before problems become entrenched.

Photo: Serge Gouin, RCMP





# GETTING AHEAD OF CRIME

Serge Gouin, RCMP



As one school director in our issue points out: “Prevention has never been glamorous.” For many, it’s hard to get excited about crime prevention.

But before you stop, read on to learn just how impactful prevention and intervention programs can be. The stories are interesting — even inspiring.

Take our cover story. Amelia Thatcher writes about the important strides that the Surrey Gang Enforcement Team and the Surrey Youth Unit in British Columbia (B.C.) are making by directing younger children away from gangs. It starts with dispelling the myths about gang-life — and letting an ex-gang member turned advocate tell the real story.

Thatcher also writes about a collaborative approach to reducing gang violence in Samson Cree Nation in Maskwacis, Alta. The HUB model brings together RCMP and other community service providers to mobilize and proactively target youth at high risk of joining a gang, and give them the choice to be something else.

To have an impact on crime, building strong community relationships is essential. Paul Northcott interviewed RCMP Community Program Officer Maryah Walker about her role supporting police and residents in La Loche, Sask. Walker says for her, making those connections started with sharing a community meal and learning a new language.

Northcott also looks at the importance of good communication. During last summer’s wildfires, the RCMP’s Aboriginal Police Services in B.C. were on high alert, and concerned that the community of Alkali Lake was at risk of being re-evacuated. Keeping the lines of communication open

meant going live on the local radio station to explain where the fires were moving and how residents could stay safe.

For the RCMP’s Public Engagement Unit in Ontario, which works to prevent terrorism and extremism, building trust with local communities took time. But now, the unit holds workshops with community leaders to share how protective factors, such as family support and positive self-esteem, can prevent youth from engaging in political violence before it’s too late.

Finally, for our panel discussion, we ask four officers across Canada how police presence in schools can help with prevention. Not surprisingly, making connections with students yields all kinds of benefits from developing trusting relationships, to volunteerism and making smart choices.

What crime prevention may lack in glamour, it more than makes up for in good sense. ■

— Katherine Aldred

## CORRECTION

In our *River rescue* story (Vol. 80, No. 1, 2018), the river in question was the North Saskatchewan River, not the Fort Saskatchewan River. We apologize for the error.

## MARCOM AWARD WINNER

*Gazette* magazine has been named a Platinum winner of the 2017 MarCom Awards for its issue on police training (Vol. 79, No. 1, 2017).

MarCom Awards recognizes achievement by communications professionals for excellence in quality and creativity. As a Platinum Award recipient, *Gazette* magazine was judged to be among the most outstanding in the 2017 competition. ■

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## PROGRAM HELPS POLICE ADDRESS SOCIAL ISSUES

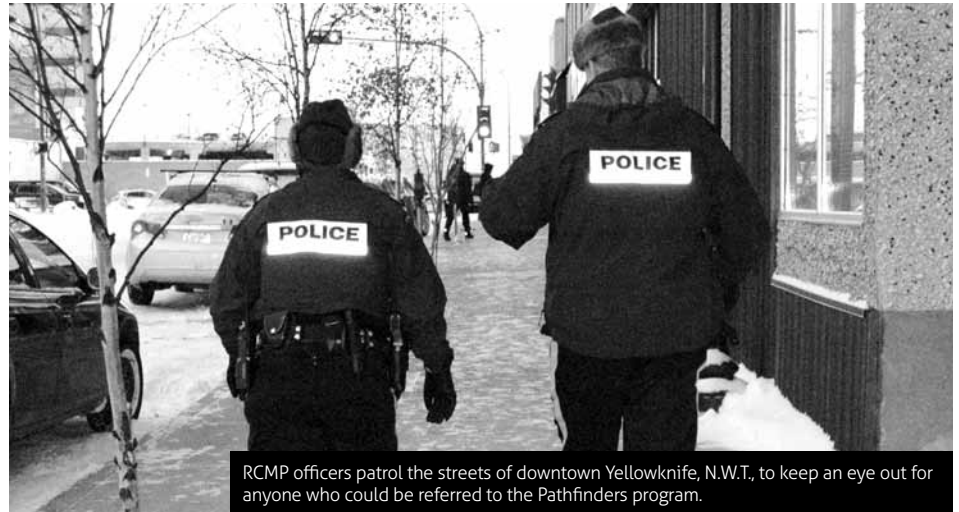
By Amelia Thatcher

For years, RCMP officers in Yellowknife, N.W.T. were swamped with repeat calls for social disorder offences that weren't always criminal in nature — such as an unwanted person in a mall, or someone sleeping in a vestibule.

“There was one individual who we had almost 200 calls for service for in one year,” says Insp. Matt Peggs, detachment commander of Yellowknife RCMP. “We had to ask ourselves, how do we deal with these high users of emergency services in a new way?”

To reduce the amount of time they were spending on high-frequency callers, the RCMP and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) partnered with the Integrated Case Management Program of the Department of Justice (DOJ). The program — also known as Pathfinders — helps residents with complex needs access services to help them get back on their feet. Many of the program's clients are often transient or homeless.

“When an individual starts dealing with multiple services across multiple departments, that's when issues arise,” says Katie-Sue Derejko, manager of the DOJ's case management program. “We try to build rapport with those hard-to-reach people so they don't fall through the cracks.”



Marie York-Condron, RCMP

RCMP officers patrol the streets of downtown Yellowknife, N.W.T., to keep an eye out for anyone who could be referred to the Pathfinders program.

In June, the RCMP and EMS identified their top 15 frequent callers, and referred them to the program. Pathfinders case workers are now helping those identified people navigate services so they can overcome issues related to homelessness, addiction and mental health.

Since the RCMP began collaborating with the DOJ, Peggs says calls for service and the number of people incarcerated for social disorder and mischief offences have declined. While part of this decrease is likely due to Pathfinders, it can also be attributed to several other city-led initiatives happening simultaneously, including a sobering center and an

outreach van.

For the RCMP, Peggs says intelligence gathering and the quality of investigations have improved since the program started. He says because officers are able to spend more time out on the roads, impaired driving charges are up 41 per cent compared to the same time period last year.

“It's about putting the right resources to the right problem,” says Peggs. “Now we have time to do that proactive policing, as opposed to responding to calls better suited for other agencies. We're using our resources more efficiently.” ■

## NEW MAPPING TOOL WILL HELP TRACK OFFENDERS

By Paul Northcott

York Regional Police (YRP) in Ontario will launch a new crime mapping software tool — the first of its kind in Canada — this year that provides a picture of all known offenders and criminal activity in an officer's area.

The YRP have been running a pilot program that provides its officers and analysts with information about patrol areas, including instances of break and enters and the presence of high-risk offenders. The software, called Active Operating Picture (AOP), also supports bail compliance checks and ensures suspended drivers adhere to their conditions.

Greg Stanisci, assistant manager of YRP's Strategic Services Bureau, says the

software — developed with Latitude Geographics — provides an additional layer of safety for officers and the community.

“Officers are now able to view all offenders who live in a neighbourhood, including those charged by other police agencies, on the AOP map with the click of a button,” says Stanisci. “This enables them to determine if there are any high-risk offenders living in the area where a warrant is going to be executed. Officers have never had easy access to that kind of information before.”

That includes records of people who are on conditions in the Canadian Police Information Centre (CPIC) database, which is administered by the RCMP.

Before AOP, that type of offender information would be accessed through

CPIC. However, an off-line search would be required to conduct an analysis of a neighbourhood. Now, in York Region, that data can be accessed almost instantaneously through the AOP, which is available on the cruiser laptop or a mobile device.

CPIC provides weekly updates to YRP. Analyst Dawn Murray Lubbers collects and transmits the material to the YRP.

“We provide them with accurate and updated information on a weekly basis of offenders in their jurisdiction that are added to CPIC,” says Lubbers.

She explained the software reminds officers to confirm any CPIC information prior to taking any enforcement measures.

The AOP software is expected to be fully operational in the first half of 2018. ■



# SOCIAL MEDIA FOLLOWERS HELP INVESTIGATORS

By Paul Northcott

When investigators with Nova Scotia’s Internet Child Exploitation (ICE) Unit started to worry a suspect could soon be on the run, the RCMP’s social media followers may have saved the day.

In November 2017, the RCMP was having trouble locating Aaron Byron Cumberland, who now faces three counts of luring of a child, making sexually explicit material available to a child and invitation to sexual touching. After the usual fact-finding channels came up empty, investigators turned to RCMP Nova Scotia’s Strategic Communications Unit for help.

Hours later, Cumberland was in custody.

“It was so important,” says Cst. Vicki Colford, an ICE investigator, about the posting. “So many people saw it in such a short period of time. It was awesome.”

It all began on Nov. 16 when police issued a warrant for Cumberland, who they believed was visiting friends in the province.

However, Cumberland couldn’t be found and police suspected he could be headed to the United States.

“His social media had him staying with different people at different places and trying to track him to a location was difficult,” says Colford.

Eventually police learned that Cumberland intended to leave on Nov. 18 and plans were made to arrest him at the Halifax Stanfield International Airport. But on Nov. 17, the ICE team discovered he wasn’t flying out.

“We were worried he was going to be evading us,” says Colford, adding officers then decided to ask their strategic communications colleagues for assistance.

Once it was clear there was a threat to public safety, Cumberland’s picture was posted on Nova Scotia RCMP’s Facebook and Twitter accounts and followers were informed he was a wanted man. More than 100,000 people viewed the information within an hour.



RCMP

The RCMP in Nova Scotia turned to its social media accounts to help locate a person of interest.

Then, less than three hours after the posting, the suspect turned himself in to Halifax Regional Police. He has since been charged and a trial is scheduled in June.

“In this case, the use of social media inadvertently put the heat on this person,” says Lia Scanlan, a senior communications advisor. “I would say it was highly likely someone called him and said, ‘You might want to Google your name.’” ■

# LABRADOR RCMP SAY TRACKERS CAN SAVE LIVES

By Paul Northcott

Matthew Lougheed and his snowmobiling partner hunkered down in a remote cove on the rugged coast of Labrador in the early evening of Jan. 26, 2018 after bad weather and rough terrain put a premature end to their trip from Hopedale to Natuashish.

Rather than panic, Lougheed, who was carrying a satellite personal tracker, knew help wasn’t far away.

Once the 34-year-old activated the device’s SOS function, the pair’s exact location was sent to rescuers, saving precious

time and resources. The use of such a tool during a potential missing-persons search is particularly important in a vast and remote place like Labrador.

