THUNDER BAY NEIGHBOURHOOD SURVEYS

A Youth Perspective on Children’s Safety

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“They think that giving us a basketball court will make all our problems go away.”
– Minority youth at ‘The Roots of Youth Violence’ consultations.

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THUNDER BAY NEIGHBOURHOOD SURVEYS - 2011

Introduction: Need for project:

Between July and early September 2011, the Regional Multicultural Youth Council (RMYC) visited eight Thunder Bay neighbourhoods to talk about safety concerns, and what could be done to better protect children. This initiative was a follow-up to the 2008 Community Profiles Survey where the Youth Council organized community consultations on safety priorities.

The need for this project was prompted by Thunder Bay’s Crime Prevention Council’s recent recommendation not to introduce curfews to protect children by controlling the movement of unsupervised minors at night. A decade ago, concerns about increasing incidents on youth violence were identified as a growing problem. A subsequent study by the RMYC recommended that curfews were necessary to protect children from harming each other after hours, being harmed, and reduce the risk of unsupervised kids committing crime after dark.

In rendering the decision not to introduce a curfew in the city, the Crime Prevention Council, used information from a survey primarily directed at the youth. Naturally, a majority of them were against the idea. Since curfews target minors under 16 years old, they fall under Ontario’s Child and Family Act, and it is parents and guardians who are responsible for their well-being. According to the Act, children under 16 years are prohibited from loitering in public places between midnight and 6:00 a.m., unless accompanied by a parent or guardian. Such children may be apprehended without warrant and taken home or to a place of safety. This implies a curfew for minors, unless under the supervision of parents or guardians.

In addition, the City of Thunder Bay adopted a Children’s Charter in June 2004, which confirms that: “Families are responsible for raising their children”. Therefore, while it was important for the Thunder Bay Crime Prevention Council to get the opinions of youths on curfews, for children under 16 years of age, it should have been the parents/guardians having a say on supervising children and keeping them safe at night.

It is in this context that the RMYC wanted to consult with parents on the City’s decision on curfews, as well as get feedback from children and youth after they knew that it was the law in Ontario that parents were responsible for what time kids should be home and indoors.
Plan of Action: Areas/Neighbourhoods:

In the summer of 2008 the RMYC conducted a survey on the safety concerns of parents in well-known high risk areas across Thunder Bay. The neighbourhoods targeted were: Academy, Limbrick, Windsor, and the city’s South-core. The areas were identified based on media reports and the youths’ concerns about problems such as crime, violence, arson, gangs, graffiti, vandalism and assaults by delinquent kids roaming around alone late at night. The findings were released in a well-publicized report that received media headlines: “City Falls Apart”. Issues covered in the report are the reasons the City of Thunder Bay created a Crime Prevention Council, and featured prominently in the last (2010) municipal elections.

This year, the RMYC wanted to conduct a follow-up study to see if conditions in the same city neighbourhoods had improved. County Park, Crestwood Townhomes – Georgina Bay and Holt Place in Wesfort, were also added to the list of areas to be surveyed. In addition, Castlegreen was included because all neighbourhoods we visited cited it as an ideal place to live. Therefore the Youth Council decided to visit the area to find out what is going on, and learn first hand what residents were doing to create and maintain such a positive image.

The RMYC used the same strategy that was successfully applied for the first survey. Visits would be made to the high risk neighbourhoods to meet people and gather information on current problems and priorities, children’s safety, and possible solutions. To get many families to participate, the Youth Council organized barbecues and games for the kids. The youth designed promotional posters and leaflets that were dropped off in mailboxes of all houses in targeted neighbourhoods two days before the events.

On the actual day, teams of youths trained to interact with people, handle food, supervise kids, and gather information were deployed. There were large sheets of white paper with different headings by the BBQ. Markers were handed out to those who came to write comments before proceeding to enjoy the hotdogs and juice. For those who could not write, the youth were glad to do it for them. The Youth Council also sent teams of youths door-to-door with survey sheets to interview those who stayed home.

The following is a summary of the situation in 2008, compared to our observation and feedback on conditions in 2011. Our recommendations and a full documentation of the neighbourhood surveys are covered later in the report.
ANALYTICAL OBSERVATIONS: 2008 COMPARED TO 2011

The following is what we saw and heard this year (2011), compared to the situation in 2008.

1. Problems involving public intoxication, drug dealing, drug abuse (needles everywhere) loitering, assaults, muggings, gangs, robberies and crime in general have increased compared to 2008. The numbers can be confirmed by police statistics and media reports. Thunder Bay south-core, businesses such as Take a Hike and the International Dance Academy adjacent to our Youth Centre have moved out for security reasons. The city acknowledges the problem, and has responded by creating the Thunder Bay Drug Strategy Committee, and a Healthy Communities Steering Committee.

2. There are more store robberies today than in 2008. Mac's convenience stores, and pharmacies around the south-core neighbourhood have been targeted. Syringes are now another weapon to commit robbery. Security is present in more businesses.

3. Thunder Bay City Council now acknowledges safety as a priority and has formed a Crime Prevention Council. The group (where the RMYC has a seat) met for the first time early this year (2011). This is a proactive move after initial denial of the problem by the then City Mayor. Please refer to The Chronicle Journal, September 17, 2008 newspaper article: "City falling apart, says new report...Council accused of missing trouble in neighbourhoods...City Department tuned in: Mayor", at the end of this report. Feedback at the barbecues reveals that the Crime Prevention Council lost credibility by rejecting curfews, but people are still determined to have their input on the matter. The City has also interested to create an anti-graffiti committee to address this problem.

4. In 2008, there were Neighbourhood Police offices in high risk areas. Today, they are gone, and the Neighbourhood Watch program has been dismantled. The demise of these services has contributed to safety problems, and even university students, who should be exemplary, have now joined the fray. While policing is not the answer to root causes of crime, violence, and so forth, their presence on site, the Neighbourhood Watch or Block parents are deterrents to crime and criminal activity. Neighbourhood Police Officers also helped to foster good relations between the police and local residents, and since they were closed, mistrust of police in neighbourhoods is growing.
Our last survey associated abusing alcohol and drugs to boredom, for excitement, recreation, to numb pain, cope with stress, and to deal with social problems. Gangs and traffickers were the main dealers, but this summer we heard of young people, laid-off workers and ordinary unemployed folks selling drugs and prescription pills for money to live on — buy food, pay hydro bills, telephone/cell-phone, cable, etc. Dealing drugs, bootlegging and prostitution have become a way of life for those who cannot get jobs, welfare or access social assistance to make ends meet. The gap between the have and have-nots is widening. There are now more people on the city's $100,000.00 Sunshine List, while lines at food-banks and shelters continue to grow. There are also more kids today who consider food, shelter and safety as priorities than playing ball or recreation.

More people now see harm reduction as a life and cost saving strategy to help addicts. There is general acceptance that prescribed Methadone is a 'less harmful alternative' compared to harder drugs. This also reduces crime and robberies committed by addicts to feed the habit. The abuse of drugs and alcohol in Thunder Bay is among the highest in the province, and there are calls for more detox beds, treatment facilities, and half-way houses. There are also volunteers willing to help with mentoring and home supports to reduce relapses, help to suppress addictions and break the cycle.

More young girls working on the streets today, and they are getting younger—some eleven years old. In 2008, street workers were confined to the Simpson Street area. Today, they have expanded north around the Casino and Court Street. There are more incidents where spoons, raw eggs and other projectiles have been thrown at street workers. These new developments have prompted the Thunder Bay Police to open a specific occurrence file (#P11027242) to report incidents where objects have been thrown from moving vehicles. This just happened this year.

We also heard of young girls having babies to get child benefits and jump the queue for subsidized housing. This was hardly mentioned in 2008. It is turning into a lifestyle to be a teen mom (without a steady boyfriend or the intention of getting married) in order to get social assistance and survive in the city. Some are having the second, third, or more kids to get more money to feed their addictions. When Children’s Aid Societies are involved, the young mothers are more concerned about loss of income rather than the well-being of the kids and the breaking of child/parent bonding.
9. This year, Castlegreen was constantly mentioned as an ideal neighbourhood. More people we talked with are aware of what a good community is, what their community should be, and the kind of neighbourhood they would like live in.

10. There is acknowledgement that more Aboriginal people are moving to the city from surrounding reserves. Thunder Bay is surrounded by three Treaty Areas. Robinson Superior 1850 Treaty (13 reserves) east of the city, Nishnawbe Aski Nation Treaty #9, (49 reserves) to the north, and Grand Council Treaty #3 (28 reserves) to the west. Therefore Thunder Bay serves as a regional centre for a total of ninety (90) reserves.

The rapid growth of the Aboriginal population is confirmed by the latest Social Profile report released by the Lakehead Social Planning Council. Between 2001 and 2006, the city’s Aboriginal population grew by 22.6% compared to only 1% for non-Aboriginals. The Aboriginal population is very young with about forty percent under 19 years of age, and almost 50 per cent 25 years old and under.

Most reserves are under-serviced and people are moving to the city to access basic services—healthcare, running water, education, other Canadians take for granted. Youths come to attend secondary schools because they are none at home. Families migrate to escape Third World conditions—poverty, crime, over-crowding, addictions, violence, unemployment and hopelessness. Some offenders are sent away for security reasons or rehabilitation. Many end up destitute and homeless and rely on emergency shelters and food banks. Some sleep on streets in summer, and any warm spaces such as coffee shops, bank machine vestibules, etc open all night in winter.

11. Misconceptions about the First Nations people in regards to treaty rights, taxation, education, hunting, etc. still exist. In spite of Prime Minister Harper’s Apology in Parliament on behalf of the nation on June 11, 2008, many non-Aboriginal people we talked with have not taken to heart the legacy of residential schools and intergenerational impacts on children today. The mental damage to families and on-going harm to children and youth continue to have adverse social implications. Poverty and addictions create negative lifestyles perpetuated by preventable diseases such as fetal alcohol syndrome/effects and so forth. This feeds into self-sustaining negative cycles of crime, violence, sniffing, among high numbers of Aboriginal people leading to stereotypes and racial profiling.
Aboriginal people moving to the city are just changing location, and bring the reserve lifestyle. Behavior, mannerisms, beliefs, attitudes, values and morals remain intact unless there is intervention to adapt to the new environment. A lack of supports to reduce culture-shock, and no services to provide character and urban lifeskills for integration into a multicultural community, add to the differences that fuel racism. Racist incidents such as the painting of "Kill Indians" on a billboard at Intercity Mall last year, Aboriginal students being banned from the same mall, racist incidents at bus terminals, and a series of reports and comments in the press reflect an increase on racism. The police have also been accused of racial profiling and failing to rise above the racist fray.

12. There is praise for the new Mayor, City Manager, and Child Advocate visiting fly in First Nations communities for the first time in 2011 to see living conditions first-hand. The main remarks were why it took so long for city leadership to become familiar and understand the situation on reserves where many new residents are coming from. People welcome having the Aboriginal Liaison at City Hall since the fall of 2008, and the creation of the City's Advisory Committee on Anti-racism in 2009, where the RMYC has a seat. These are welcome developments many feel are long due.

13. Four Aboriginal students have died while attending school in the city during the past two years. A total to nine students from remote fly-in reserves have died since 2000, after Dennis Franklin Cromarty First Nations High School (DFC) opened. Seven of the students were from DFC, including Reggie Bushie, a 15 year old student from Poplar Hill First Nation whose body was pulled from the McIntyre River on November 1, 2007. A Coroner's Inquest was called after Reggie's death, but this is yet to take place due to legal proceedings precipitated by the absence of Aboriginal representation on Jury rolls.