“That really did save our lives ... they knew right where to look for us,” says Lougheed, noting the pair lit a small fire as temperatures hovered around the -40 C mark with the wind chill.

In 2016, the Hopedale RCMP, several Nunatsiavut communities and local organizations raised funds to buy 10 of the satellite messengers, which are loaned free of charge to anyone heading out into the wilderness.

Sgt. Darryl MacMullin wants to see more of the devices, which can fit into the palm of your hand, signed out of the Hopedale detachment.

“If more residents use the devices, we can cut out the guess work and send our ground search and rescue teams directly to the location of the SOS signal saving time, which is precious during these investigations. They’re an invaluable resource,” he says

That said, MacMullin suggests the devices may be underused because locals who have lived their life on the land — and who feel they know the region well — perceive its use as a sign of weakness or simply unnecessary.

Lougheed, who’s very grateful to his rescuers, agrees.

“I’m starting to think some of the hunters and travellers got too much pride to take one,” he says. “I mean, we all know basically where we are going on a nice day, but when you can’t see nothing and there’s snow and 80 km/h winds, you have a different perspective. I’m not going anywhere without it again.” ■



Labrador RCMP say a satellite personal tracker can save time and lives when people need rescuing in the wilderness, like two snowmobilers this January.



The Surrey Gang Enforcement Team (SGET) present the Shattering the Image program to youth to dispel myths about gang life.

## STRAIGHT TALK

### TARGETING YOUTH TO END GANG VIOLENCE IN SURREY B.C.

By Amelia Thatcher

When it comes to addressing gang violence in Surrey, B.C., RCMP officers are spending more time in elementary and middle schools. It's all part of a push towards more youth education, prevention and intervention programs at the RCMP's largest detachment.

"Our goal is always to prevent youth from being entangled in crime, gangs and violence," says Sgt. Neil Kennedy, who's in charge of Surrey RCMP's Youth Unit. "We know that we can have greater impact and have greater success when we intervene and educate early — before high school is a very critical time."

Over the last three years, Surrey's Youth Unit has expanded by 20 per cent and shifted its focus to younger age groups, targeting kids as young as Grade 4 to get the message across. The Surrey Wraparound (Wrap) program, along with new programs like Shattering the Image and Game On, are helping police encourage youth to make the right choices and steer them away from gang life.

"We use these programs and partnerships to connect with youth, mentor them and guide them into productive lifestyle choices," says Kennedy. "When kids feel connected, they start building healthy rela-

tionships and behaviours."

#### SHATTERING THE IMAGE

This past year, the Surrey Youth Unit and Surrey Gang Enforcement Team (SGET) have been working more closely with the Surrey School District to engage more kids between the ages of eight and 13. The goal is to reach youth before they start heading down the wrong path.

"Why wait till age 14 or 15 when we can go upstream and start supporting these kids at 8 and 9," says Rob Rai, director of school and community connections for the Surrey School District. "Prevention has never been glamorous, but it's far more economical and impactful to deal with issues earlier."

Sgt. Michael Sanchez from the SGET team realized there were many myths and misconceptions about gangs among youth. Ideas like 'gangs provide wealth and power' were prevalent, while the reality of gang violence and crime was often downplayed.

"We realized we needed something to stop the next generation of kids from getting into gangs," says Sanchez. "We needed to shatter the image that gang life is glamorous and shed light on the facts."

With the help of the Surrey School District, Sanchez partnered with Jordan Buna, an ex-gang member turned advocate,

to create Shattering the Image — a gang prevention presentation for local elementary, middle and high schools.

Adapted from a provincial program called End Gang Life created by B.C.'s Combined Forces Special Enforcement Unit (CFSEU-BC), Shattering the Image is tailored for Surrey's specific gang landscape.

"We're delivering a message that is localized to our community," says Sanchez. "We're seeing younger kids being targeted and recruited into gangs."

#### REALITY CHECK

According to Sanchez, gang recruitment can happen as young as 12 or 13 years old. Many youths can be exposed to gang ideas through social media, like Facebook and Snapchat. He says it's not unusual to see kids post photos with bottles of vodka, air pistols and bags of marijuana, normalizing gang behaviour in grades 5 and 6.

In Shattering the Image, Sanchez explains to youth why these behaviours can be dangerous, and talks about being savvy on social media. He also talks about the history of gangs in the Lower Mainland, current gangs in Surrey, the latest recruitment tactics and trends on the street.

As a member of the SGET team, Sanchez sees the evolution of new street trends as they



happen, and includes some of his first-hand policing experiences in the presentation.

“Lately, we were having trouble finding drugs when doing vehicle searches,” says Sanchez. “With a little bit of investigation, we figured out that new recruits were being taught to hide drugs in their anal cavity. While this isn’t a new tactic, we’ve seen a resurgence of it in Surrey, so I put it in the presentation.”

The last part of the presentation is a heartfelt talk from Buna, who was involved in crime and gangs as a young adult in Surrey.

“I tell my personal story and focus on the concept of choices,” he says. “Kids don’t realize the things they’re doing have consequences, so I try to show them a cause-and-effect in my life.”

Buna describes himself as a kid from a “good two-parent family” who got into the wrong crowd in grades 5 and 6. In his 20’s, he became involved in the drug trade and was arrested for charges of drug trafficking and carrying a weapon. After serving time, he decided to take his life back, completing a degree in psychology and criminology. He now tours across the province sharing his story with CFSEU-BC’s End Gang Life program and Shattering the Image presentations.

“We wanted to do this in Surrey because kids are talking about drugs and gangs anyway,” says Buna. “I want to have this conversation with them at a Grade 7 level and give them the facts, rather than have them get wrong information off social media or through classmates.”

Since they started giving presentations in September last year, Sanchez and Buna say



Surrey RCMP

Members of Surrey RCMP’s Youth Unit work with local schools to build positive relationships with kids, in the hopes of preventing them from becoming involved in criminality.

demand for their program has skyrocketed. The SGET team was assigned two additional members to handle the extra workload.

### DIFFERENT PATH

Another one of Surrey’s staple youth crime prevention initiatives has been the Wrap Program. Developed in collaboration with the Surrey School District, Wrap dissuades at-risk youth from becoming entrenched in the drug and gang lifestyle by “wrapping” them in a variety of community resources. In recent years the program has been so successful that waitlists began piling up.

“We didn’t want to create a vacuum,” says Kennedy, referring to the gap in services for waitlisted kids. “We needed to prevent those risk factors — like negative peer group, criminal activity, not going to school, addiction and mental health — from latching on. Those things can encourage a youth to go

into criminality.”

To address the Wrap waitlisted at-risk kids, the Surrey Youth Unit partnered with Big Brothers and the Surrey School District to create Game On — a 12-week mentoring program for youth who’ve shown signs of gang-associated behaviour. Game On connects young people to positive leadership and peer mentoring to help steer them back on track before further intervention is needed.

Kennedy says the key is getting kids connected to good role models early, because by grades 8 and 9, most youth have typically already established their social values, moral values and peer groups. He says by reaching out earlier, mentors and peers can set the tone for how youth make decisions in the future.

“Negative behaviours stimulate a negative reaction. This program replaces those negative behaviours,” says Kennedy. “Once they’re engaged and participating, you’ve shown them that they’re succeeding and they can do it on their own.”

The heart of the Shattering the Image, Wrap and Game On programs is to build stronger, more positive youth-police relationships. Whether it’s talking to young people about the realities of gang life, or actively engaging kids who are dabbling in criminality, police have a role to play when it comes to crime prevention in Surrey, and beyond.

“These younger kids are desperate to attach themselves to something or someone that’s cool or powerful or represents a level of success in their eyes,” says Sanchez. “So when we [the police] go and pick these kids up and talk to them about their choices, we’ll hear them say things like ‘I want to be a police officer’ later on. And it’s because of these relationships we’re building.” ■

## MENTORING SUCCESS STORY

By Sgt. Neil Kennedy, Surrey RCMP Youth Unit

The first youth I mentored was in Grade 7. He was very shy, didn’t have a good self-image and wasn’t caring for himself. By staying positive and building him up, he really came out of his shell that year and soon became one of the best-dressed kids at school.

He wasn’t a big guy, but by the end of the year when all four-foot-five of him stood up, he looked like he was six feet tall. He became full of confidence, friendly and helpful. His mom said my mentoring was the best thing to happen to him.

He’s in Grade 9 now, and I stop in and visit him every once in a while. Now he has a good peer group and he sees school as a positive thing, whereas before he didn’t. The most rewarding thing is supporting youth that may be struggling and setting them up for success.





# POCKET-SIZED PREVENTION

## CONSTABLE DISCUSSES SEXUAL CONSENT IN B.C. SCHOOLS

By Amelia Thatcher

On many university campuses, sexual consent is a hot-button issue, and the University of British Columbia (UBC) in Vancouver, B.C., is no exception. That's why Cst. Ian Sim created *Understanding Sexual Consent: A pocket guide* last year.

"We need to work smarter, and for me that's prevention," says Sim, a community liaison officer at the RCMP's University detachment in Vancouver. "After the fact, it's too late for victims."

The pocket-sized guide uses pictograms and simple words to convey what consent is, what it isn't, and what phone numbers you can call to get help or report an incident.

Sim and other officers at the University detachment use the pocket guides as an education and prevention tool, handing them out to counsellors in the local elementary and high schools, and to students on UBC's campus.

"If I can make people feel comfortable discussing this important issue, that's the goal," says Sim. "But if I can keep people safe, that's the holy grail."

### A PORTABLE MESSAGE

Sim created the tri-fold double-sided pocket guide last year after one of the RCMP's crime prevention posters caught his eye. The poster deftly and creatively conveyed the concept of sexual consent — a topic that's been on the radar of politicians, workplaces, schools and law enforcement for the past few years.

The RCMP's National Crime Prevention Services created the original infographic poster in 2016, following increased appetite from schools and police officers for new ways to start conversations about intimate partner violence and sexual consent.

"We wanted to incorporate imagery youth are using and seeing on an everyday basis, like emoji's," says Louis Zuniga, manager of the RCMP's National Youth Services. "We wanted to pull from those trends to make sure the language we used resonated with youth and they could understand it."

The colourful simplicity of the poster struck a chord with Sim, but he wanted something more tactile and mobile to hand

out on his foot patrols. Sim approached B.C. Crime Prevention Services, which adapted the poster's content into a smaller pocket-sized format.

"I wanted to create a different platform to expand our audience," he says. "It works for elementary and high schools, the university, the bar crowd, as well as parents. Everyone can use the information in the pocket guide."