The latest four deaths occurred in high risk neighbourhoods covered in this report. From consultations with the youth, a lack of safe places to hang out, and unsuitable boarding homes contribute to the problems. At the last Raising Aboriginal Voices Youth Symposium attended by over 270 Aboriginal youth in the city, racism was a top priority. In spite of our recommendations, there is still no formal orientation program to welcome Aboriginal students to city schools to bond and share urban survival skills, no safe places such as youth drop-in centres to hang out, no youth detox, youth shelter, halfway houses for homeless youth, or special residences for boarding students.
14. The neglect of facilities such as playgrounds continues to be a problem today. Most equipment in kids’ play-areas has been not been refurbished or up-graded. There has even been talk about closing public swimming pools and some hockey skating rinks. Many poor people feel that not much will change because of who they are and where they live. They believe that the issue is not a lack of money, but commitment. They are aware of the huge cost over-runs at Chippewa Park, and the Waterfront that have been easily covered. The recent approval of $900,000.00 to an out-of-town artist for two columns of steel art for Marina Park was mentioned in the context that such an amount of money could easily provide new state of the art playground equipment for all community housing projects. People like the Skate Park at the Waterfront and the Pro Kids program. But residents in the neighbourhoods feel they are out of reach due to distance and cost of transportation.

15. Parents and children reported that bullying is getting worse. From the comments, kids are being constantly bullied and threatened by their peers. The situation is common at playgrounds and in schools where youth congregate. Cyber bullying is also a growing problem that occurs in the privacy of the home. We heard of some native, racialized, gay, and poor kids afraid to go to school or to parks for fear of bullies.

There are more calls for parental supervision when kids are outside or using playgrounds to help to shield children from bullies. Implementing a curfew will stop kids from wandering outside alone at night and ensure that children are safe indoors after-dark. Reports of youths being jumped at night, assaults and altercations adds to the RMYC’s arguments to create youth centres in neighbourhoods. While there will still be risks of harm, the vulnerability is much reduced when activities are organized locally, and children no not need to travel far away to participate. Introducing Neighbourhood Watch or Block Parents Programs will certainly help to reduce the incidents of bullying.

16. In 2008, many people did not know about the Thunder Bay Children’s Charter adopted by City Council in June, 2004. Today, a majority is still not aware of the Children’s Charter and cannot name the City’s Children’s Advocate – even though many have concerns about children and youth which fall in the Children’s Advocate’s portfolio. The fact the Children’s Advocate has no budget, contributes to the City’s inability to publicize the Children’s Charter, and engage citizens to promote children’s rights.
17. The City now has a Youth Strategy Framework adopted on June, 6, 2011, and there is an Advisory Committee on Youth Services. This will make recommendations to Council on the delivery of Youth Programs and opportunities, as well as provide input on the concept of a youth centre. These are welcome recent improvements at City Hall.

18. More people were talking about mental health issues this year compared to 2008. There is acknowledgement that stress and depression contribute to social problems in neighbourhoods. Addictions to alcohol and drugs compound mental health issues, damages the brain and leads to crime. Failure to deal with drinking and substance abuse lifestyles perpetuates diseases such as fetal alcohol syndrome/effects. A lack of diagnosis, treatment and failure to improve social conditions makes things worse.

19. There is awareness of the work done by grassroots groups and service agencies such as Evergreen, Community Safety Initiatives, Food Banks, Shelter, Grace Church, Drew Drop Inn, Salvation Army, Shelter House, John Howard Society, Multicultural Association, Boys and Girls Club, Children’s Aid, Dilico, Friendship Centre, Anishnawbe Mushkiki, Ontario Native Women’s Association, Beendigen, Faye Peterson, Catholic Development Centre, Native Housing, Metis Centre, Computer Access Program sites, and so forth. People are also aware of various daycare programs in schools and the work of the Thunder Bay’s Urban Aboriginal Strategy’s (UAS to raise the plight of Aboriginal people in the city. The UAS is making a difference, and there is concern over what will happen when the funding agreement ends in March, 2012.

Even with what is available, there were complaints about access to services scattered across the city, and the problems of costs to use public transportation to seek help. There is a definite need for one-stop front-line services to welcome new arrivals from reserves, and home supports to ease their transition to city life.

20. People who came to the barbecues in 2008 and 2011 are motivated to make a difference in their neighbourhoods, and we should capitalize on this enthusiasm. Two youths involved in the project who have lived in Regina and Winnipeg see an urgent need to build on this interest before people lose hope and give up. From their experiences, people do not remain motivated for ever. Once the enthusiasm wanes, it is difficult to re-engage people, rekindle the flame and make progress.
RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTION FOR ACTIONPLAN

The following are the RMYC’s recommendations and proposed plan of action (italicized):

1. Residents in the housing complexes we visited want to be part of the solution to problems they are facing. They have ideas and are motivated to improve conditions where they live. For example, years ago, they worked together and got rid of drugs and related problems at Windsor Street (see “Neighbourhood cleans itself up” and letter from the Thunder Bay District Housing Authority at the end of this report.) Therefore, the City should capitalize in the local human potential, and the capacity to act and re-instate Community Relations Workers to initiate change. The Community Relations Workers should be culturally sensitive to connect well with people from different backgrounds including children and youth so that they can mobilize people to work together and make a difference.

2. The residents need training to mobilize their neighbourhood to take ownership of the issues and support to apply the strategies they want to act on. For example, Castlegreen was given as an example of an ideal neighbourhood to live in. Therefore, training residents to gain organizational skills and experience from Castlegreen, and helping them to adopt best practices learned should inspire them to achieve the improvements they want to see.

3. The City and Thunder Bay Police Service should re-establish Neighbourhood Policing Offices in high risk community housing complexes as requested by residents. There is a belief that visible police presence is a deterrent to crime. Neighbourhood Policing will enable officers to connect with the local population, enhance communication, and facilitate implementation of crime prevention programs, and the enforcement of safety measures such as curfews, recreation, drug trafficking, public intoxication, noise, panhandling, break-and-enter, speeding, gang activity, and other security issues.

* There is a common belief in impoverished neighbourhoods that they are not policed or protected the same way as wealthier areas. Racial minorities and Aboriginal people also feel that they are victims of racial profiling and stereotyping by prejudiced police officers. Neighbourhood Policing Offices serving as community/family resource centres and storefronts for programs can be ideal spaces to build bridges of understanding and trust with police officers. Sharing space in local neighbourhoods brings people and police officers closer, gives them a chance to learn about diversity, and be culturally sensitive.
4. Thunder Bay City Council and the Thunder Bay District Housing Corporation should collaborate to establish alcohol and drug-free public housing units for families wanting to avoid or abstain from alcohol and drugs, and those coming from alcohol/drug addictions treatment. This will help to reduce relapses, and enhance the success of detox programs. The Urban Aboriginal Strategy should work with service agencies to provide services, programs and supports that promote sobriety, address mental health and other social issues. This will help kids to grow up in safer neighbourhoods where they can concentrate on schooling away from the negative influences of addictions. Adopting a ‘co-operative housing model’ at Castlegreen for screening and allocating housing based on set criteria can tackle social issues and help to improve the quality of life for families – parents, children and youth.

* The City should consult with the Drug Strategy Committee and other stakeholders such as the Methadone program, Shelter House etc. and support half-way houses for alcoholics and drug addicts in treatment. Having them in same areas will make it easier to deliver social programs, treatment services and supports. This will help them to heal, and prevent problems expanding to other areas (the rotten potato syndrome). In addition, police officers, addiction workers, child welfare agencies, counsellors, church groups, etc will be able work with those who need help, and monitor the actions of chronic alcoholics, junkies, bootleggers and drug-dealers.

5. Over 1,000 people in the community housing projects, the south core, and visitors to our children’s area booth we surveyed during the CLE Family Fair, support curfews as a safety measure. While there is general consensus that parents should be responsible for setting the times children should be indoors and enforcing curfews, the city should step in to help dysfunctional families and parents unable to take care or discipline their children. Therefore, Thunder Bay City Council should introduce curfews as as safety measure, to protect children from harm, and reduce crime by unsupervised kids at night.

* Residents in housing projects should be engaged on strategies to implement and enforce curfews. The Urban Aboriginal Strategy, the Thunder Bay Aboriginal Liaison Policing Unit and its Advisory Committee, and Friendship Centre’s Youth Justice Committee Program should liaise with the Crime Prevention Committee and other stakeholders for input to deal with Aboriginal youths who violate curfews, and come up with the supports parents need to care for their children. More resources are needed to meet the unique needs of a rapidly increasing indigenous population impacted by the legacy of residential schools.
First Nations with youths going to school in Thunder Bay have curfews for their students. Since nine Aboriginal students have died while attending schools in the city, the Thunder Bay Crime Prevention Council, City Police and stake-holders should meet with Aboriginal communities and First Nations Education Authorities to discuss curfews and ways to reassure parents that their children attending school in the city will be protected after hours.

6. The City of Thunder Bay, Thunder Bay Housing Authority and groups working on homelessness, should meet to discuss strategies to provide safe affordable housing and ways to improve conditions in public housing complexes. Social service agencies dealing with issues such as alcohol and drug abuse, crime, violence, gangs, racism, poverty, mental health and unemployment, identified as priorities should collaborate to provide programs, services and supports to address root causes of the problems. Best practices being applied in Castlegreen should be adopted, as well as home visits and front-line supports for struggling families with no parenting skills or lacking urban lifeskills.

Arrangements should be made with students taking social work, police foundations, and other lifeskills courses to do fieldwork and placements in impoverished and high risk neighbourhoods as part of training to offer services to residents. This will also provide role models for kids, teach lifeskills, instill character, and assure residents that the community cares. Churches and Elders should also be approached for support when dealing with Aboriginal people who benefit from a spiritual approach to healing and wellness.

7. The City should support the establishment of a youth resource centre conveniently located for easy access, and open 24/7 as a safe place for all youths to hang out. There should be qualified staff, culturally sensitive volunteers and peer role models who can connect and communicate well with youths and parents/guardians. There should offices for counselling, information on education, training, jobs, programs, services, supports and other resources.

A centrally located drop-in centre open around the clock like the Shelter House would complement curfews. Youths picked up wandering the streets alone at night would be dropped off there if homeless, or when conditions not ideal to leave them at home. The centre would provide a great opportunity for the City, police, service agencies to connect with youths, talk with them, hear their stories, identify their needs, discuss their problems and what would to improve their conditions, and engage them to be part of the solution.
In addition to a main youth centre, the RMYC is recommending the creation of youth drop-in satellites in local neighbourhoods. The RMYC ran successful pilot projects years ago in Academy, Limbrick and Windsor (see letters from Windsor Place where shared space in the local Community Resource Centres to hold activities in the neighbourhoods. We trained peer leaders and engaged vulnerable kids in positive activities very close to home. These outreach initiatives stopped due to a lack of funding.

Neighbourhood hubs incorporating youth centres in are an efficient way to connect and involve children and youth in high-risk areas. Easy access minimizes problems of transportation, the risks of violence at bus stops or being jumped while walking home in unfamiliar areas, and so forth. In addition, parents will not be too worried about bus-fare and safety if children are participating in after school activities in their own neighbourhood.

Last but not least the City should support the on-going development of peer leaders to plan, promote and help to run youth activities. The RMYC and other community agencies can provide the training to create role models who use positive peer influence to organize activities that make a difference. The main youth centre would be the ideal base to teach the leadership and organizational skills, universal values, respect, manners and etiquette.

8. The City should develop ways to monitor racial climate in neighbourhoods and engage the general public to deal with the racial divide between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. Racism is a two way street, and in the absence of enlightened interaction, and mutual understanding to counter ignorance, and perceptions that feed stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination. The power dynamics, name-calling and racial bullying favour perpetrators, and letters to the editor in the local press reveal a polarization of attitudes and hardened beliefs. This is very evident from the public comments we heard in the neighbourhoods.

The RMYC designed a Racist Incident Reporting Form to monitor what is happening, and gather feedback on how victims want to see the matter resolved. The primary target has been schools where many youths report problems. There has been some reluctance to use the ‘Form’ for fear of negative image if many incidents are reported in particular schools. The RMYC hears complaints about racist encounters at bus terminals, in shopping malls, with police, and in public housing projects regularly. A lack of a formal structure and funding to handle the Forms and process complaints is hampering progress.
Therefore, the City should launch a publicity campaign to promote and distribute Racist Incident Reporting Forms at convenient locations such as City Hall, Thunder Bay Housing, Victoriaville Centre Mall, Shelter House, bus terminals etc. Completed forms should be submitted to the City’s Anti-Racism Committee and groups such as Diversity Thunder Bay for analysis on what is going on and what must be done. There is an urgent need to show that the City cares, and something is being done to improve race relations.

9. School teachers should receive sensitivity training and orientation on Ontario’s Equity and inclusive Education Strategy to avoid stigmatizing minority students and those from public housing projects. Simple complaint process such as the RMYC’s Racist Incident Reporting Form and peer mediation should be used to encourage students to provide input on what is going on. All children deserve a fair chance in our schools to get a good education to open doors for a better and brighter future. This will help to break the cycle of poverty, reduce crime, and problems of addictions when people use drugs to cope, or youths resort to dealing drugs and committing crime as alternatives to getting a job and having an income.

The RMYC is presently working with local school boards, Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) and educators on a project funded by the Ministry of Education to make schools safer. We are engaging students to assess the current safety climate in schools, and gather input on ways to create a more welcoming learning environment. The youth will be preparing recommendations for the Ministry of Educations, Thunder Bay Catholic District School Board, Lakehead District School Board and NAN for the safety and success of all students.

10. Thunder Bay Police Service should invest in a public relations campaign to promote fairness, equity and inclusive treatment of all citizens including children and all youths across the city. There is a need for the Police Service to develop an easy complaint process to encourage the reporting of police bias, unprofessional conduct, as well as solicit suggestions to improve protection service delivery and make our community safer.

The Police Service should continue their effort to recruit police officers from the Aboriginal community, racial minorities and women, to reflect our diversity and improve the lines of communication with marginalized groups. This will ensure internal cultural sensitivity among officers, and enhance delivery of protection services fairly across the city.
11. Thunder Bay City Council, senior city staff and policy makers can learn from Mayor Keith Hobbs, City Councillor and Children's Advocate Joe Virdiromo, and City Manager Tim Commissio who visited several reserves this year to get a first-hand look at the living conditions of our fastest growing population. We should learn and be better informed about the realities of life on reserves in order time to deal with the complex issues affecting First Nations. A lifestyle of dependency created by government policy through the Indian Act entraps many. When they move to the city and lose band council support, they face challenges to deal with culture shock and the social expectations of the mainstream.

**Therefore:** it is important for city policy makers to have a full grasp of the poverty, overcrowding, addictions, violence, unemployment and the extent of family dysfunction caused by forcibly taking children away to attend residential schools. There is a need for strategic intervention to minimize the cultural differences, reduce the social gaps, and eliminate the stereotypes the are perpetuating hurtful comments, prejudice, racist attitudes and discrimination that has become rampant in the community.

12. Many Aboriginal children and youth are suffering from the intergenerational impacts of residential schools. With the destruction of traditional culture, and parenting skills, many Aboriginal children and youth have been raised in dysfunctional families, exposed to violence, neglect, physical, sexual and mental abuse, lack parental support, and have experienced indifference that puts them at risk and makes them vulnerable. The high incidences of alcoholism, prescription painkillers, illicit drugs and sniffing on reserves contribute to mental illness, memory loss, attention deficit, and health problems that affect the children's ability to concentrate in school and learn. A significant number rely on breakfast, lunch, and other food programs at school to learn well.

There are more Aboriginal kids in foster-care today than those who went to residential schools. Some teens in our Youth Council have changed foster homes over twenty times, making them susceptible to joining criminal youth gangs to belong, have a family, and survive. Others have been moved eight times in less than two years, and assume multiple names and identities in the process. The anger, violence, frustration, insubordination, resentment, and disrespect make it hard for many to integrate into the social mainstream.
The mental anguish, pain, stress and depression are reflected by constant fits of rage, despair, a lack of respect for self, others or property, self-mutilation, and dependence on alcohol or drugs to numb the pain. The suicide epidemic in First Nations communities in a country many new immigrants adore says a lot about the predicament.

In addition, a shortage of housing on many reserves creates situations where people take turns to sleep. Such sleep patterns are an issue when youths move to the city. Wandering about all hours of the night unsupervised is a potential for disaster—crime, victimization and tragedy. This also gets in the way of their schooling, diminishes chances of graduation, prospects of employment, and a productive life. And since school drop-outs fill our jails, the consequences lead to the over-representation of Aboriginal people in corrections.

Treating Aboriginal children the same as others not traumatized by residential schools will not work, just as feeding peanut-butter jelly sandwiches to hungry kids will harm those allergic to peanuts. To level the playing-field, people in wheelchairs need assistance—a ramp, elevator or escalator to climb stairs. Aboriginal youths suffering from the residential school syndrome are not benefitting from mainstream programs designed for kids, and by people never traumatized by residential schools. The outcomes are what we have today—high numbers of Aboriginal children unable to cope, ending up as wards of the crown, caught in the criminal justice system and warehoused in correctional facilities. Hence the Supreme Court of Canada “R. v. Gladue” ruling in 1999 that courts take into consideration the Aboriginal background of offenders under Section 718.2(e) of the Criminal Code.

*Therefore,* the City/Aboriginal Liaison should partner with UAS, NAN and other agencies committed to advancing the cause of Aboriginal people should collaborate on initiatives to level the playing-field and achieve equitable results. Educators have learned that hungry students do not do well in school, and have introduced nutrition programs. The City should realize that hungry and homeless kids do not play ball, appreciate or use recreational facilities the same way as well-fed children. They just do not have the energy and resilience to play, and can vandalize facilities designed for them. There is a definite gap in priorities and expectations, and we need to enhance our understanding of the real issues. Most policy-makers have succeeded in life and are too far ahead to realize that amid this prosperity, there are people we have left far behind, and living in Third World conditions here in Canada.
13. Building on visits by the Mayor, Children’s Advocate and City Manager to First Nations communities, and the recent agreement for mutual co-operation between City Council and Fort William First Nation, the City should forge positive relations with all First Nations in the three Treaty Areas across the region. From the RMYC’s experience, First Nations will support anyone who is sincerely committed to the well-being of Aboriginal children, empowers the youth to be proud of their culture, and helps them to realize their potential and participate in all aspects of Canadian life as equals. We learned first hand that despite concerns about being assimilated under Canadian Multiculturalism, Nishnawbe Aski Nation Chiefs in Assembly passed a unanimous resolution to work with the RMYC and support our Multicultural Youth Centre’s work with Aboriginal youth. This was done without a request.

*Therefore, since nine Aboriginal students have died while going to school in Thunder Bay, the City should have a formal response related to the Reggie Bushie Coroner’s Inquest. The Mayor, Children’s Advocate and City Manager should initiate a meeting with the three Treaty Area Grand Chiefs for their input on ways we can collaborate to meet the needs of Aboriginal children and youth coming to the city to fulfill their academic and career goals.*

*There is a need for radical and aggressive approaches to build bridges with First Nations who have the region’s fastest growing population, natural resources needed to sustain our city, and feel the brunt of prejudice, discrimination and negative stereotypes that are dividing neighbourhood and undermining efforts for mutual co-existence and harmony.*

14. If the City is serious about tackling social ills in the community, a comprehensive strategy is required. This begins by acknowledging the true nature of the issues, including the fact that native Aboriginal people in the city are here to stay, and we cannot rely on the Indian Act and Band Councils to come to the rescue and solve current problems in the city.

There are many volunteer groups in Thunder Bay doing outstanding work to make the city a better and safer place to live. Most, like our Youth Council, are struggling financially to provide much needed services that enhance the quality of life in city neighbourhoods. The opening of the Thunder Bay Casino downtown in 2000, stopped the Monte Carlos, and is siphoning bingo profits they used to earn. Two of the three bingo halls used by charities to fund-raise have closed. City Hall issues bingo licenses, gets the gaming financial reports which reveal the extent of the problem, but has not stepped in to help.
The City gets a 5% of the slot revenues for hosting the Casino, and all the money goes into general revenue. Therefore, we are recommending that part of this Casino windfall should go to a special fund to support community groups with innovative ideas and programs to improve social conditions that are contributing to our problems. There should be an investment to deal with the city’s priorities targeting children and youth, as well as activities for kids who are victims of gambling parents. Providing funds for grassroots groups will stabilize their operations and enable them to make long-term plans that produce results.

15. There is a need to publicize Thunder Bay’s Children’s Charter, and engage ordinary citizens to participate in activities that enhance the status of children and youth. There is an African proverb: “It takes a village to raise a child”. Therefore, the City’s Children’s Advocate should develop a strategic plan to engage marginalized groups racialized communities, and Aboriginals in city neighbourhoods and gather feedback and input on ways we can all collaborate to improve social conditions for families and children. The City should host regular forum with stakeholders to evaluate progress, review workplans and seek the resources needed to maintain momentum.

Conclusion:

There is an urgent need for the City to engage residents who are willing and motivated to play an active role and make a difference in their neighbourhoods before they lose hope and give up. City Council should support creative initiatives that offer positive alternatives to individuals and families struggling with social issues so that they feel good about themselves and play an active role to improve their neighbourhoods. We must act now and commit adequate resources to capitalize on the human potential ready to take ownership of their fate. Working with the Aboriginal community offers challenges and opportunities to make our region a model.

The City should invest in prevention programs to reduce the numbers of youths finding their own ways to cope with predicaments, and turning bad habits into lifestyles for survival. Old ways of doing things are not working well, and we need to implement new strategies to initiate change we want to break the negative cycles that trap the poor and marginalized in our society. It will take a collective community effort, time and money to change conditions and situations that are causing the problems. As Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said: “The best way to solve any problem is to remove its cause.”
THE SURVEYS

LIMBRICK PLACE -- July 13\textsuperscript{th}, 2011.
By: Trent Campeau, Taran Desmoulia, Jeremy Kakegamic, Kay Ostamas, Quinn Spyrka & Martin Zhang

We organized the barbecue between 2:00 p.m. and 4:00 p.m. on the playground next to Vale Community Centre. Large sheets of paper were provided for residents to write down their responses to different questions. Teams of youths also went door-to-door to interview those who stayed home. The following are the highlights from the survey:

A. Top Safety Concerns in Neighbourhood:

1. Youth:
   * Children playing outside alone late at night / Kids out late at night: 1 - 2 a.m.
   * Bullying amongst youth

2. Dangerous materials:
   * Broken glass/bottles
   * Electrical boxes left open
   * Garbage / Litter hazards in playgrounds
   * Needles/syringes left everywhere

3. Lack of supervision:
   * No-one watching kids
   * Lack of parental supervision

4. Animals / pets:
   * Animals neglected or not being cared for by owners
   * Animals roaming around not being controlled and pooping everywhere

5. Adults:
   * Lack of parental supervision
   * A lot of violence at night mainly with adults
   * Adults under the influence of alcohol or drugs day and night
   * Wild and noisy house parties disturbing kids
6. Crime:
   * Break and enters
   * Violence/Fighting
   * Intoxicated people hanging around
   * Bullying
   * Gang related violence
   * Vandalizing
   * Lack of security at night