Sim uses the pocket guide as a tool when he discusses consent with youth and young adults. He says the pictograms can even help those who don't read English or French (the two languages in which the guide is currently available) understand the message.

### CAMPUS BUY-IN

Sim has been handing out the pocket guides since last summer. He says the back-to-school season in September was when they really took off.

"I was on the street as hundreds of kids went to the frat houses for parties," says Sim. "I handed out \$230 tickets for open liquor, and I also handed out the pocketbooks."

So far, Sim says he's only received positive feedback from youth and university students. Recently, he bumped into UBC's inter-fraternity president during a routine foot patrol of campus. He was surprised to

hear the young man had a stack of the guides in his back pocket.

"It mobilizes the conversation and brings it into the environments where the discussion is needed," says Jeriah Newman, president of UBC's Interfraternity Council. "The pocket guides are great because the person gets to leave with them — they can put it in their pocket and read it anytime."

Newman says a lot of students are uncertain or confused when it comes to consent, and this guide "brings it back to reality" with the basics. He says the simple messages like telling people to always ask permission, or reminding people that consent isn't implicit, are what makes the guide hit home.

The pocket guide is also resonating with UBC campus administration. This school year, the UBC Student Housing office requested 10,000 copies to hand out to all students staying in residence.

"This is an issue that's everywhere, in every community, from coast-to-coast-to-coast. The level of trauma as a result of sexual violence can be life-changing," says Sim. "The pocketbook will make a difference because we're giving thousands of kids and young adults across the province the tools to stop sexual assaults and sexual harassment. It doesn't get any better than that." ■



Cst. Ian Sim hands out copies of the *Understanding Sexual Consent* pocket guide to students at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, B.C.



# MASKWACIS INTERVENTION

## COLLABORATIVE APPROACH REDUCES GANG VIOLENCE

By Amelia Thatcher

In 2012, the Samson Cree Nation in Maskwacis, Alta., was in crisis. Violent crime was at an all-time high and school absenteeism was through the roof — more than 300 young people were involved in 13 active gangs in the 8,000-person First Nations community just south of Edmonton.

“We had all these indicators that there was something going on with youth, so we began looking for answers,” says Vernon Saddleback, Chief of Samson. “We had to think about how to introduce something that would change the outcome for our people and our kids.”

After hearing about the success of Prince Albert, Saskatchewan’s HUB model — a community-led collaboration table with police and service agencies — Saddleback and members of the Maskwacis RCMP detachment decided it was worth trying out in Samson.

In September of that year, teachers in the community were shocked at how empty their schools were. They approached the school board asking for help and just a few days later, the Samson HUB went live.

Since then, the Maskwacis RCMP Community Response Unit helped Ermineskin, another reserve in the area, set up a HUB. Now they’re setting up new HUBs in the remaining two reserves in Maskwacis.

### WORKING TOGETHER

Once per week, the HUBs mobilize to discuss cases that individual agencies can’t handle on their own. Service providers like Community Wellness, Maskwacis Youth Initiative, Education, Housing, Income Support, Health Services, Probation and Child and Family Services work together with the RCMP to offer services to people who are at risk of harming themselves or their community.

“The goal is to intervene early to reduce crime, violence and victimization,” says Cst. Morgan Kyle, a community resource officer at the Maskwacis RCMP detachment. “It’s a proactive, rather than a reactive approach.”

For a case to be referred to the HUB table, it must have three or more risk



The HUB table in Samson Cree Nation in Alberta brings together police, local government and community agencies to address high-risk cases involving more than one agency.

Maskwacis RCMP

factors, which can include alcohol, drugs, mental health, criminal behaviour, truancy, housing, gang association and parenting issues. Once a case is accepted at the table, relevant agencies identify themselves and work together to come up with a plan of action to reduce the risk.

“It’s really broken down silos,” says Saddleback, who chairs the HUB meetings. “Now departments are working together, managers know each other’s cell numbers and caseloads for all agencies are down because we’re using the right resources to address issues.”

### FILLING GAPS

The RCMP provides most of the referrals to the HUB tables, since they track files in the Police Reporting and Occurrence System (PROS). Christall Paul is the criminal intelligence analyst at the Maskwacis RCMP detachment who keeps tabs on all the files in PROS, and identifies cases to bring to the HUB tables.

“I look for files coded for things like mental health, domestic violence or drug trafficking, and I’ll read the history of the individual or family and count up the risk factors,” says Paul. “Instead of reacting after

the fact, we’re trying to identify elevated risk factors before they trigger a serious incident.”

But in order to address those risk factors, there has to be sufficient community support and services already in place. That’s one thing the HUB improved in Samson — it identified needs in the community and highlighted services that were lacking. It’s been a stepping stone for the creation of many new programs.

“One thing we noticed was that there wasn’t a lot of things for youth to do at night. We kept getting repeat calls for youth who were causing issues,” says Kyle. “That’s one thing HUB has brought to Samson — more youth programming to keep kids busy.”

Saddleback says since the HUB started in 2012, the number of gangs and the amount violence has decreased significantly. He says community members are now more willing to talk, and push back — they all want a safer community.

“I’m not after gangsters, I’m after the causes that allow people to be gangsters,” says Saddleback. “HUB has helped give community members the choice to be something else, so they can choose to be better, healthier people.” ■

# BRIDGING THE GAP

## COMMUNITY PROGRAM OFFICER HELPS BUILD SKILLS

*Maryah Walker is a community program officer at the RCMP's La Loche detachment in Saskatchewan. She was the first person in the province to hold the civilian job, a role that involves working with the community and police. Paul Northcott spoke to Walker about her profession, the challenges of her work, and the rewards.*

### WHAT IS THE ROLE OF A COMMUNITY PROGRAM OFFICER?

It's my job to work with communities to develop crime-prevention and crime-reduction initiatives. I keep in mind the RCMP's national and divisional priorities and implement them in a meaningful way. I don't feel it's my job to go into a community and tell them how to make things better. After community consultations, we work together to find programs that are community-led and police-assisted; in my experience, this has been most effective.

### HOW DO YOU WORK WITH POLICE OFFICERS?

This position allows for members to focus on investigations. If a school wants a presentation, I liaise, make the arrangements and create the presentations so the RCMP member's time is used effectively when they go into the classroom. I also help members become more culturally aware and advise them of how cultural protocols can impact policing. Many of our members have never worked or lived in a Dene community before and I help bridge the gap.

### WHY DOES THE RCMP NEED COMMUNITY PROGRAM OFFICERS?

Members are very busy responding to calls and they often don't have time for the community-policing aspect. I work hard to build community capacity — giving people the skills to provide their own supports. Whether we deliver Crime Stoppers, gang awareness or sexual assault education presentations, we are giving them the tools to assist with crime prevention and reduction efforts. The things we do help bring information and education so people can have all the knowledge to make the best choices.



Community Program Officer Maryah Walker helps provide the tools, skills and knowledge so that people in her community can support themselves.

Courtesy of Maryah Walker

### WHAT CHALLENGES DO YOU FACE?

When bringing community members together for educational purposes, it's customary to do so over a meal. Unfortunately, we don't have the budget and often times working with youth, food is an initiator for programming. So I've built a good relationship with our mayor, council and local friendship centre. They've been great at covering the cost of lunches or snacks. They see the value in bringing the community together.

I moved here in 2011. I was a young mom and it was a bit of culture shock coming from Kitchener, Ont. But I was able to re-orient myself to the community and really enjoy the pace of life here and have picked up new hobbies.

### TELL ME ABOUT AN INITIATIVE YOU CONSIDER TO BE A SUCCESS STORY?

I was working with a group of young men who had a hard time engaging — they weren't coming to school consistently and weren't making the best lifestyle choices. I started working with them and the school social worker, to provide weekly programming that focused on building life skills. Over time we formed a close relationship and four are graduating this year. Looking back,

it's interesting to see how far they've come, and now they are mentors for other youth.

### AS A NON-INDIGENOUS PERSON WORKING IN AN INDIGENOUS AREA, HOW DO YOU CONNECT WITH YOUR COMMUNITY?

My son and I have made an effort to integrate into the community. He speaks Dene and I know quite a bit. Attending community events has allowed us to make wonderful friends and to develop a support network here. This has allowed me to be more effective in my role, as a sense of trust has been established with the community.

### HOW HAVE YOU ABLE TO SUPPORT YOUR COMMUNITY?

I've developed trust with our community that allows people to come to me. But as much as I'm able to support them, they support me. Together we have experienced a lot of loss and I've been impacted tremendously by traumatic events our community has experienced. Because of the support our community has given back to us, that's why we're still here. It's a give-and-take relationship. I don't have any other family here. They are my family. ■



According to Cst. Meighan De Pass, positive exchanges between youth and police in the schools lead to increased trust and information sharing, which can directly benefit investigations, young people and society.

# HOW CAN POLICE PRESENCE IN SCHOOLS HELP WITH PREVENTION?

## THE PANELLISTS

- Cst. Meighan de Pass, school liaison officer, Sidney North Saanich detachment, British Columbia
- S/Cst. Robert Cleveland, Aboriginal community constable, Police Community Relations, Thompson, Manitoba
- Cst. Brad Kelly, general duty investigator, Carmacks detachment, Yukon
- Cst. Stephen Duggan, general duty policing, Queens District, Prince Edward Island

*Crime prevention and other awareness initiatives for youth — whether to stop bullying, violence, drug use or impaired driving — are often delivered by police officers in a school setting. But how effective is this approach? We asked four RCMP officers about the benefits and limitations of being physically present in schools and what impact this has on young peoples' actions.*

### CST. MEIGHAN DE PASS

The Sidney North Saanich detachment is an excellent example of the positive results available to a police force that invests in its youth. In response to a dramatic increase in violence involving drugs and alcohol

that culminated in a murder in 1994, the detachment developed a progressive crime prevention approach in its local elementary and secondary schools.

This approach involves building a positive police presence in the schools, such as conducting safety instructions, drug abuse resistance education (DARE), bike rodeos, basic traffic enforcement, event participation and rapport-building through a multitude of avenues including officer-led sports activities.

We work hand in hand with the school administration, which leads to quick responses to in-school incidents, such as bullying and exploitation. The evolving stories from youth about bystander interventions

and reporting clearly tell crime prevention officers that our education is resulting in behaviour changes.

Operationally this crime prevention through relationship-building and education results in an increase of positive exchanges between youth and general duty officers on a variety of files. Also, the better the relationship between a community and its police, the better the flow of information, which can directly benefit investigations.

An important part of developing effective crime prevention strategies is knowing your client base, and having current information is an integral part of that process. This can also manifest in decreased



calls for service, a reduction in the severity of violence on youth-related calls and an increase in positive relationship-building opportunities.