7. Education Concerns:
   * Lack of education
   * Youths skipping or walking about or playing during school hours

B. What Can Be Done To Prevent/Protect From Getting Into Trouble?

1. Games and Activities:
   * Provide recreational equipment, and safe play areas
   * Organize social gatherings
   * Involve them in planning and organizing activities
   * After-school activities

2. Peer Support and help:
   * Develop peer leaders /peer helpers / positive role models
   * More regular activities for kids
   * Make the Young Offenders Act more effective
   * Youth organizing their own activities
   * Youth centres for kids to hang out with peers
   * Team-buildings games and sports: street hockey, basketball, volleyball, etc
3. **Parental involvement and support:**
   * More parental involvement with youth
   * Parents supervising their kids and keeping children inside after hours
   * Parenting skills and counselling

4. **Security for community:**
   * Police patrols / Neighbourhood police or Security office
   * Install security cameras in the neighbourhood
   * Fix/Clean-up playground, parking lots and neighbourhood

C. **What supports do parents need to keep their children safe?**

1. **Involvement in the community:**
   * More parental awareness / Sharing parenting skills
   * Resource centre or youth centre for community activities
   * Neighbourhood watch
   * Community events for families i.e. Halloween, Christmas, Easter, Canada Day
   * Home visits and supports
   * Create volunteer opportunities to go out and do something
   * Neighbourhood cleanups with parents and youth being involved

2. **Safety for Youth and Everybody:**
   * Glass/plastic bottle collection and needle pick-ups
   * Parent patrol group to watch children/youth
   * Know where your kids are at **ALL** times
   * Neighbourhood Police watch
   * Counselling
   * Healthy lifestyles for the youth and all ages
   * Education/Options for the community to grasp onto
3. **Awareness for the neighbourhood and community:**
   
   * Awareness of social issues in neighbourhood
   * Promotion of programs, services, supports and activities available
   * Know the trouble areas and risks
   * More awareness for the dangers in the neighbourhood
   * More knowledge about safety for the youth.

**B. Will Curfews Help?**

**YES:** 26  
**NO:** 3

**YES: Reasons Why, (many repeats)**

* Comfort of home
* To ensure that kids are safe at home
* So I know where my children are and that they are safe
* They stop too many young kids who are out late
* To prevent bad things from happening to children
* To protect kids from too much drinking, drugs and fighting
* Stop small kids roaming about late at night
* Kids should be in the house at 10 p.m.
* Shows that we care about the safety of children

**NO: Reasons Why:**

* Youth will rebel more because of the curfews
* More youth will be labelled as troubled, and bad just for breaking the curfew
* Unnecessary work for our officers
* You start making criminals out of kids
* Children should be meeting police on 1st positive experience
* Teenagers won't comply
General Observations:

There was quite a good response to the neighbourhood barbecue. For the two hours we were there, (from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m.) we served over 300 hot dogs and two pitchers of juice. Many kids came out, as well as young mothers and teenagers. We also visited every home to interview anyone who was there. They were all very receptive, and opened up to respond to our questions.

From the feedback, the situation at Limbrick Place is not improving. Having held a similar event in the neighbourhood two years ago, conditions are deteriorating. Many adults as well as some young people said that it is common to little kids running around and playing outside on their own day and night, until 1-2 a.m. They feel that they should be supervised to ensure that they are safe and well protected. With broken glass, needles/syringes, broken bottles and litter everywhere, it is both a safety hazard and health risk for the young children.

The playgrounds at Limbrick are run down. The equipment is old, and worn down, and there is not enough for the many kids in the area. The yards around the houses and parking lots need cleaning, and a general sprucing up of the area is needed to instil pride in the neighbourhood. There is a need to prevent the ‘broken window syndrome’ where things not repaired lead to more neglect, and kids growing up in such areas will just not care. They see this all the time, get accustomed to the setting and take it as normal.

The youth we talked to would like the playgrounds fixed, and the area cleaned up. They are keen to help. Involving them to clean up their surroundings would help to show pride in their neighbourhood. They are also concerned about violence. There is bullying, fighting, racism and crime, which are on the rise.

Alcohol abuse, drugs and gangs are major problems. There are people partying and drinking day and night to the point of neglecting their children. Addiction is common and people use the little money they have to feed their bad habits at the expense of food and other basic necessities for their children. This contributes to poverty that traps children and youth in negative cycles, with no way out.

With poorly equipped playgrounds there are not that many good and safe places for kids to hang out. Those with parents who can pay membership fees can go the Boys and Girls Club, and participate in programs organized at Vale Community Centre and elsewhere. But with poverty, addictions and different priorities many children are left to wander around.

There is a growing Aboriginal population in the area. Many of the young families are affected by the legacy of residential schools and a loss of identity. The children are suffering from the harm done to their parents or grandparents who were forcefully removed from their families to be raised by strangers in strange schools far away from home. The intergenerational impacts are passed on, and are taking their toll on kids raised in broken families, dysfunctional homes, abusive relationships, and deprived of love and nurturing due to a lack of parenting skills.
The problems are obvious, and the thriving gang activity can be attributed to kids joining any groups to belong to some form of family with structure. It is therefore, not surprising that an overwhelming majority of people who commented about curfews were in favour of putting a limit on when kids should be indoors. There are parents that lack skills to teach and discipline their children, and a curfew would help to protect them. While there is concern about forcing kids to stay indoors in abusive homes, and trying to control truant teenagers, mutual feeling is that society should care for those in trouble and offer structure, guidance, programs and supports for those rebelling against dysfunctional and abusive home environments.

The negative press coverage at Limbrick about fights, drugs, gangs and murders in the neighbourhood still resonates, and many would like to move from the area if there were other options. With the current housing shortage, and income-gear ed accommodation, people feel trapped to live in the area. One young mother appealed to us for help because she was trying to get her new-born baby girl who was taken away by child protection services when they learned that she lived in Limbrick.

According to her side of the story, the agency felt that the social environment there is not good for the well-being of the baby. Since she could not find or afford a home in another (better) area, she has been unable to get her baby back. If this is the case, it says a lot about our community housing projects being regarded as unfit to raise healthy children.

**Personal Experiences:**

Some Summer Students working at the Youth Centre have lived in the Limbrick Housing Project. Others know friends living in the neighbourhood. Here are their personal stories.

**Summer Student #1:**

"I lived in Limbrick between 2004 and 2005. I do not feel that the neighbourhood was a very good place for children to grow up. I remember that it was particularly dangerous at night. Groups of youths would be gathered in small circles. They often dressed as though they were involved in gangs. Also, younger children would ride bikes late at night. I remember my friend's mother dropping me off at home during the night, and there would be children, with no shirts on, riding their bikes all over the place after midnight. She lived at a better part in the city, and she was shocked.

After I moved from Limbrick, I joined the RMYC, and went back on several occasions to do surveys and out-reach. The situation seems to be getting worse. From the people we talked to, things are being neglected, and people who are motivated to do something will eventually give up, and it will be hard to change anything."

**Summer Student #2:**

"I lived in Limbrick Place from 2007 to 2008. I did not feel that it was such a bad place then compared to now. The people were friendly, and it had nice housing complexes. There was minimal graffiti, and some litter. Of course coming from North Central in Regina, (the hood of Regina, Saskatchewan) this place didn't seem to be that bad at all. I somewhat got used to the lifestyle of people around doing what they did."
I was the type of person to walk to places in the night and didn’t come across people that were in groups jumping the unfortunate. Although now I feel almost nervous and uncomfortable to mention I lived in Limbrick, because of the condition it is in at this moment. I moved out of the area to go back to Saskatchewan. I now feel like I could do anything, and can do everything in my power to help deal with what is happening here.”

Student #3

“I have not personally lived at Limbrick, but have visited the place regularly. I have friends in the Limbrick area, and when I walked around, it was obvious that the other teenagers knew that I was different and from a other part of the city. I would have never guessed that it would lead to being jumped. Being Aboriginal, I thought I would easily blend in, but that did not save me from being attacked.

Being stronger, and physically fit, I was always able to defend myself and fend them off. The last time I got jumped, I retaliated and did more damage to them than they did to me. After that I never visited my friends again because I was scared things would get out of hand with revenge. I was afraid that weapons would be involved as I heard happened to others and I did not want to be seriously hurt or end up dead.”

Conclusion:

As mentioned earlier, the situation at Limbrick Place in regards to the safety and the well-being of children and youth is not improving. Houses, parking lots, playground equipment, etc. are aging and in need of maintenance and/or repair. Residents are concerned about security, and the well-being of their children, and want things to change. They have ideas of what should be done, but feel powerless to do anything about it.

Some residents want help and support to create a citizens’ neighbourhood committee to work with people to improve the area. But, it will require external support, guidance and resources to engage people to take ownership for those things they can be responsible for. Training is required to provide skills and enable them to consult with neighbours, assess needs, plan and organize activities to address priorities, and work with stakeholders for the good of the area.

As many parents told us, they need help to get things done. There is a sense of indifference, worthlessness, and hopelessness that anything positive will be done to address issues since this is not a prominent area such as the ‘Waterfront’. Many say it is hard to access services to improve their lives. The youth also feel that no one seems concerned or interested to invest in activities and programs that will help to prevent them from getting into trouble.

The RMYC used to run a Girl Power Program and some after-school activities at Limbrick when there was a Community Resource Centre in Unit #87. We also used to organize dances at Vale, and worked with local kids on neighbourhood clean ups. Unfortunately, all our initiatives stopped due to a lack of financial support. We need to reach out to desperate parents and their children to prevent things getting any worse at Limbrick!
WINDSOR PLACE -- July 21, 2011
By: Robyn Kakegamic, Joanne Magiskan & Jacky Mersch

The barbecue at Windsor Place was held on July 21, 2011. In spite of changing the date due to bad weather, the turnout was impressive. We also had special visitors present: Thunder Bay City Councillor--Rebecca Johnson, Thunder Bay Crime Prevention Council Co-ordinator--Amy Siciliano, Thunder Bay Centre for Change--Sandi Boucher, Confederation College Learning Café--Paul Reid, The Indian Friendship Centre Youth Worker--Marco Maccadianza, Youth Outreach Workers--Gauvin and Hughette, NDP provincial candidate -- Steve Mantis, Sandi Krasowski from the Chronicle Journal, and Thunder Bay Newsledger's--James Murray.

A. What are the top safety concerns in this neighbourhood?

1. **Crime:**
   - Crime, thefts, break and enters, robberies, attacks with weapons
   - Violence / fighting / assaults
   - Alcohol abuse / People drinking in public / Public intoxication
   - Drugs / Drug dealing
   - Gang activity
   - Bullying
   - Punk gangs
   - Vandalism

2. **Parenting:**
   - Children not supervised / Unsupervised kids—big time problem
   - Kids on the street, vehicles speeding, broken glass/bottles, and no one watching
   - Isolation from extended family
   - Poverty – low on food, also due to addictions
   - Needles on the ground and parents not there to keep kids safe
   - Kids on the street playing with cars driving fast
   - Kids being out and walking around alone extremely late at night
   - Inappropriate behaviour by parents and adults in front of children.
   - Parents who act like kids
   - People under the influence of alcohol or drugs day and night.
   - Parents drinking and doing drugs in front of their children
3. **Poverty:**
   - Many unemployed residents / People dealing drugs and bootlegging for income.
   - Youth selling drugs when kicked out of their homes and need money to live on.

B. **What can be done to protect kids and prevent them from getting into trouble?**

   **Parenting:**
   - Offer services to help parents talk with their kids
   - Church events and family supports for parents
   - More parental involvement needed / programs for parents in neighbourhood
   - Home visits to reach out and support families
   - Be aware of what is going on in the neighbourhood
   - Organize events that involve parents and children
   - Have community clean-up days with parents and children participating
   - Parental support group / Clubs for parents
   - Teach them about addictions
   - Parenting skills / Training and teaching parents about parental responsibilities
   - Parents should know where their kids are at all times, or face the consequences
   - Counselling to prevent parents from engaging in violence
   - Encourage parents to look after under-age children

   **Policing:**
   - Police patrols
   - Neighbourhood Policing
   - Organize neighbourhood watch
   - Community supervision—looking after all children’s safety
   - Have security cameras

   **Children and Youth:**
   - Engage the youth in positive activities
   - Boys and Girls Club / Offer kids something to do to keep them busy
   - More programs in neighbourhood for children and teens
   - Youth Resource Centre / Teen Club / Youth Centre
   - Teach kids safety tips in neighbourhood, crossing the street, drugs, gangs, etc.
C. What supports do parents need to keep their children safe?

**Parenting:**
- Parenting skills / Parental supervision i.e. keeping little kids in sight at all times
- Affordable daycare
- Parent support groups
- Parents helping and watching out for each other’s children
- Parents enforcing a curfews to protect children
- Family counseling
- Parents working with police to protect kids and to abide by the law
- More activities for children and youth
- Better playground equipment, and cleaner more appealing play areas
- Parents should come out of their houses to watch/supervise kids playing
- Connect with children and communicate with them to hear their concerns

**Policing:**
- Get Neighbourhood Policing Centre back at Windsor
- More cops for security / Police patrols / Police should respond to calls promptly
- Neighbourhood watch

**Community:**
- They need help to improve the neighbourhood
- More youth programs such as the Boys and Girls Club
- More affordable activities for youth, workshops, socials, recreation, etc.
- The City should improve playgrounds and repair/fix broken things
- The City should consult more with residents and hear our concerns.
- The City should provide social programs to improve the neighbourhood
- Support for grassroots activities and work with the residence to improve conditions
- Schools and Teachers should treat students from Windsor as they do all others
- Social Service agencies should provide more home supports for needy families

C. Will Curfews Help? YES: 52 NO: 7

Some residents felt that it was useless to comment because the City had rejected the idea.
YES: There were many repeat comments and arguments in favour!

- Less trouble will occur, and kids don't need to be out after dark
- To get kids indoors at a certain earlier time protects them from harm and crime
- They will help parents to tell kids what time to be home, or get into trouble
- Kids shouldn't be out late. What good things happen outside for kids to enjoy at dark?
- A curfew helps back parents up so that kids avoid breaking the law
- Fewer crimes committed by kids because they will be home
- Will make it easy to maintain peace and quiet
- Less noise by kids loitering outside after hours
- No graffiti by kids after dark because they will be indoors
- Encourages parents to be responsible for the safety of their children after hours
- Curfews will limit the underage kids from being on the streets late at night
- Cut down on vandalism and crime by unsupervised kids
- Parents will know where their children are – at home
- Because we need to stay safe
- Will help parents to control/discipline kids who want to hang out late
- Gives kids some structure about time while growing up

NO: Objectors liked the idea of keeping kids off streets at night, but felt it was up to parents

- Parents with poor parenting skills will not make an effort to learn how to parent
- Parents who are addicts or who do not know how to discipline their children will not follow through enforcing the curfew time
- Yelling at the kids that its curfew time does not encourage the kids to come in, especially when they are afraid that they will be beaten or mistreated at home
- Children coming around from Picton and Blucher where there is no parental supervision after curfew times will influence the Windsor kids not to obey any rules about curfews
- Children want to take risks, and it should be safe for them to go out at night
- Kids raised up hanging outside all night will not come home at a designated time
- Parents partying at home don't care what time their kids come in. The kids can stay out so that parents can do whatever they want
- Kids in the neighbourhood don't listen to their parents, even about curfews
General Observations:

An analysis of the comments by residents at Windsor Place reveals that living conditions and the social environment are not so good. From our observations during the 2008 out-reach, things were already deteriorating compared to twelve years earlier when the RMYC ran programs for children and youth at the Windsor Street Family Resource Centre. During that time things had improved so much that the Youth Council co-hosted a "Rock Around the Block Party" at Windsor to celebrate success of reducing crime, getting rid of the drinking, the drugs, and property damage. Please read news article "Neighbourhood cleans itself up" and letter from the Thunder Bay District Housing Authority at the end of this report. This confirms the progress that had been achieved by engaging locals to clean up their neighbourhood.

When the RMYC youth teams went door to door to interview residents, they saw large weeds growing in the large court-yard sandbox with playground equipment. There was litter, broken glass, a dirty parking lot, needles/syringes, and run down fences needing repair and painting. There were un-kept yards, and the neighbourhood shows signs of neglect.

The residents welcome the Boys and Girls Club located at the former Forest Park School across the street. This is a great facility for kids to access after school programs. There are a variety of activities offered to keep them busy. The school facilities are well utilized and the building is properly maintained. However, the playground equipment outside is for small and just little kids. There is nothing for youths. The City should refurbish the playground and provide more equipment so that the many young children and youth have adequate facilities to play and have fun in a well maintained area close to home.

In the discussions, we learned that cost is a major barrier for some parents to get all kids to participate in special activities organized by the Boys and Girls Club. With employment being identified as a problem, poverty is a major concern. It is unlikely that parents who say that they are low on food will have extra cash to pay the fees to participate in special activities organized by the Club. While the After-school Program sponsored by the Ministry of Health Promotion is free for any students registered in regular schools, the funding provided is to run the program for three hours (3:30 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.) and for three days a week only. More funding is needed to have structured activities for more hours seven days a week. And involving the youth in planning and organizing events will keep them busy and out of trouble.
From the sheets of paper and the home interviews, the major hurdle to improving things and enhancing the safety of children and youth is a lack of parental involvement. Many of the residents are Aboriginal, and chatting with them reveals that they have been impacted by the legacy of residential schools. They do not know how to parent, take care of their kids, show affection, or how to supervise them. They love their kids, but need help to be responsible parents who can teach discipline well.

There is a definite need for parenting skills and social supports to enable dysfunctional families and very young parents to learn qualities to be good and effective parents. Curfews are not punishment, but something to protect kids by ensuring that they are taken good care of, well supervised, and not left to wonder alone after dark. Loving and caring parents or guardians monitor the movements of their children all the time. The residents need this intervention as a safety measure, to provide discipline and to limit risky behavior.

Parents are worried about violence, crime, alcohol, drugs and gangs in the neighbourhood, and need help to control the movement of young kids at night. For families lacking skills to raise and nurture children properly, curfews are a welcome intervention, just as foster care is provided for abused or neglected children. Really, how many community leaders and policy makers objecting curfews let their kids run around unsupervised all night? All children deserve the same protection and structure as foundation for a successful life and a brighter future.

The growing incidents of youth-to-youth violence, assaults, and crime in the neighbourhood were shared in the following stories by two students on the Youth Council interview team:

_Summer Student #1:

I myself lived on Picton during 2005-2006 and experienced violence as well as substance abuse first hand. I am not Aboriginal, and was physically assaulted by four young men over my sisters drug related problems. They jumped out of the bush on my walk home, and I was left with a broken nose and three broken ribs. I couldn't even get up to walk home it hurt so bad.

If there was more security and supervision none of that would have happened. No one deserves something like that over nothing. This is just one of many bad experiences I had. I have also heard about similar assaults from other youths who live in the area.
Summer Student #2:

I have experienced bullying, fighting and drugs. I was peer pressured to break and enter into a Windsor Place apartment and I got busted. I was the one that got in trouble even though it wasn't my idea. I knew it wasn't the right choice, but I did it because I wanted to fit in. That's when I decided to moved from Windsor to Westfort.

Looking back now, I really regret what I did. But with no guidance, and the need to belong, the pressure is so strong. When you move from the reserve, and you face so much racism, and you do not feel accepted in your new community, you do anything to make new friends and become part of the crowd. I feel that this is why many native kids end up in trouble. There is nowhere to turn except to join others who are in the same hopeless situation for company. They become your role models in the city.

Taking Action:

On suggestions to make the neighbourhood safer for children, providing parenting skills is the top priority. Loving and caring families where kids feel safe and want to be home, rather than out on the streets can make a difference. But, teaching parenting is a big challenge. Ideas shared include creating local support or self-help groups where parents collaborate to take care of the children. This may involve organizing activities for parents to work together, develop acquaintances, and build trust to share experiences about raising kids.

We met some motivated women who remembered the good old days and want things to change. They like the neighbourhood, love the people, and believe that they can turn things around. They need some leadership and organizational development training and support to run meetings, plan activities, and organize events. They want the Neighbourhood Police Centre back to provide the security they need to get things started, and share space as a resource centre for meetings. They feel that the local Police office should be large enough to be used as a neighbourhood hub for: AA meetings, counselling sessions, prayers, a social service store-front, youth drop-in, food-bank, community kitchen and so forth.

Bringing front-line services and social workers to the neighbourhood will also make it easy for parents to access help and services without worrying about transportation, bus fare, babysitters, and long periods of being away from home and worrying about break-ins.
The RMYC is willing to help by engaging youths in the neighbourhood and training them as peer leaders to organize their own activities, as we did successfully years ago. The youth will work with the women/parents to plan and host community events. The interaction can be dynamic when parents can collaborate to prepare snacks, and the RMYC can host barbecues for the kids when they clean up yards, cut grass, pull up weeds from the playground, paint fences etc. The Youth Council can provide peer support and guidance to create positive role models who can lead other youths by example and organize their own activities.

Thereafter, peer leaders can collaborate with local parents to organize Halloween parties, celebrations, talent shows and other events for youths to learn life skills, social responsibility and gain civic pride while having fun. It is empowering for kids to have ownership and feel good about what they can do to improve their neighbourhood.

On the other hand, the women can form support groups can encourage parents to help each other to learn parenting skills. They can also share ideas to help families in need and look-out for each other as well as the safety of their children. Through the interaction, workshops and presentations from various social service agencies, parents will have opportunities to acquire relevant skills and supports to be effective parents.

These suggestions are not new. We believe they can work. The RMYC was involved in a similar campaign to provide positive experiences for children and youth at Limbrick and Windsor a decade ago. We collaborated with the local Neighbourhood Policing offices to organize activities for children and youth in the area. We worked with local parents support groups to plan and host events for the area using a local resource centre as a base. We identified and trained groups of local youth to help us run Girl Power programs, organized picnics, fun days, and dances for the kids. The events were extremely successful and brought residents out to get to know each other better.

Looking back at Windsor, the RMYC worked with local residents to organize garage sales for fundraising, and held street parties with live bands, talent shows and barbecues to promote neighbourhood pride. We provided the sound system for concerts and dances that brought residents together and got kids involved with their parents. The youth in our activities then are mothers now, and remember the positive experiences. They want something similar for their kids. They want them involved in our activities, and have been keen to register their kids for our leadership training, Girl Power program, and summer camps, etc.
The youth-led programs and proactive out-reach services we used to provide were severely cut back due to a lack of money. Funding problems have plagued the RMYC since the Thunder Bay Casino opened. The huge bingo profits we used to make to run youth programs have disappeared. Thunder Bay City Council and the Ontario Trillium Foundation, the main recipients of the Casino proceeds have not compensated us for lost revenue. Therefore, we are putting a lot of effort to save our Youth Centre instead of concentrating on training young leaders to run programs and organize their own activities. We need to create role models who use positive peer influence and engage more youths to make a difference.