When youth interact with police officers outside of liaison-based initiatives, they frequently ask about their school liaison officers. If they're in trouble, they often reference having disappointed their liaison officer, indicating the strong connection and bond that can develop between the two.

This is especially important if we consider how many youth don't have the benefit of having someone to teach and model safe, appropriate behaviours for them. They can't be positive, law-abiding students if no one is showing them what that looks like.

Children and teens often lack a safe place — or a voice to ask for one. Becoming that voice or safe person to ask can be pivotal in preventing further risky behaviours or victimization.

Some of the most important indicators of success within this field are anecdotal. Recently our former school liaison officer received a text from a former student. She was letting him know that due to his support, she had just successfully provided testimony in court.

Our continued presence in our schools directly combats the often negative social media pop culture interpretation of police officers. Building relationships with young people has immediate benefits for society and it will reap further benefits as these youth become our clients of the future.

### S/CST. ROBERT CLEVELAND

I have a very unique position as an Aboriginal Community Constable working and living in my own community. I have worked as a police community relations officer with the Thompson RCMP detachment for the last six and a half years.

Being Métis has opened many doors. I've been a school liaison in several of our local schools. I have taught the DARE program as well as the Aboriginal Shield Program to a variety of classes both in urban and rural areas. I've also been invited to speak to children about drugs, stranger danger, the buddy

system, recruiting and sexting. School visits occur almost daily.

Whether it be to meet the teachers or to participate in Remembrance Day services, the National Aboriginal Veterans Day, a Christmas feast, Citizenship Day or school science fairs, I have the opportunity to discuss issues with the students. I've also been included in many school functions and sit on several committees such as the Adolescent Health Education Committee.

Finally, I also make myself available to the schools should they have concerns or issues that they need addressed: bullying, internet concerns and some behaviour issues.

I feel that by being present in the schools fosters positive relations with the staff and students. The students are shown that police officers are human beings and that we care

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**“Being present in the schools fosters positive relations with the staff and students. The students are shown that police officers are human beings and that we care about them.”**

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*— S/Cst. Robert Cleveland*

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about them. Being in the moment and engaging with youth in the schools helps to build healthy relationships.

Students are not afraid to approach police officers and this reduces the barriers not only in the school but outside as well. As a SAFE (school action for emergencies) coordinator in Thompson, I practise lockdown drills in the schools. This sends a very powerful message to the students and staff that police officers are there to keep everyone safe. It calms students and reassures them that the police are there to help protect them.

I have found that many students are curious about the job of a police officer and by being physically present, this allows students to engage with the officer and ask questions, share ideas and thoughts, and see another perspective.

Engaging with Indigenous students especially helps to dispels myths, rumors and non-truths about police officers, and being in the school allows this to happen. Yes, some people have negative perceptions about police, but there are many others who have had positive interactions.

There are many great police role models within this organization and members who care about schools and the communities in which they live. I have witnessed this through positive initiatives such as the National Youth Engagement Week, the National Youth Leadership Program and the Aboriginal Pre Cadet Training Program, to name a few. These programs only strengthen our relationships within the schools.

Having police officers in schools builds healthy relationships with the students and this makes a difference.

### CST. BRAD KELLY

Prior to my current posting, I worked in Watson Lake, Yukon, for three years. During that time, I had many opportunities to engage in community policing with young people.

On a couple of occasions, I accompanied a First Nation youth to the RCMP Training Academy in Regina, Sask., for Youth Leadership Workshops. These workshops were tailored toward First Nations youth from different communities across Canada. They

focused on empowering young people to create and implement action plans in their communities to help address issues related to victimization. The workshops also served to develop leadership skills in youth and help build positive relationships with police.

The youth who I guided identified bullying to be a pervasive problem within Watson Lake. She and I created a plan to implement the Walk Away, Ignore, Talk it out and Seek Help (WITS) Program, which aims to prevent bullying and peer victimization.

We attended the kindergarten and grades one, two and three classrooms at the local elementary school, and read age-appropriate and culturally relevant stories about bullying to the students. Following the readings, we led discussions about the material. We might ask students why the main character felt left out or what the other characters could do to include him or her.

Being in the school allows police officers like me to work from a strengths-based perspective in that we aren't there to catch young people doing things wrong; rather, we're there to promote youth empowerment.



It creates opportunities to connect with young people in a positive way and to become a meaningful role model. By being approachable, police officers can show that they are there to help rather than solely to hold students accountable for wrongdoings. Police presence in schools enforces the idea of community-based policing and helping families and community members enjoy life.

In the school, I've not only built relationships with young people but also with school personnel. I've collaborated with teachers working toward the same goal of reducing peer victimization. In many ways, the RCMP and the education system are very much on the same page when it comes to healthy promotion of individual strengths and opportunities for youth.

One limitation of any sort of crime prevention initiative is that there's no one-size-fits-all approach. When delivering the WITS Program, I was well aware that children come from different backgrounds and home lives and it may be difficult for every one of them to simply walk away, which is

the first step in WITS. I was also aware that they may need to internalize this information through repetition.

Finally, I was able to learn from the youth by interacting with them in the school. Young people have their finger on the pulse of what's going on and it can help police officers remain current and responsive to today's issues as experienced by youth.

**CST. STEPHEN DUGGAN**

The key to speaking on any topic from a police standpoint is to make the subject real for the student and show them that I'm not just another adult telling them not to do this or that. I'm lucky that my "You control the choice you make" campaign involves something all teenagers want to do: drive a car.

My presentation is a direct result of receiving a letter several months after I had arrested a young person for driving impaired. This driver wrote about what that one bad choice had cost her — losing her job and education, feeling humiliated among family and friends, and the ongoing monetary cost

of getting her licence back. But even after all that had happened, this young driver thanked me for stopping her because it changed her life.

As a police officer, I knew I had found the real story around which to design a presentation.

I learned early in my career that showing up unprepared is worse than not showing up. For the school to give valuable class time, especially an entire school, there's an expectation that the message you deliver make a long-lasting impression on the students.

I always open with, "I'm not here to tell you what you can and can't do. I'm just here to explain the consequences of the choice you make." Over the next 40 minutes, I discuss the various police interactions they can have based on the driving choices they make. I make it interactive by having students provide a breath sample on a roadside screening device, go through a mock Standardized Field Sobriety Test (SFST) exam followed by telling them they are under arrest.

I conclude my presentation by telling the students about that young driver who wrote me the letter. I then stop and bring that young driver out. For about 15 minutes, the students get to see and hear a peer telling them the consequence of making a bad driving choice. I tell the students that this driver made the wrong choice, but instead of letting it define the rest of her life, she made a better one — and standing in front of them to tell her story is part of that.

This presentation allows me to incorporate and remove subject matter when necessary. With the changes to marijuana laws coming in 2018, I have already started to incorporate more impaired-by-drug information into the presentation.

I know my presentation works. In Prince Edward Island, I have policed in two districts and have spoken in the district high schools annually and driver education courses monthly. I've had students and young drivers follow me into parking lots, just to tell me that they've made the right choice.

I'm positive that without the support of schools giving their valuable class time, students wouldn't have the opportunity to meet a police officer, interact with them and be provided with valuable information. It's much easier to make these students accountable for their life choices when they've all heard the message together at the same time. ■

P.E.I. RCMP



Cst. Stephen Duggan of Queens District, P.E.I., and Courteney Gordon speak to students about the consequences of making a bad choices, like driving impaired.

# SMALL TOWN, BIG EVENT

## OFFICERS PROVIDE LINK BETWEEN RESIDENTS AND G7 ORGANIZERS

By Paul Northcott

When it's your country's turn to host a massive international event that will be the focus of the world, one thing on your long to-do list is to keep the locals informed.

This year, from June 8-9, the G7 Summit will be held at Le Manoir Richelieu in La Malbaie, Que., which is located in the Charlevoix region.

To provide the most up-to-date information to local residents, organizers sent four police officers — two from the RCMP and two from the Sûreté du Québec — into La Malbaie last September. Their role is to act as a link between the community and the G7's Integrated Security Unit (ISU).

### MEET THE PEOPLE

La Malbaie Mayor Michel Couturier says the community relations officers have become well known in the town of about 9,000, which is about 140 kilometres north-east of Quebec City.

"I find all of the residents' questions have been answered and, in a community like ours, it's easy to start a rumour," says Couturier. "With their presence, there's no place for rumour."

One of the first things Cpl. Isabelle Michaud and Cst. Ann Marcotte — the RCMP's community-relations officers — did when they arrived was to correct any misconceptions about the summit.

"We opened our office and we invited people to come in and ask us questions about the security aspect," says Marcotte, noting there was speculation the perimeter fence around Le Manoir Richelieu would be enormous, businesses would be forced to close and some people would have to leave town. "We killed a lot of rumours. If we weren't here people would be wondering: What's going on?"

As well, the officers, who moved to the community for the summit, have held information sessions with a variety of local groups, completed interviews with media and held so-called coffee-with-a-cop sessions where they heard basic questions such as how can residents get around town during the summit.

"Sometimes it's really informal," says Michaud. "We're really about promoting awareness."

And when questions can't be answered, the pair sends off emails to the ISU's public affairs and communications officer for more information. "When the answers come back, we find the person and provide the response," says Michaud.

### WHAT ABOUT PROTESTS?

The event marks the first time President Donald Trump will set foot in Canada. During the summit, the controversial U.S. leader could act as a magnet — drawing protesters and activists to the region.

Michaud says she's fielded some questions about potential protests, but not because of the U.S. leader. "People just want to know where they [the protests] are going to be," she says.

During the summit, security officials have designated an area for peaceful protests near the town's museum and protected area.

The mayor notes that recent Canadian-hosted G7 summits, such as Huntsville,

Ont., in 2010 and Kananaskis, Alta., in 2002, experienced small demonstrations.

"It's more risky to have these things in big cities than here," Couturier says. "Here, we will have some protesters but I think maybe Quebec [City] will have more."

If anything, Couturier says people are happy to see all the G7 leaders in the region.

"I think the feeling is that the people are proud to receive an event like this. We have a long tradition here of hospitality . . . and we've developed a big tourism economy. To receive an event like this a confirmation the quality of our community," he says.

Couturier adds the community relations officers have done a lot of work to prepare everyone.

"The more we approach the event, I realize the importance of their ability to stay in touch with citizens of La Malbaie," he says.

When the summit ends, and all the leaders, media and protesters have left, the community-relations officers will stick around a little longer.