Conclusion:

The residents who came to the barbecue and those interviewed at home were friendly, and wanted to talk. Some wanted to take ownership of the issues, while others were quick to lay blame for their problems. Some were optimistic about the future, others felt helpless. They see their situation hopeless because people regarded what is happening at Windsor as 'normal'. They believed that their neighbourhood was not a priority, and noted cutbacks in social services for the poor, while the numbers of people on the “Sunshine list” being paid $100,000.00 or more a year by the public was constantly increasing. Some who had moved to Windsor from other city areas noticed the difference in how they were treated by teachers, police, social service agencies such as Dilico, and so forth, once they mentioned where they lived. They felt stigmatized by race and the neighbourhood they lived in.

We were, however, inspired by a few young mothers and youths who want to see change in the area. Looking back, we wondered why problems of drinking, drugs and damage that had been solved ten years ago were allowed to come back. Why were successful programs including the young leaders and role model program the RMYC used to run at the Windsor Street Family Resource Centre not supported? (Please read news article and letter from the Thunder Bay District Housing Authority at the end of this report).

For positive things to happen, we need to engage those motivated to do something, give them a voice, and support them. We have to listen to what the residents are saying and their ideas, then work with them to be part of the solution to the problems they are facing. With a growing Aboriginal population impacted by the sexual, emotional, mental, and physical abuse in residential schools and lacking parenting skills, we cannot expect them to do a good job of raising children and nurturing them as the rest of society.
The facts today speak for themselves—the high numbers of Aboriginal youths in care, dropping out of school, in the correctional system, and committing suicide. There are more Aboriginal children in care today that the total number of children taken to residential schools. This confirms major problems with parenting. Therefore, it is unrealistic to expect Aboriginal people going through trauma of dysfunctional families and the culture shock of moving from impoverished remote reserves to the city to be ideal parents who know how to raise, discipline and guide their kids in an urban environment. They need help!

We already have the Urban Aboriginal Strategy, the Aboriginal Liaison Policing Unit, and an alternative Restorative Justice program, shelters as well as healing lodges for Aboriginal offenders to help them deal with the damage done to their family structures, culture, traditions, spirituality, and so forth. This was publicly acknowledged by the Prime Minister in Parliament on behalf of the Canadian government on June 11, 2008. We need to act accordingly.

The RMYC’s suggestions to improve the situation include the following:

- The City should take the lead and invest in the human potential at Windsor and engage the residents to be part of the solution to the problems they are facing.

- Re-establish Neighbourhood Policing office at the Windsor Street housing complex which should also serve as community resource centre, and youth drop-in.

- Introduce curfews the residents want to protect all children, and involve them to help with the implementation and enforcement.

- Social service agencies, community groups and churches should do home visits and set up front-line supports for families, especially Aboriginal parents moving from reserves with no parenting skills and lacking urban lifeskills.

- School teachers, police officers and social workers should not stigmatize Windsor residents. The kids deserve a good education for better employment prospects and a brighter future, and need to establish positive relations with the police.

- The City should support local youth drop-in centres and youth-led initiatives to train young leaders to organize positive activities and create role models for positive peer influence.
COUNTY PARK NEIGHBOURHOOD SURVEY -- July 28, 2011
By: Jeremy Kakegamic, Kaine Kindla, Jonathan Campeau, & Trent Campeau

The neighbourhood survey at Country Park took place on July 28, 2011. We set up the barbecue and the sheets of white paper with questions for residents to respond to by the parking lot at our Lady of Charity School. We also sent teams to visit homes and interview residents. The turn-out was good, but consisted of mostly mothers and their children. The empty parking lot was ideal for games for the kids.

The following are the highlights from the survey:

A. What are the top safety concerns in the neighbourhood?

- Break-ins.
- Broken glass.
- Poor lighting on the streets
- Garbage / Litter in the community
- Children's safety
- Strangers hanging around nature path
- Better lighting on trail
- Bored youth
- Violence
- Gangs
- Drunks
- Objects thrown at joggers
- Pop thrown at pedestrians
- Bullying
- Needles
- Drug trafficking
- People partying and swearing
- Fighting
- Loud music
- Ruckus
- Stealing / Thefts
- Break and entering
- Car hopping
- Driving too fast in neighbourhood
- Drugs
- People under the influence
- Vandalism
- Sand on trails
B. What can be done to protect kids and prevent them from getting into trouble.

- More structured activities
- Daycare
- Organized sports
- Community activities
- Community/Recreation centre
- Public swimming pool
- Parks
- Sports
- Youth/Teen Centre
- More events organized for youths
- Parents spending more time with kids
- Teaching kids to stay out of trouble
- After school programs
- More police / Neighbourhood Police
- More activities/events around the 'hood'
- Police patrols
- Curfews
- Better playgrounds

C. What supports do parents need to keep their children safe?

- Better parenting / Parents should know where their kids are.
- Parents should have an idea of what their children are doing
- Financial support to deal with poverty
- Support for yard/grounds improvement
- Awareness of the area/what is going on
- Parenting skills / Ask kids what they are doing and when they will be back
- Canadian food guide
- Peer look out and Neighbourhood watch
- Encouragement to work with other family members
D. Will curfews help?  
YES: 16  
NO: 6

YES:  
- Youth should be off the streets during late evening hours
- Children should have limitations during dusk hours
- Spending time with parents in the evening
- More parental control. It will be safer for the youth and give comfort to the parents.
- Less people in the neighbourhood out at night
- Children need stricter routines
- Will make it easier for parents to get their kids to come home
- Stop children being out late at night on the streets
- Children as well as teens shouldn't be out wandering all hours of the night
- Curfews should be for all kids under 16 for safety
- Add police supervision to add community safe-guards
- Too dangerous for children to be out alone at night
- So they won't come in late
- Gives children a sense of responsibility

NO:  
- Kids don't listen to parents to enforce curfews
- Rely on parents to enforce curfews
- Break curfews
- No one will listen
- It's mostly adults walking around late
- Safety begins in the home, comes out in the community
Four students from Country Park with different cultural backgrounds shared the following:

**Summer Student #1:** “For me, living in County Park has been a great experience. I don't see the stuff that goes on during hours of the night because I am always indoors after dark. I enforce my own curfew, and I don’t really go outside due to people hassling me when I first moved here in September of 2010. I try to stay away from a lot of the bad, and so far, I have managed to do quite well. I don’t really understand why people talk or write about the negative views in the area. I guess you can say I avoid my eyes from these things because I don’t really want to fret on this topic and add stress into a growing neighbourhood.

My first personal experiences back in September-November were a dark time. When I use to go for walks I had to watch myself. My main concerns were the gang activity in the area. Being a Native American, I really had to watch how I dressed or how I walk. I got into a handful of fights over how I dressed. There are my own kind of people in the neighbourhood who are pretty sick and need help. Things will continue to get worse if nothing is done soon.”

**Summer Student #2:** “I recently moved back to Thunder Bay and was settled in County Park. I have been around and have lived in many different areas in the city, but so far County Park has been good to me and my family. From what I’ve seen so far, it is a place for kids to run around and enjoy their time. Compared to other places in the City, I feel that it is a good place to live because my sisters are always outside and have made friends with almost every child around my street.

The major concerns about safety came up last fall when a young woman was brutally murdered in the neighbourhood. This was shocking because other young girls committed the crime. Things have settled a bit now, but what happened still creates fears whether it will happen again. There was a petition presented to City Council earlier this year to improve lighting in the pathways around the area for the safety of residents.

I feel that the people in the area want to make it a good place to live. I do not go out a lot alone at night, so, I do not see much of what goes on after dark. From what I see, I have nothing but praise for the County Park residents wanting to work together to prevent bad things from happening in the neighbourhood.”
**Summer Student #3:** “I have seen worse things in other areas than what is happening in this neighbourhood. After the murder of the young woman last October, I know that many females are afraid to walk alone at night. There seems to be is a pack of homeless looking teens that walk around thinking and looking like they are the top dogs, but in reality there are the losers of society that don’t deserve to get far until they smarten up. The neighbours around my house are very nice and friendly, so I occasionally like to spark up a conversation. A fellow Pow Wow drummer usually tells me that neighbourhood people are crazy and silly, so I should move. Of course I enjoy the place so much that I would like to get my own place in that neighbourhood.

From how much I like to take walks around and come home late, I would agree with others that there should be lights in the walk paths. The bushes around the housing projects are what I would like to call "red zones," places that are full of danger. Although it is often said that County Park is a nasty neighbourhood, I would disagree, at least not like the “Hood” in Regina, Saskatchewan where I lived before coming here.

In Regina, where I used to live, things were very bad with car-thefts, gangs, drug dealing, prostitution, violence and other forms of crime all over the place. Many bad things were happening constantly day and night. It’s not the same as County Park, and would hate it if it become like that. But we have choices of becoming like the “Hood”, or the north-end of Winnipeg, or becoming a better neighbourhood like Castlegreen next door to us.”

**Summer Student #4:** “I have lived in County Park area, and seen many things that go on around there, most of them not good. There is substance abuse, violence, as well as people walking around extremely late. Not just children but adults who are very intoxicated and make it unsafe for the children who are walking around. When I was twelve years old, I got jumped around County Park and had broken bones and bruises. It was serious, and I feel that children should not grow up exposed to the drug scene, drug deals and fights going on right outside your front window.

I went to Our Lady of Charity, and had my first glimpse of the lifestyle of addiction. Youth were breaking school windows and people stealing TV’s, stereos and anything that was worth any little bit of money just to get what they “need”. I have been there, because I have gone through different drug addictions, including Oxy’s, ecstasy, marijuana and more."
It is really hard to stay away from that kind of lifestyle when that is all that you see around in your neighbourhood your whole life. I have been that person who will do just about anything to get that next fix. Some of the things people do for it are just unimaginable. You steal from family and friends, you take cash from your job, lie and cheat to get high. When you get busted, you keep finding new ways to feed your addiction.

Do people really expect the youth to just ignore the drugs? We need to legitimately stop all these crimes or at least get them away from the very public streets. I know that not many people admit it, but personally I do not want more children growing up surrounded by lots of drugs. I have done it and don’t want anyone to go through the same influences. We need to stop ignoring what’s happening and thinking it’s not that bad. It is really a horrible environment for children to grow up seeing adults living on drugs.

There many residents who do not actually have a job and are on welfare. Others deal drugs for money to survive. Some young people grow up feeling that they don’t need to work because they are surrounded by adults who get free easy money! This is another major problem. We should step up and make changes so kids grow up with positive examples, and everyone feels safe and proud of their neighbourhood.

The area of County Park needs more activities to keep kids off the streets, and to help adults who want their children to feel safe and grow up in an appropriate environment. A youth drop-in centre with supervised programs would be good. Street lights should be fixed so people feel safe walking at night. Police patrols are needed to prevent drunks from smashing bottles and crime. The residents should contribute with community clean-ups, picking up broken glass and garbage to make both the playgrounds and streets safer to be around.”

General Observations:

The perceptions of the youth team echo the comments from the residents at County Park who came to the community barbecue or participated in the door-to-door interviews. The main concerns in regards to children’s safety are kids wandering about unsupervised after dark. Some referred to the murder of a sixteen year old girl from Sachigo Lake First Nation last September 21, 2010 at the hands of two other teens (14 and 15 years old) as an example of what can happen when children stay out alone late at night.
The issues of broken glass, garbage, drugs, poor street lighting, violence and crime in general also came up as safety concerns. Residents affected by thefts, break and enter, property damage, seen drug deals, drunks or assaults wanted police patrols or a Neighbourhood Police Office in the area for safety. Many parents feel that more recreational activities to occupy their children especially in summers when school is out and the weather fine. Poor kids need positive alternatives to just wandering about in the neighbourhood looking for things to do.

On the issue of curfews, there are many who support the idea given what was happening in the neighbourhood, the drugs, drunks, gangs, assaults and so forth. Some even had suggestions of the times younger children should be home (7:30 – 8:30 p.m.), and 10:00 p.m. for youths 12-15 years of age, especially during the school year. Times could be adjusted accordingly with day-light saving time when we have longer daylight hours.

Once children start hanging out with the wrong crowd, it is very difficult to turn them around and bring them back. Many become rebellious as was expressed by residents who felt that they would not obey the curfew law. Then, what would you do with them? On the other hand there were parents who said they enforce curfews on their children. In the words of one mother: “I have an almost 18 year old, and I do not let him wander after hours. Avoidable things happen during those hours”.

Many people feel that curfews should be enforced by parents. But given that there are growing numbers of dysfunctional families, single parent families where the only parent has to juggle between night jobs and supervising kids, very young parents or ‘teen moms’ with no parenting skills, and parents who neglect their children due to poverty, addictions, misdirected priorities, or other social problems. The problems are more pronounced in Aboriginal communities impacted by sexual, physical, and emotional abuse in residential schools. The break down of Aboriginal families and their communities was acknowledged by Prime Minister Stephen Harper in Parliament with unanimous support from all parties in the House on June 11, 2008.

We cannot expect people whose own lives have been mentally damaged and are struggling to heal, to play an effective role in providing structure to their children. It is therefore unrealistic to expect them to maintain order or enforce a curfew to protect minors from harm. We feel that external help is required, just as Children’s Aid Societies intervene to ensure the well-being of children, to give kids the structure they need to succeed in school and lay the foundation for the highly competitive global work-world.

The issue of employment was mentioned as a safety issue. When parents are busy trying to hustle jobs to feed the family, pay rent, etc. it is hard for them to concentrate on fulfilling their role as guardians. They spend many hours working night shifts to be there to supervise their children. When there are no jobs, and welfare money does not cover all the bills, people resort to selling drugs for income. There is a ready market for drugs for various reasons, and the ready market is creating a cycle of dependence and addictions that spirals out of control.

When addiction sets, things easily spiral out of control and drugs or alcohol take the upper hand and becoming a priority over everything else including kids and family. Children are neglected and have to find their own fun or ways to survive. If there are no structured activities to participate in, or positive role models they can identify with for direction, bored kids are prone to indulge in vandalism and crime, alcohol, drugs, sex and so forth for excitement. They can also be lured to join gangs for family support and to belong.

As mentioned by one youth team members living in the neighbourhood, the bad things he has seen in County Park, are no way close to the situation in the ‘hoods’ in Regina and Winnipeg. On the other hand, the youth had high praise for Castlegreen very close by. He frequently visits friends there and wanted County Park to have the same community spirit and pride. Otherwise things can slowly deteriorate to what he experienced in the ‘hood’ in Saskatchewan.

The potential exists to turn things around. But creative ideas and supports are needed to empower local residence to act and take pride in their neighbourhood. Police patrols would help, and a Neighbourhood Police Office that serves as a resource centre for residents to meet, plan, and organize activities would be a positive move. The youth can also share the space for meetings, study groups or to access computers. Right now, those who cannot afford computers have to go to the Internet Café on Junot to access the internet.
THUNDER BAY SOUTH-CORE SURVEY
By: Taren Desmoulin, Sarah Foglia, Kaine Kindla, Jacky Mersch, Kay Ostamas & Martin Zhang

On July 29th, we held a barbeque in front of our Youth Centre in the southcore. We were keen to hear what people had to say about the down-town area, and whether concerns were different from public housing projects and other neighbourhoods.

Being just a block away from City Hall, we were curious to hear what local people would like to tell the Mayor, our City Council, Chief of Police and the School Boards. We put up sheets of blank white paper along the sidewalk for people to write their comments. There were a number of illiterate folks who asked our youth team to write for them. Once the BBQ and juice were ready, there was a steady line up of people eager to share their comments before being served hotdogs and juice. Below is a summary of the comments:

1. **What are the top safety issues for kids in this neighborhood?**
   - Needles should be cleaned up/Needle exchange users should use disposal units.
   - Drinking and drunks everywhere
   - Gangs and drugs
   - Nothing for kids to do / No safe places for youth to hang out
   - Bullying and kids hurting each other
   - More jobs opportunities to keep people from wandering about doing nothing
   - Better parental support and supervision
   - It’s not good for kids to see working girls wearing skimpy shorts and tank tops
   - Kids skipping school and hanging out around the mall
   - Racism
   - Communication, people yelling at each other all the time
   - The bar next to the Youth Centre not safe for kids
   - Transportation, people walking home and being jumped
   - Finances - poverty, people doing anything or everything to make some money
   - Violence / Assaults / Fighting
   - Poor parenting
2. What can be done to protect children?
   - Parenting, parenting and parenting
   - Keep your own kids safe
   - All pro-youth groups should interact
   - Have safe houses for 'junkies'
   - More drop-in centers for children
   - More free programs and activities for kids
   - People need to care
   - Teaching children strong morals to be responsible
   - Respect all people
   - Keeps parks and public places clean
   - Need more positive spaces for children
   - More free programs after school to keep children busy
   - Have more family support agencies and funding for child care
   - Have more playgrounds
   - More love, no more hate
   - Children need safe places to play
   - Stop drinking please
   - Teach kids about safety
   - More cops
   - Bring back our Policing Centre
   - Monitor activities of your children
   - Free parenting courses
   - Accessible family services for everyone
3. Will Curfews Work?  

YES:  
- Keep all underage children in after certain hours  
- Some kids will listen to the curfews  
- Will help parents keep kids at home  
- If you're on parole/probation  
- Controls whereabouts of children  
- Will help kids to be safe  
- Parents should control where their children are  
- Keep us children inline, and parents will know where we are  
- Should bring back younger kids indoors and keep them safe  
- Teach children that freedom is earned, not a privilege  
- It is too dangerous for children to be walking around at night  
- If parents can help to enforce them  
- Curfews will help young children under 18

NO:  
- Parents need help to enforce it  
- Parents should be held responsible  
- Nobody will listen  
- It's up to the parents to teach them to be responsible  
- It might help just to get kids off the street at a certain hour  
- Makes more law breakers  
- We would be denying people's rights but parents are responsible for their children  
- People will go out regardless of a set time  
- Communication helps. Need more listening rather than set rules  
- Some kids might think they have done wrong and might not follow the curfews
Given the Youth Centre’s proximity to City Hall, we added a few more questions about our Municipal leaders. While at it, we decided to include the Police Chief and school boards.

4. **What would you like to tell the Mayor?**

- Talk to regular people more often about their concerns
- Stop putting all the money into the waterfront project
- Work on getting youth programs
- Good job / You are doing a great job
- Get working girls off the streets, big time!
- With all the drinking and alcoholics, do we need a Youth Centre by a bar?
- Get young working girls off the streets into a treatment programs
- We need a bigger welfare check. $295.65 is not cutting it for us
- Address more Aboriginal issues
- More programs and supports for kids / Have more programs for teens
- Take a walk in the city to see high risk areas first hand
- We need a resource centre for Aboriginal people from reserves
- Work more directly with First Nations Band authorities
- Work with youth and listen to their concerns
- Learn from the past Mayors’ mistakes
- More cops please / Neighbourhood Policing
- Support neighbourhood watch program
- Help support the Armed Forces
- Help people with affordable rent
- Million dollar project at Waterfront is outrageous. Thank you for your vote again!
- Bring people back to the downtown cores because we have enough urban sprawl
- Help kids to listen, stay in school, respect others, not to drink or do drugs
5. What would you like to tell City Council?

- Try listening to ordinary people for once

- Why are you spending all the money on the light beams at Marina Park when there are so many homeless and starving people

- Seek out innovative ideas to improve the city and local communities – take risks

- Work together with First Nations

- More affordable housing / cheaper rent

- Have a resource centre for growing numbers of Aboriginal people moving to the city to help them find services, and get support to adjust to city life

- Support small organizations, e.g. RMYC that work with at-risk youth

- Take care of all people

- We need a resource centre to deal with issues facing Aboriginal people in the city

- $900,000.00 for art at the Marina, please work on poverty and other serious issues

- Please also listen to people with no money or minimal income.

- Aboriginal issues and racism are major concerns

- Fix downtown Fort William

- Provide spaces for AA meetings and more beds for addiction treatment

- How unfair and unjust to spend outrageously on the waterfront when there is poverty

- We need more programs and supports for Aboriginal people

- Work on poverty, addictions and homelessness issues

- Stop trying to kill small business with higher taxes; can't believe you guys

- More safer hangouts for teens in local neighbourhoods

- Get the streets and roads fixed

- Deal with drugs, gangs and violence

- Create opportunities to promote ourselves worldwide

- Reopen City Hall for bus riders till busses stop running 24/7

- More cops and Neighbourhood Policing

- More activities for youth
6. What would you like to tell the Police Chief?

- Get all the drugs and drug dealers off the street
- Find creative ways to stop crime, invest in prevention programs
- More safe hang outs or playgrounds for kids in local neighbourhoods
- Everyone deserves respect
- More police patrol on foot / street/pools
- We need a drug free environment
- Don't take me to jail, take me to detox
- Crack down on crime against prostitutes
- More programs to rehabilitate criminals and better after-care services
- Better housing and support programs reduces crime
- Better policing service when dealing with the youth
- No racism
- Solve the problem in the down town core
- Treat us the way you would treat yourself. We're not all fools, drunks, hookers or junkies. We deserve respect as human beings
- A place in the south core for a 12-Step program / AA meeting spaces
- Don't sit around so much get out and about on the streets and make the streets safer for everyone
- Charge people for littering needles
- Keep up the good work
- You guys are great

7. What would you like to tell the School Board?

- Find more native teachers
- Have more cultural activities
- More cultural celebrations
• Make sure bullying is a big NO NO
• Control the use of foul language
• Encourage interaction between cultures and races.
• Control bullying, more supervision
• Teach students about safety, tell them to respect each other stay in school, you will reach your dreams
• Please have safe accountable housing for native youth from reserves studying in Thunder Bay schools / more cultural programs
• Respect other cultures
• More Aboriginal youth centres
• Get us to school more, so that we graduate
• Concentrate on educating people on the effects of difference drugs, and how to help others. More information on prevention. It's really bad
• Be nice to people you don't know
• More Aboriginal culture in schools to reduce ignorance and racism
• Aboriginal liaisons and supports for native youth to help them stay in school
• Help out people that are trying to get all of their high school credits, not to put down people having problems with reading, writing and spelling

**Students Personal Experience working in the South core:**

**Student #1**

My personal experience in the south core is seeing a lot of drunks passed out, or walking around causing trouble for no reason. There are also pen-handlers and beggars always asking you for money. I see a lot of drug dealers too wanting to sell you stuff. They do it so openly as if it was legal. I know of people who have been jumped for money, drugs and other valuable things.

Drugs are a huge problem here, and everywhere you go there are needles and other drug paraphernalia laying on the ground. Prostitution is also a big concern, and a lot of kids are growing up seeing girls walking around this neighborhood prostituting.
With nothing to do in the neighbourhood, many teenagers go looking for trouble. Most are on drugs or like drinking. Fighting & stabbings are very common this side of town, and there have been serious injuries and a few deaths. Unless I am with friends waiting for the bus, I am afraid to walk alone at night in the south-core.

*Student # 2:*

The Multicultural Youth Centre in Thunder Bay’s downtown is where I volunteer and spend lots of my free time with friends. The area where I really live is fifteen minutes away on foot, and five minutes by car. My home is on Isabella Street by Franklin Street, next to the old Fort William Collegiate Institute. The area encompasses St. Patrick High School, Vicker’s Park, and Pope John Paul the II Senior Elementary School.