"We're going to stay behind and assess things," says Michaud. ■



Two G7 community relations officers chat with a resident about the upcoming summit in La Malbaie, Que.



# TALKING TERRORISM

## RESILIENCE PROTECTS AGAINST YOUTH RADICALIZATION

By Amelia Thatcher

When police visit schools and talk to communities, familiar topics like bullying, drugs and internet safety are often the focus. While these issues are important, broader topics such as terrorism often get pushed to the wayside.

The Ontario RCMP's Public Engagement Unit (PEU) is working hard to bring that national security discussion locally — with a focus on youth.

“We talk about domestic violence, gang violence, schoolyard violence, but we don't talk about political violence,” says Lamia Aston, a strategic analyst with PEU in the Greater Toronto Area and southwestern Ontario. “We need to address that vulnerability, especially when it comes to youth.”

In Ontario, the RCMP takes a secondary role when it comes to law enforcement. Everyday policing duties like traffic stops, responding to calls and neighbourhood patrols are carried out by the municipal and provincial police of jurisdiction. The RCMP steps in when police come across files that deal with national issues — like terrorism.

Regional Integrated National Security Enforcement Teams (INSETs) led by the RCMP investigate criminal acts of terrorism and extremism in Canada. The PEU is a public engagement branch of Ontario's regional INSET based in Toronto. They work closely with local police of jurisdiction to build community relationships.

“We're delivering the right message and tools to the right people to build trust and prevent radicalization,” says Supt. Lise Crouch, the assistant criminal operations officer in charge of southwestern Ontario's INSET. “We're starting community-led, police-supported, sustainable grassroots initiatives.”

### COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

When the PEU first began in 2005, they worked hard to get themselves known in the communities around Toronto. Networking and building connections were the main priorities for the small unit, which was at first poorly received by the communities.

“It was a hostile environment for police because this was shortly after 9/11. The



The RCMP's Public Engagement Unit works with communities in southwestern Ontario to help prevent radicalization to violence, with a focus on building resilience in youth.

Courtesy of Ontario RCMP INSET

communities were very suspicious,” says Cpl. Param Dhillon, the non-commissioned officer in charge of the PEU. “The first step was just letting people know who we are, and what we do.”

Since the team's focus is engagement, they had to let residents know that they weren't there to spy on people. They had to articulate that they were there to inform, educate and prevent community members from going down the path of radicalization.

“Usually when police come in, the community assumes it's for intelligence gathering,” says Dhillon. “But we're not there to gather intelligence. We're mobilizing the community to get them to understand that this threat is real and it's not just the police who can solve this. We need the community.”

To build relationships with residents, the PEU connected with trusted community members: political leaders, religious leaders, school representatives, parents and anyone else who held well-respected positions. After five years of building up their presence and winning-over respected community leaders, Dhillon says residents slowly started coming around. “They began to see that our efforts were genuine.”

### PROTECTIVE FACTORS

After connecting with key community leaders, the next step for the PEU was closing the gap between the community and police. The unit began holding open town-hall meetings led by Supt. Lise Crouch, where residents

had the opportunity to question the RCMP on anything that was on their mind.

“The community appreciated that they were being heard,” says Crouch. “The fact that they could speak to the top command, closed the gap very quickly and helped us build that critical trust.”

The unit also actively holds workshops and events to inform community leaders about recruitment trends, how the internet and social media is used to leverage ideologies and how to notice signs of radicalization, especially in more vulnerable youth populations.

“Every child, when they go down the path to radicalization, they've somehow become disengaged,” says Dhillon. “Prevention means going back to basics, and building up protective factors, or positive influences, in young people.”

Now that the PEU has accomplished their initial goal of connecting to the community, they're homing-in on preventing radicalization in youth by spreading the word on protective factors. They're talking to community leaders about the importance of promoting strong family and social support, positive self-esteem, community engagement and critical decision making skills — all factors that can prevent youth from engaging in political violence down the road.

“Engaging as many as we can is the key to our success,” says Crouch. “We're working locally to build national resilience against terrorism.” ■



# INTERVENING IN TIME

## QUEBEC TEAM AIMS TO PREVENT SECURITY INCIDENTS

By Amelia Thatcher

On January 29, 2017, a man entered a mosque in Quebec City, Que., and opened fire, killing six people and injuring five others as they kneeled for their evening prayers.

In the hours following the shooting, the RCMP's National Security Intervention and Prevention Team in Quebec responded. Working alongside local police, the RCMP team provided support to the community and answered whatever questions they could.

"From a national security perspective, we were that point of contact for the community," says Supt. Martine Fontaine, criminal operations officer in-charge of organized crime and the National Security Intervention and Prevention Team in Quebec. "Our role was not about investigating the crime, we were there to support residents and those affected."

### INTERVENTION

The team has three primary roles when it comes to national security: intervention, training and awareness. The Quebec City mosque shooting is the most recent example of how the team intervenes following a potential national security incident.

"Communities, victims, families and the suspect's family all need to know information," says Sgt. Hakim Bellal, who's in charge of the Intervention and Prevention Team.

In the days following the shooting, the team met with the president of the mosque, community leaders and victim's families to explain how the investigation would be done. They were there to offer support and provide resources to community members.

Besides responding to national security incidents, much of the team's intervention work is proactive in nature. They support investigators by assessing individuals identified by families, friends, concerned neighbours, colleagues and other police agencies as posing a possible risk to national security. To evaluate the risk of each person, they use a variety of tools including the RCMP's Violent Extremist Risk Assessment tool.

Depending on the level of risk, the team works with an investigator to intervene and provide support and resources to suspects and their families. Their ultimate goal is to

prevent radicalization to violence and stop threats before they happen.

### TRAINING

On top of intervention work, the Intervention and Prevention Team also offers training sessions to other police agencies and private sector partners.

Their primary role is making sure local police are equipped to prevent, recognize and diffuse threats to national security. Through the three-day Counter Terrorism Information Officer (CTIO) program, officers learn about the indicators and warnings of potential terrorist activity. To date, the team has held 18 workshops, educating more than 1,000 new CTIOs.

The team's other priority is educating non-police agencies. They offer one-day critical infrastructure workshops to promote suspicious incident reporting. They also offer half-day national security awareness workshops to workers who regularly interact with the public. To date, they've trained employees at more than 70 organizations, including airport personnel, healthcare workers and approximately 800 officers at the Canada Border Services Agency in Quebec.

"We want to make sure everyone speaks the same language — we want every police officer to know the indicators of terrorism," says Meriem Rebbani-Gosselin, intervention co-ordinator for the team.

Last fall, the team also introduced

a one-and-a-half-day course on cultural competency for police and other partners. Its goal is to get officers to understand and address cultural differences when interacting with the public.

"It's about how to be sensitive to different cultures and religions when we're giving a service to them," says Bellal. "The population of Canada has changed, so we must adapt our policing approach."

### AWARENESS

Following the Quebec City shooting, reaching out to the community was simple for the team, because they had already established bonds with them in the years leading up to the incident through awareness initiatives.

"When you build strong relationships with the community and you have trust, then when good or bad things happen and you need them, they will be there," says Bellal. "They will be open, they will be supportive and they will help you."

The team regularly visits communities throughout the province, attending events, talking to youth and holding open town halls to discuss their role and bring awareness to national security.

"Early actions and detection will reduce the threat," says Fontaine. "And this has to be based in our communities. It's a shared responsibility, including the private sector, social agencies, schools, religious leaders, parents — everyone." ■



The RCMP's National Security Intervention and Prevention Team visits community events in Quebec to engage with residents and talk about what they do.



# COASTAL CONNECTION

## MARINE UNIT PROVIDES PRESENCE IN REMOTE AREAS

By Amelia Thatcher

When an orphaned bear cub was found roaming the First Nations village of Oweekeno, B.C., the community called the RCMP's West Coast Marine Services (WCMS) unit for help.

"The most important thing we do is show up and fill in during times when detachments are shorthanded," says Cst. Dave Kokesch, an officer on the WCMS's north patrol boat. "It's about being accessible to remote communities and building those positive relationships."

The WCMS unit patrols the west coast of British Columbia, between the Alaska and Washington state borders, visiting hard-to-reach communities like the 300-person coastal village of Oweekeno.

Kokesch and other WCMS officers happened to be nearby when they overheard concerned locals talking about the wandering bear cub. Residents didn't know what to do, so they asked the RCMP for help — on the condition that the cub wouldn't be put down.

Kokesch and the other officers quickly agreed and tracked down the bear cub. Using a peanut butter sandwich, they were able to coax the bear into a dog crate. They contacted wildlife conservation officers who flew in and airlifted the cub to a rehabilitation centre.

"When we finally got the cub in the cage, the community surrounded us, they couldn't believe it," says Kokesch. "It's not a huge effort on our part, but it made a big difference for this community. It's these types of things that wouldn't get done if we weren't visiting these remote places."

### REMOTE ACCESS

The WCMS unit consists of three 65-foot Catamaran boats: one patrolling the northern coast of the province, and two around the Vancouver Island/lower mainland area. Four officers work on each boat for seven days at a time, in rotation with other members of the 26-person unit.

As the operations commander, Sgt. Rod Pick co-ordinates the activity of all three boats in the unit. While some stops are de-



B.C. RCMP

The RCMP's West Coast Marine Services patrols along B.C.'s coast assisting detachments, doing community outreach and preventing criminal activity such as the bootlegging of alcohol.

termined in advance, the boats often respond to calls as they come in.

"First and foremost we assist detachments, whether that's general duty policing or just being that presence," says Pick. "We get into areas that detachments have a hard time getting into — usually remote places only accessible by boat."

The unit helps detachments handle crimes in peripheral communities, including assaults, mischiefs and liquor control. They also help with community outreach, visiting schools and putting on education initiatives.

"Even if we're just in a community for a day and passing through, we always hit the school. That's a big priority for us," says Kokesch. "There's always a gymnasium open, so we'll go play basketball or badminton and have an evening with the kids so they get to know us."

### BUSTED BOOTLEGGING

WCMS also works regularly with partner agencies including the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Transport Canada, the B.C. Ministry of Environment, Canada Border Services Agency and the Canadian Coast Guard to enforce the *Canada Shipping Act* and deal with other boat-related crimes. Recently, the unit has been working closely with BC Ferries to prevent the illegal bootlegging of alcohol.

"Once the alcohol gets to any community, that's when the issues start, so we're trying to stop that from happening," says Kokesch. "We're nipping it in the bud."

In July, he and several other RCMP officers went onto a ferry in plainclothes. They rode it for eight hours, looking to see if anyone was drinking or bringing alcohol onto the boat. Once they got close to the destination, they changed into uniform and took action, making several arrests.

"We want to keep up an image of professionalism, so having the RCMP onboard sends the message that this isn't a party cruise," says Angel Wahnnon, a security officer with BC Ferries. "It's quite honestly been night and day. It's made a noticeable difference. Now everyone thinks twice about drinking on the ship."

Whether it's the partner agencies the unit works with, or the communities it serves, the WCMS unit helps the RCMP make connections up and down British Columbia's coastline.

"We try to focus on the needs of these communities, and educate and listen to the locals in order to keep a handle on crime," says Kokesch. "One minute you can be working on an assault or a drug problem, the next minute you're rescuing a bear cub. We just do whatever needs to get done." ■

# SURVIVAL SKILLS

## OUTDOOR CAMPS BRIDGE GAP BETWEEN YOUTH, POLICE

By Paul Northcott

Some First Nation youth in British Columbia are taking advantage of outdoor programs to learn more about the land, their culture and themselves. But the camps also provide the RCMP with a chance to connect with the people and the communities they serve.

On the northwestern corner of Haida Gwaii, the Old Massett First Nation has for years organized the Rediscovery Camp, which teaches survival skills — such as building shelters, making fires, foraging and cooking — to adolescents.

Donavan Hunter, a member of the Haida Nation, attended the camp as a 12-year-old and is now a leader. He says giving First Nation youth the chance to spend time in the wilderness helps connect them to their history. And, he says, spending time around the Fire Circle gives campers a place to discuss their concerns.

Holding a feather at the fire means a camper could speak.

“At first some of the kids are quiet. But gradually they’d open up and by the third night you’d have to take it away from them,” jokes the 21-year old Hunter, who works as an educational assistant in Massett.

### MAKING CONNECTIONS

The goal is to instil pride in the participants while encouraging them to learn more about their Indigenous heritage. As well, it’s meant to steer at-risk youth towards good decision-making while linking First Nations youth and police.

The RCMP’s role is to support the camp leaders.

Cpl. Jonathan Spooner has attended the camps and says they provided him with insight into indigenous culture.

“For me it was important to gain an understanding and to hear about their culture and story,” says Spooner, who adds discrimination and relationships with police were discussed.

It was also apparent to Spooner that some campers didn’t have positive attitudes towards him. He says during the 2016 camp, one of the teens “was quite against police” and that was especially evident when he was

in uniform.

“I would notice a difference between when they saw me in regular civilian clothes and there was a bit of anxiety when I put on my uniform,” says Spooner, who noted that apprehension abated as the camp went on. “It was just a matter of him seeing me and hearing my story as a police officer but also seeing me as a family man and a father.”

### LIFE LESSONS EVERYWHERE

In Port Alberni, Cst. Pete Batt and Cpl. Jay Donahue developed a program called Survival Kids that teaches young people, including Indigenous youth, about first aid, shelter building and other outdoor skills.

It was created after Batt and Donahue determined that an anti-drug program wasn’t enough for young people in the community.

“We have to reach further than just visiting a classroom,” says Batt. “The programs we’ve been using assume a base level of resilience. We can build more resilience using outdoor skills.”

It’s his philosophy that life lessons are everywhere in today’s world and outdoor survival skills are one method that young people can learn them. During some ac-

tivities, participants carry in their own food — water, dried lentils and rice.

“One of the issues we see with youth in our communities, is what looks like an addiction to junk food: soda, chips and fatty foods. Twenty-four hours only eating lentils and rice re-enforces the life lesson: what we need versus what we want,” says Batt.

On the overnight hikes, the young people build their own shelters, light their fires and they even dig latrines. Youth get to see how their decisions affect outcomes and, in some cases, just how lucky they have it at home.

“This program opens up lines of communication between police and community partners, says Batt. “Youth begin to understand that if people don’t know that you need help, they’re not going to be able to give you the help you need.”

Initiatives like Rediscovery and Survival Kids let young people know that community leaders are there for them if they’re ever in need.

“You’re able to build relationships and when we get back to town and the campers see me, they come up to me, sometimes just to talk,” says Hunter, who hopes to be involved with the camp for many years. ■



This group of youth participated in a wilderness program on Diana Island designed to teach them survival skills and life lessons.



# ON HIGH ALERT

## RADIO BROADCAST INFORMS COMMUNITY DURING WILDFIRES

By Paul Northcott

As wildfires roared across the forests, grasslands and towns of British Columbia last summer, a dedicated unit of RCMP officers from Aboriginal Policing Services (APS) helped Indigenous communities under siege.

One of the teams was led by RCMP Sgt. Dee Stewart, acting officer in charge of B.C.'s APS section.

The team's role was to assist partner agencies and communities when evacuation orders were issued and lifted. The officers helped residents move in and out of affected areas. Teams would also deliver food, water and other much-needed supplies, and they would simply check on people to make sure they were safe.

No one can accurately predict if the fires will return with similar force this summer but, if they do, Stewart knows what affected Aboriginal communities will do.

"They're going to call on my APS unit," says Stewart, who's also a member of the Shuswap Nation's Bonaparte Indian Band. "Wherever the fire was last year, or where there was need, in our Aboriginal communities, we would follow the fire."

### DETERMINE NEEDS — THEN GO

During the wildfires, Stewart attended daily morning briefings to learn which communities were at risk. She would then update RCMP members and divide them into teams of two. They would then fan out to the communities most affected that day, sometimes driving hundreds of kilometres and working 12- to 16-hour shifts.

In late July, the residents of Alkali Lake, located south of Williams Lake or about 340 kilometres northwest of Kamloops, began returning home after an evacuation order was lifted. However, shortly after their arrival, the fire again came dangerously close.

"If the winds had shifted and the fire hit the grasslands, it could have quickly swept back, and we were concerned about how many residents were in the community," says Stewart.

So Cst. Scott Macleod and Cst. Daniel Cohen were dispatched to Alkali Lake on



RCMP

As wildfires roared across British Columbia last summer, RCMP officers co-ordinated evacuations and safety checks.

July 30 to determine how many residents had come back and to discuss emergency plans with local officials.

No sooner had police started door-knocking to find out how many band members were on site, they were asked to explain what was happening.

"There was a bit of a panic. People were asking, 'Why are the police going around asking questions,'" says Alkali Lake Band Councillor Neil Paul.

Cohen and Macleod acknowledged having officers canvassing residents raised alarm bells.

"I can see them putting two and two together and saying, 'Hey, is this an evacuation order?'" says Macleod.

To ease any worry, Macleod was invited on community radio to explain the situation, and after a brief broadcast, the pair were back touring the community of about 120 homes. Paul came along, too.

"After that, and at the end of the day, our presence helped because people were reassured we were there to help," says Cohen.

Stewart, who has been involved in Aboriginal policing for 14 years and in charge of the APS section for more than a year, says

it was vital to know what was happening and who was in the community.

"I think that the community was upset until they figured out who the RCMP members were and what their role was," she says. "It was a fluid situation that had a bit of a potential. The next day we had a meeting with the community to make sure the community was on high alert."

### SMALL GESTURES

Sometimes the little things help, too.

Stewart says last summer one community asked some of the unit's officers for help to organize a youth event.

"That sounds silly but it made such an impact with the youth and it is such a positive thing for our members and the community to see," says Stewart.

Stewart says the communities served by the unit want to see officers committed to the job.

"I think that our communities, and for me as a First Nations person, see the benefits of having First Nations police services members dedicated to our communities and addressing our community needs," she says. ■



# CAUGHT RED-HANDED

## COMMERCIAL THEFT PROJECT STOPS SHOPLIFTERS IN KELOWNA

By Amelia Thatcher

In 2016, Sgt. Greg Woodcox noticed a spike in the number of transient, homeless and drug-dependent downtown residents caught shoplifting on surveillance video in Kelowna, B.C.

“I knew almost everyone in the photos that were sent around the detachment for identification,” says Woodcox, officer in charge of Kelowna RCMP’s Downtown Enforcement Unit, which patrols the downtown core every day. “I wanted to find a way to use my knowledge to make a difference, and I wanted to hold people accountable for what they were doing.”

To bring more thieves to justice, Woodcox enlisted the help of Cst. Kyle Boffy and started the Kelowna Commercial Theft Project — a co-ordinated partnership to target chronic shoplifters.

Working with local major retailers such as Safeway, Save on Foods, Superstore and Walmart, Woodcox and Boffy created a group email connecting stores to each other, and to the RCMP.

They also held training days with store Loss Prevention Officers (LPOs), who are responsible for store security, preventing theft and handling other misdemeanors. Boffy talked to the LPOs about the requirements for building a case to go to court, and gave them a template to provide consistent evidence to police.

“In cases like shoplifting, where we rely on partners for evidence, we have to recognize the value they bring to the table and actively engage them,” says Boffy. “It makes the process a lot more streamlined.”

### PREVENTING THEFT

Along with helping identify shoplifting suspects, the Commercial Theft Project is also used proactively to prevent thefts. When cold and sinus medication kept disappearing off pharmacy shelves in Kelowna earlier this year, Boffy took notice.

“It’s something we keep an eye on because some medications contain pseudoephedrine — a stimulant drug that can be used to make meth,” he says.

Within the span of a week, the

detachment had logged multiple thefts of medications containing the stimulant, and determined the drugs were being targeted.

In an effort to stop the thefts, Boffy immediately reached out to partner retailers through the commercial theft group email. After a brief discussion, retailers made a decision to move the cold medication behind the pharmacy counter, and out of reach from criminals.

“When we see trends in thefts, this helps us address them before they get too large,” says Boffy. “The open lines of communication help us work proactively to stop crimes before they can happen again.”

### STREAMLINED IDENTIFICATION

Since Kelowna RCMP started the Commercial Theft Project in June 2017, suspect identification has skyrocketed to more than 80 per cent, up from 50 per cent. The group email, LPO training and Woodcox’s knowledge of the local transient population has resulted in more than 300 closed cases this year.

“There’s been murder, assault and fraud charges laid based on our LPO work and camera footage,” says Kyle Longbotham,

loss prevention manager for Loblaws in Kelowna. “Word has gotten out that if you’re trying to steal from Superstore or any other store on board, you’re going to get identified and caught.”

The project also helps keep LPOs safe, according to Longbotham. He says his store recently adopted a hands-off approach when dealing with shoplifters.

“We have 10 to 15 confrontations with people every week, and now we let them go if they’re violent or run away because we know Boffy and Woodcox will be able to catch them down the line,” says Longbotham.

The project has also improved relationships between the RCMP and retailers. With all shoplifting tips going directly to Woodcox and Boffy through the commercial theft email, retailers know that each case will be followed up.

“If they send me a photo, within a couple minutes I often know who it is, and I’ll have someone in custody within the week,” says Woodcox. “It gives us credibility. It shows retailers and the public that whether it’s for a major crime or minor crime, the Kelowna RCMP cares. If you call us, something will be done.” ■



Kelowna RCMP officers meet with Loss Prevention Officers from local retailers as part of the Commercial Theft Project, which targets chronic shoplifters.

# just THE FACTS

## CANNABIS



*Cannabis, also known as marijuana, is a psychoactive drug grown from the Cannabis plant. While consuming, possessing and producing cannabis without a prescription or licence remains a crime in Canada, laws governing the recreational use of the drug will be changing as early as this year. Before changes take place, take a look at the current state of cannabis in Canada, and worldwide.*

Cannabis is the number one cultivated, produced, trafficked and consumed illicit drug worldwide, according to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2016. The most recent data from the World Drug Report states that North America accounts for 37 per cent of seized cannabis globally.

In Canada, possessing, producing, trafficking, importing, and exporting cannabis is still illegal and subject to offences under the *Controlled Drugs and Substances Act* (CDSA), other than as specifically exempted for medical purposes.

In 2016, the *Access to Cannabis for Medical Purposes Regulations* came into effect in Canada. This legislation replaces previous laws governing access to medical marijuana, which date back to 2001. Under the regulations, Canadians who have a prescription can purchase cannabis for medical purposes from licensed producers, grow their own cannabis, or designate

someone to grow on their behalf.

In Canada, the number of licenced facilities producing cannabis for medical purposes nearly doubled in the second half of 2017 — to 84 in December from 44 in May — according to Health Canada data. The surge comes in the wake of the agency's efforts to streamline its approval process.

In 2015, twelve per cent or 3.6 million Canadians reported they used cannabis in the last 12 months. Past-year cannabis use was more prevalent among males (15 per cent) than females (10 per cent), according to the Canadian Tobacco, Alcohol and Drugs Survey (CTADS), 2015.

Past-year cannabis use is more prevalent among youth aged 15 to 19 (21 per cent) and young adults aged 20 to 24 (30 per cent) than among adults aged 25 or older (10 per cent) according to CTADS, 2015.

Cannabis remains the top domestically produced drug in Canada, according to the RCMP. Domestic production of marijuana exceeded \$4.9 billion in 2017, according to Statistics Canada.

Fifty-eight per cent of police-reported CDSA offences were cannabis-related. The other 42 per cent were for offences relating to the importation, exportation, trafficking, production and possession

of drugs and narcotics such as cocaine, heroin, crystal meth, PCP, LSD and ecstasy, according to the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics (CCJS), 2016.

Cannabis-related offences (including possession, trafficking, production and distribution) decreased by 11 per cent nationally from 2015 to 2016. This is the fifth consecutive year that the rate has declined, according to CCJS, 2016.

Possession is the most common cannabis offence, next to trafficking, according to Statistics Canada. The rate of cannabis possession declined 12 per cent nationally from 2015 to 2016.

Driving under the influence of marijuana is a crime. Police officers and trained Drug Recognition Experts can determine if drivers are under the influence of a drug by using the Standard Field Sobriety Test and/or the Drug Recognition Evaluation. Penalties include licence suspension, fines, criminal charges and jail time.

Public Safety Canada conducted public opinion research on drug-impaired driving in 2017. The study showed 56 per cent of Canadians have consumed cannabis at some point in their lives. Among those who have, 28 per cent reported they've operated a vehicle while under the influence.

There were 3,098 drug-impaired driving violations in 2016, which is 343 more than the previous year — an 11 per cent increase.

In 2016, 96 per cent of police-reported impaired driving incidents involved alcohol while four per cent involved drugs.

In Canada, penalties for those convicted of participating in the cultivation and distribution of illicit marijuana can range from monetary fines, to forfeiture of assets, to incarceration.

— Compiled by Amelia Thatcher



# PINCHER CREEK

## HISTORIC DETACHMENT FACES MODERN CHALLENGES

*Every RCMP detachment has its own characteristics, challenges, people and attractions. In this issue, we launch a new section to profile these more than 700 police detachments, starting with Pincher Creek in Alberta. We hope to highlight the variety of the work and the passion and dedication of RCMP employees serving in communities across Canada.*

**By Paul Northcott**

Despite serving a low-crime region in south-western Alberta that boasts some of the most iconic Canadian scenery, police officers at the RCMP's Pincher Creek detachment still deal with criminal activity and cope with natural disasters, such as wildfires, that could hit almost anywhere across the country.

"The appeal of Pincher Creek is working in a small town. It's a friendly, very pro-police community. And the crime level here is fairly low, which is nice," says Sgt. Mark Harrison, commander of the 11-member detachment. "But a lot of the property thefts, we believe, are related to supporting the drug trade because of the increase in fentanyl and opioid use."

The detachment is a little more than 200 kilometres south of Calgary and offers spectacular vistas of the Rocky Mountains to the west and Prairie farmland to the east. It's

also home to Waterton Lakes National Park, which attracted more than 800,000 visitors last year.

About 8,500 Albertans live in the area — in small towns, ranches or farms.

In what might be described as a unique aspect of local policing, Cpl. Jeff Feist says the high winds — which can often reach up to 120 km/h in the town and even stronger in the mountains — are one of the challenges of working in the area. Feist, who's worked at the detachment for six years, says those gales can blow transport trucks off roads and fan forest fires in the summer. A huge blaze hit the area last year.

On Aug. 30, 2017, a lightning strike just across the border in British Columbia sparked a wildfire that would become known as the Kenow fire, destroying vast swaths of Alberta forests and some property.

"It was the worst drought, dry conditions that Pincher Creek had ever seen," says Feist, whose detachment called in extra members to help out with the emergency response.

Fuelled by arid conditions and strong winds, the fire eventually started to move toward Waterton and the Municipal District of Pincher Creek, arriving on Sept. 11.

"Normally there's not much going on, just visitors relaxing. But it got pretty serious

for a while," says Harrison.

By Sept. 12, the fire had engulfed more than 30,000 hectares in the province and evacuation orders were in place.

"With the heavy smoke and the increase of emergency vehicles in the park, most of the visitors departed prior to the evacuation," Harrison says. "We had 20 members on the scene helping with the evacuation. It was a good team effort for sure."

Five homes were destroyed along with some other buildings, but no lives were lost.

Detachment newcomer Cst. Tanner Flinn, who graduated from Depot last spring and arrived at the Pincher Creek detachment in May, was put to work going door to door. He says he enjoys living and working the region, especially the recreational opportunities, and hopes to continue policing in Alberta for years to come.

"I'm still new to this," says Flinn, 24, from Jasper, Ont. "I like the small-town rural policing, getting the opportunity to meet people and enjoy the outdoor experiences."

Those elements have been relished by RCMP members, and their area predecessors, for more than 140 years.

The North-West Mounted Police came to southern Alberta in 1874 and were responsible for naming Pincher Creek.

Although small in numbers most of the year, the population of Pincher Creek explodes in the spring and summer as tourists arrive to explore Waterton Lakes, which is also the location of a seasonal RCMP detachment — and Canada's oldest. Waterton detachment was opened in 1928.

From May to September, four additional members are posted to Waterton to police the park. Lost passports and illegal border crossings are some of the issues they contend with. But many visitors want one thing from the RCMP: to see Mounties wearing red serge.

"The tourists think the iconic Mountie is something incredible and something unique and they are always looking for that," says Feist. "They [the four Waterton members] can't walk down the street without a picture being asked of them. The guys this past summer wore their red serge almost daily." ■

RCMP



Cst. Sherri Flundra of Pincher Creek detachment examines a map at a southern Alberta road block on Sept. 12, 2017. Evacuation orders were in place for the area because of a wildfire.



# TEACHING A DOG NEW TRICKS

## FENTANYL DETECTION NOW PART OF DOG TRAINING

By Paul Northcott

Handlers with the RCMP's Police Dog Services unit spend years preparing themselves and their canine partners physically and mentally for the rigours of police work. It's a commitment to training that never stops.

Preparations are constant and fluid because when a team is called to search for a missing person or for drugs, no two situations are the same.

"There is not a 100 per cent safe way to do police work. We're exposed to different stuff all the time and knowledge is power when it comes to dealing with things," says S/Sgt. Gary Creed, senior trainer at the the RCMP Police Dog Service Training Centre (PDSTC) in Innisfail, Alta. — about 140 kilometres north of Calgary.

That philosophy has never been more relevant with the emergence of the dangerous synthetic opioid fentanyl. The drug has challenged law enforcement agencies because of increased seizures and fatal overdoses. As well, in 2016, several police officers were exposed to the drug.

### SNIFFING OUT FENTANYL

Because it's also a threat to dogs, Creed started asking a few years ago if there was a way dogs could sniff out the powder-like substance without putting themselves and their handlers at risk. As a former explosives dog handler, he knew accommodations were made in that training so the animals could safely detect bombs.

So after brainstorming with Sgt. Eric Boechler, of B.C.'s Federal Serious Organized Crime Section, they determined the answer was yes and, last year, the RCMP developed and tested what would become an award-winning technique to detect fentanyl.

First, clandestine lab technicians combined two milligrams of pure fentanyl with 125 mg of distilled water and then placed 10 drops of the compound on a swath of cloth — something that resembled a make-up pad. Three dogs were involved in the initial testing and Creed admits, "we were prepared for the worst-case scenario." Medical and veterinary personnel were on site in case something went wrong.



Sgt. Shaunna Lewis, a trainer at the Police Dog Service Training Centre in Innisfail, Alta., safely presents fentanyl to a police service dog.

"We didn't know what we were up against and we had to make sure they were smelling fentanyl, and that's what they were detecting," he says.

Some real-world proof the training worked came a couple of months later in Vancouver when, during a traffic stop, one of the original three dogs found thousands of fentanyl pills in a car.

"Now we actually had an operational case that proved the dogs were able to detect the fentanyl," says Creed, who notes all handlers possess the antidote — naloxone.

In November 2017, the PDSTC received an award for its fentanyl-detection work at the 2017 Homeland Security Awards in the United States.

### TRAINING AND SACRIFICE

It takes years to train police service dogs. When they are less than one year old, German Shepherd pups are sent to live with handlers, or potential handlers, to be trained and to become accustomed to living in a community. There are repeated trips to the PDSTC for more intense training and once they are full-fledged members, the dogs are re-certified, or validated, annually.

None of it could happen without one crucial element — family support.

"Any individual who wants to join the Police Dog Service in the RCMP should know it's a lifestyle and family has to be on board," says Sgt. Dave McClarty, program manager with Police Dog Services in Saskatchewan. "It'd be very difficult if a person's family wasn't."

Cpl. Fraser McInnis, who works with his canine partner Axel on Newfoundland's west coast, sacrificed time with his two young boys to complete and continue his training. He was away from home when both of his sons were infants.

"I wouldn't be able to do it without my wife," he says. "You know, you miss birthdays and on Christmas Day (2017) I was called out for a missing hunter. But when you get that call, you've got to put things down and go."

Axel, like McClarty's police service dog Denver and all RCMP dogs trained to identify drugs, have received the training to detect fentanyl.

"These are dogs that are already trained up. It took them a day to learn the brand new smell of fentanyl and to respond positively," says Creed. "I don't know how stinky fentanyl is, because I've never been brave enough to smell it, but it must be because it seems like it's really easy for the dogs to find." ■

RCMP





# PINPOINTING PATTERNS

## CRIME ANALYST LINKS CRIMES TO CLOSE CASES

*To the untrained eye, crimes can seem sporadic, following no rhyme or reason. It's RCMP crime analyst Kim Audette's job to make sense of it. In 2013 she helped establish Saskatchewan's first Crime Analysis Unit, a data-led team that analyzes crime trends, geographic patterns and human behaviour. Amelia Thatcher spoke to Audette to see how she links crimes to help crack cases.*

### WHAT IS CRIME ANALYSIS?

Crime analysis is about leveraging data and evidence to identify hotspots for crime. It's about being predictive in determining where crime is more likely to occur and where suspects are more likely to target. We use that knowledge to help front-line officers with resourcing — informing them where police should be deployed on any given shift.

### HOW OFTEN DO YOU LOOK FOR PATTERNS?

We monitor occurrences on a daily basis, especially for things like property crime. For example, we'll look at where the break and enters to businesses are happening, or where vehicles are being stolen. Was there a cluster of thefts in a specific neighbourhood?

Depending on what we find, we determine what crime-prevention tactics would work best in specific areas.

### WHAT TACTICS DO YOU USE?

We do a lot of MO — or *modus operandi* — analysis, which looks at a criminal's habits and patterns. For example, how they enter a building, what sorts of things they steal, and whether it's a crime of opportunity or a specific target.

If there's a known suspect, we'll look up their history in intelligence databases. If there's no known suspect, we'll try to find one by doing detailed searches in PROS — the Police Reporting and Occurrence System that officers document crimes in. We'll also make connections with municipal partners and other detachments to see if they've had similar crimes in their areas or know a possible suspect.

Then we try to find like occurrences in the same area around the same dates and times. We'll make timelines and maps, look at a criminal's direction of travel and link crimes by evidence and by MO. We work pretty closely with investigators to add new info and pursue leads until we solve the case.

### ARE THERE ANY CHALLENGES?

Data integrity is one of the largest challenges. We are limited by what's been reported. If the information isn't there, we can't make linkages.

Another challenge is the geography of Saskatchewan. In the north, most of the offenders are known because the communities are smaller. In the south, we get a lot of travelling criminals who go along the major highways. Those cases are the most challenging because you don't have a suspect. It's hard to connect a crime that happened on the Alberta border to a crime that's near the Manitoba border — you wouldn't necessarily look at those and think they're linked, but it's only an eight-hour drive. Oftentimes, investigators don't look beyond their own detachment borders. That's my job.

### DO YOU HAVE AN EXAMPLE OF A CASE?

We recently had an instance where there were more than 200 break and enters across British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba. It began with one detachment reaching out for help with repeat break and enters to a golf course. Then we found out the neighbouring detachment also had one. It just grew from there — I quickly linked about 40 other cases that fit the same MO.

Soon we were able to identify a suspect. Shortly after, we linked him to several vehicle thefts — he would use the stolen vehicles to get from place to place. We found receipts in one of his stolen trucks, so we determined he was staying in local motels when doing the break-ins. He lived off the proceeds of his crimes and would travel around the country golfing.

Eventually we obtained a warrant for his phone records, which helped us pinpoint his locations and match them to the location and time of the crimes. He was hard to locate because he was nomadic. It wasn't until he bought a vehicle and registered it in his name that we were able to catch him, arrest him and obtain a search warrant. He hadn't been on anyone's radar, but with good investigative work and analysis we were able to obtain a federal sentence. ■

Scott McGregor, RCMP



RCMP crime analyst Kim Audette helps investigators in Saskatchewan link crimes that are connected.



# POLICE AS TEACHERS

## SCHOOL PROGRAMS BUILD RELATIONSHIPS WITH YOUTH

By Amelia Thatcher

Once per week, Cst. Rita Gillis sits down with a Grade 4 class in Okotoks, Alta., and reads them a story.

“For a lot of kids, having a police officer in the classroom is new,” says Gillis, a school liaison officer at the Okotoks RCMP detachment. “They’re not used to having police officers teaching material to them.”

As part of the WITS Program, officers like Gillis use books to teach elementary kids about how to cope with bullying. Through literature and discussion, they teach children about four key conflict resolution strategies that the program is based on — walk away, ignore, talk it out and seek help (WITS).

Last year, Gillis helped bring the WITS Program into St. Mary’s Elementary School. It was so successful that the program has now expanded to five Grade 4 classes.

“It’s totally opened up a new line of communication,” says Gillis. “Having that early relationship with kids is key. It makes it easier to engage with them later on in junior high and high school.”

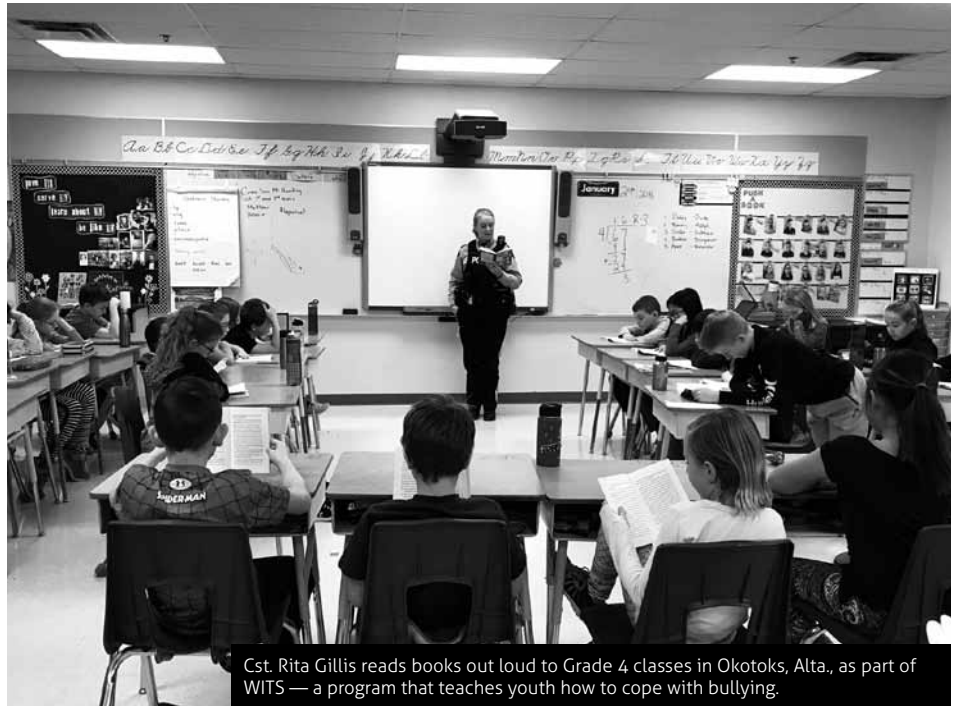
### USING YOUR WITS

WITS is supported by the RCMP Foundation — a charitable organization that initiates, develops and supports child and youth programs across Canada. RCMP detachments often use programs supported by the foundation as a way of engaging youth to prevent them from going down the path of criminality later in life.

The WITS Program helps build police-youth relationships by having officers interact with kids during class time. Schools choose books that reflect anti-bullying messages, and police officers come in to read them out loud during monthly visits. Afterwards, officers engage the kids in activities to discuss what they’ve learned.

On her most recent trip to a classroom, Gillis read a book that talked about how it’s important to see differences between people as something worth celebrating. Afterwards, she paired kids up and got them to brainstorm things they had in common, and things that made them unique.

“The level of excitement and par-



Cst. Rita Gillis reads books out loud to Grade 4 classes in Okotoks, Alta., as part of WITS — a program that teaches youth how to cope with bullying.

RCMP

icipation is amazing,” she says. “I saw conversations that normally wouldn’t happen — kids saying things like ‘I didn’t know you liked sushi!’ and discovering new things about their classmates. It brings a sense of unity and togetherness in the classroom.”

Gillis says she likes how the WITS Program encourages police to have conversations with youth.

“Kids often envision police officers as having a hard exterior, so to let them know that we’re just people is so beneficial,” she says. “It’s broken down barriers.”

### KIDS, COPS AND COMPUTERS

The RCMP Foundation also supports the Kids, Cops and Computers program for youth in middle schools. Much like the WITS Program, Kids Cops and Computers is all about setting youth up for success by teaching them about healthy lifestyle choices.

RCMP Cst. Rebecca Dingle runs the program in a Grade 7 class at Brooks Junior High School in Brooks, Alta. For the past three years, she’s used the program as a way to engage youth in the community.

“If you give kids the tools to succeed early in life, it can prevent criminal activity later on,” says Dingle. “Kids are on comput-

ers, cellphones and social media all the time. Our goal is to educate them on safe, smart, healthy habits.”

As part of the program, each youth receives a laptop computer to use throughout the school year on academic assignments.

“Kids are digital natives and when they’re engaged with technology in the classroom it can improve their level of work,” says Jim Burchell, principal of Brooks Junior High School. “It gives kids who don’t have technology in their home an opportunity to have a level playing field with some of their peers.”

Dingle visits the Grade 7 class about once per month. Each visit, she talks about topics like cyberbullying, sexting and self-esteem. She also provides information on how to report online harassment, how to protect social media profiles and what’s appropriate to post online.

If kids successfully complete the program, they officially earn ownership of the laptops at the end of the year.

“Giving kids access to technology helps them succeed and excel in the things they want to do,” says Dingle. “We hope that through this opportunity, kids can be leaders in their schools, their communities and online.” ■