In the summer, flowers are planted on street corners along with shrubbery and new trees. Neighbors get together for yard sales and barbecues. If you’re bored and want to enjoy the summer air, you can go over to Vickers Park- one of the most beautiful parks in Thunder Bay. You will often see people taking wedding, graduation, or other special occasion photos, or kids in playgrounds running around laughing under the watchful eyes of parents, or people just enjoying the park scenery. The neighborhood is full of beautiful houses and perfectly mowed yards. It is a friendly safe environment that depicts the general lifestyle of Thunder Bay’s middle class and white collar citizens.

It is hard to believe that just five minutes away in the south-core, a completely different neighborhood exists. The area has old sullied buildings, with the recently refurbished City Hall as the main attraction. The area seems forgotten, ignored, and disregarded. There are broken beer bottles, used needles, and condoms strewn on sidewalks. There is smell of urine and feces in alleyways where drunks relieve themselves.

Walking alone through the streets, there is nothing friendly or safe about the environment. The Mac's Convenience Stores in the area have been robbed so many times with knives and syringes that no one raises any eyebrows when they hear of another store robbery. Everywhere you look, I see something I am not normally used to, from public drunkenness, prostitutes on roadsides, or groups of older men hanging around willingly cat calling any girl who walks by. It’s all strange, to see this down town next to City Hall and a busy shopping mall. It is like something out of a movie.
The few welcoming areas consist of locally owned cafes shops, and youth centers, but they all close up early for safety reasons after dark. Problems escalated when Newfies Pub opened next to our Youth Centre. The bar has worsened the state of the south core by providing a venue for more locals to abuse alcohol, drug dealers, prescription pill-sellers and prostitutes to hang out. The nuisance created and safety issues have caused businesses such as Take-A-Hike and The International Dance Academy by the Newfies Pub to move out to escape the mayhem. We just do not know why such a bar could be allowed to move next to a Youth Centre where kids hangout. We have tried to relocate to escape the problems, but we do not have the funds for the move.

In this location, our Youth Centre can no longer operate like a real youth drop-in. We now keep the doors locked to prevent drunks staggering in, or drug users trying to force their way in to use washrooms. It is hard to run an open and welcoming facility when you are always afraid of who might walk in and harass youths at the centre. We have to speak with some clients through a half open door just to make sure who they are. This is also creating problems for First Nations youth we work at the centre who are constantly harassed by relations and older acquaintances from their home reserves patronizing the bar. It is creating unnecessary inconveniences for the youth.

The residents in the neighborhood try to cope, and from the stories, we hear about victims of sexual assault, gang violence, substance abuse and so forth. Some students attending elementary schools in the area hangout at the Victoriaville Mall or anywhere they can, looking for something to do. The high drop-out rate and the numbers of jobless people in the area is what contributes to most of the crime related issues, and no one seems to be seriously trying to addresses these issues.

With the obvious problems we have with alcoholism and drug addictions in this community, the City Council should not be allowing bars like Newfies Pub to exist within areas already stricken with large amounts of intravenous drug users, alcoholics and prostitutes. How can two communities living only five minutes away from each other be so different? No two neighborhoods should contrast this much, everyone deserves to live happily in a safe place. Spending time in both of the communities has taught me so much about what to be thankful for, and even at eighteen years of age, it’s hard to believe that 5 minutes can make so much of a difference.
Student # 3:

There are many problems I see in my city, and some of them depend on where you are. But close to the Youth Centre where we hang out, the problems of drinking, drugs, violence, hatred, and racism is what one regularly sees. Most of the racism I see is against native people, and the problem is getting worse. The attitudes and comments are heartbreaking. The racism leads to resentment which becomes a two-way street of hatred which I feel is dividing the community more and more.

It is very damaging to the youth coming from reserves for the first time to attend school to hear the racist talk, and put downs by complete strangers you do not know. It makes you wonder if you are welcome to stay in the city and attend school here. When you go into the shops, store staff follow you around as if you are going to steal something. You are scared to walk alone because you will be verbally or physically assaulted. It makes you wonder who to trust, except your own people. And when you hang out with them, you are afraid to be associated with gangs. This creates feelings of resentment that makes you angry and want to fight back.

Every time I wake up I hope that the world will change over-night, but as I walk throughout the city, I still see drunks, hookers, and racists, I see old friends slowly killing themselves and new graves. I feel sorrow for each person that is trapped in addictions and an endless cycle of quitting and falling back down into the darkness of their problems.

People say that they will help, but it is sometimes already too late for those who need it the most. Also we can't reach out to those who won't accept our help, we can't force the parents and children to change, and we can only teach them how. Even then, who can really help the youth other than youth? When parents fail, and our community leaders only care to please those of influence to them, it is easy for the poor, weak and vulnerable to be caught between the cracks. And when children lose their support, how are they supposed to survive? It's like a table losing its leg. We need to teach youth how to respect themselves and that they have different options. They can choose a new path, and live a different life than what they are seeing every day.

When I see the younger children act the way I feel pain and I feel sorrow. I don't want to see them end up like the past friends and brothers I have lost. These children don't realize that their families would be heart-broken if they died. We always think about what we could have done after those we love are gone and never before.
PROBLEMS WITH THE YOUTH CENTRE’S LOCATION

Issues identified at the barbecue are identical to what the youth who use the Youth Centre have been telling us. They do not feel safe having a bar next door. Since the bar patrons cannot smoke inside, they hang out on the sidewalk blocking the entrance into our Centre. It is intimidating, and does not set a good example for kids coming to use our facilities.

We know that some of the children come to the Centre to escape from the dysfunctional lifestyle, poverty, violence, physical, sexual and emotional abuse, neglect, addictions or other problems, at home, only to see their family members hanging outside the bar. It is hard to avoid the drunks, drug-dealers, prostitutes and panhandlers hanging around. We already have enough problems for our overworked police that we do not need to create more young addicts.

There are people with creepy looks at young girls coming to the Centre as if they are prostitutes. It is a very uncomfortable environment, with some rowdy and potentially violent people hanging out on the sidewalk. We no longer allow adults to just to walk-in and use our washrooms and telephones. Some were using our toilets to drop-off, pick-up or do drugs. Others were using our phones to make drug deals. We learned hard lessons when we had to clean up blood stains all over the bathroom from people shooting drugs. Some were also coming is under the guise of using the phone and washroom to look for personal items such as purses, wallets, i-pods, cell-phones etc. to steal and pawn off.

Around the Youth Centre, there are cigarette butts, broken beer bottles, garbage and used condoms we have to clean up. We also have to deal with people puking or relieving themselves around our building. For the three years we have been at the current location, the Youth Centre window has been smashed, and we had to replace the glass door three times. The RMYC van parked at the back had the windshield smashed twice. This past Civic Holiday weekend, (July 31, 2011) the van was stolen after someone smashed the back window. The police recovered it after ten days and we had to fix the damages.

It is difficult to train peer leaders and role models in such a bad social environment. The youth visiting the Youth Centre have to endure the negative influences including ignoring relatives, acquaintances, and older friends hanging out at Newfies pub. This is very distracting and increases safety concerns and various risk factors among vulnerable youth.
General Discussion:

For the few hours that we were on the sidewalk, the response was fantastic! There were shoppers, business people and locals who hang around the south core, Newfies Pub, and the Victoriaville Centre Mall entrance who provided input. We also had people from the Thunder Bay Shelter House, the John Howard Society and the Methadone Clinic who brought up issues of homelessness, easily accessible AA meeting places for addicts, and the need for positive activities to do in order to avoid relapsing back into addictions.

Affordable housing and social supports for addicts and those with mental health issues was mentioned many times. Support for the destitute, shelter and social programs would help to clean up neighbourhoods and reduce crime, the numbers of new addicts, and the need for costly police services. Jobs are also a strategy to reduce those people having to deal drugs for income to live on. Focusing on prevention will go a long way to improving people's lives and reducing costs. "An ounce of prevention is better than a pound of cure".

A top priority is used needles scattered everywhere in spite of designated disposal areas managed by Superior Points -- a harm reduction program. Addiction to alcohol and/or drugs was a major safety issue fuelling violence, robberies, serious assaults and murders. Thefts are common, and people under the influence argue loudly, shout at each other and often fight. While Police Patrols are having an impact, officers cannot be everywhere day and night. The high crime rate, addicts and undesirable people scare potential customers and visitors.

There were spontaneous discussions among the people writing down the issues and what could be done. Some felt they did not have to write anything because it was already there. Others grabbed the markers several times to add something they had just thought of, but wondered if anything would come out of it. Many were aware of the Youth Centre's financial predicament, and praised the Youth Council for continuing to work with kids downtown. A passer-by set up a donation jar at the BBQ, and we collected $60.00 in two hours.

People appreciate the work of volunteers groups such as Evergreen, the Trash Bashers, Community Safety Initiatives, Grace Church, Eagle's Cry Life Centre, New Hope Youth Centre and churches in the neighbourhood. There is a feeling that City Council should consult more with residents to get on top of the issues, support volunteers groups addressing city priorities such as crime and violence. This is much cheaper than hiring full-time city staff to do the work.
ACADEMY PARK, August 16, 2011

By Trent Campeau, Alexandra Eaton & Sarah Foglia

The barbecue at Academy Park was held on August 16, 2011. Sheets of paper for residents to write comments and we sent teams of youths door-to-door to conduct interviews. About sixty people came to the barbecue, a majority of them women and children. Below is the feedback from the Academy housing project.

A. What are the top safety concerns in this neighbourhood?
- Drinking and abusing drugs
- Drug dealers
- Kids running around unsupervised at all hours
- Eggs being thrown at windows
- Fights / Violence
- Loud drunken parties
- Dirty playgrounds with needles and garbage
- Bad parenting, parents who do not take good care of their kids
- Stray animals
- Break-ins / Thefts / Robberies
- Discrimination / racism
- Speeding drivers not yielding for pedestrians
- Poor lighting in some areas
- Gangs
- Bullying and getting beat up
- People being stalked and jumped
- Children wandering alone at night
- Native people from reserves ignorant about city life
- People carrying weapons for self-defence
- Poor security. Police take a long time to respond to calls
- Vandalism and Graffiti
B. **What can be done to protect kids and prevent them from getting into trouble?**
- Good parenting skills
- Organize social gatherings
- Involve them in planning and organizing activities
- Teach kids to avoid alcohol and drugs
- Support struggling families
- Have a neighbourhood watch program
- Neighbourhood police
- Enforce a curfew
- After-school activities
- Have a youth centre
- Encourage parents to watch over their children
- Have a parents’ support group
- More recreational activities for kids and for families
- Enforce the noise bylaw to maintain peace and quiet
- Police patrols
- Have speed bumps and ticket speeding drivers
- A clean playground with modern equipment
- Keep kids indoors at night

C. **What supports do parents need to keep their children safe?**
- A neighbourhood watch program
- Daycare
- Police patrols
- Teach young mothers parenting skills
- Affordable recreation in neighbourhood
- A good play area for children
- Parenting skills
- Youth centre
- After-school programs
- Food
- Help to discipline kids
- Counselling

D. Will curfews help?  

YES: 21  NO: 3

YES: (some repeat or similar comments)
- Children should not be outside alone late at night
- Encourage parents to supervise their kinds
- Parents will watch out for their children and know who they hang out with
- Reduce the risk of minors drinking and doing drugs at night
- Curfews protect minors from harm
- They will show kids that they cannot stay out all night
- Kids will stay home and be safe after dark
- Curfews reduce vandalism at night
- Stop kids from committing crime at night
- Parents will watch over their children
- Prevent kids from causing any ruckus at night
- Reduce the numbers of kids getting into trouble
- Eliminates the worry of parents not knowing where their children are
- They will help parents to discipline their children
- Curfews help to ensure that kids are safe

NO:
- Rebellious kids will not obey curfews
- Bad parents will not enforce them
- Parents should be responsible
General Observations:

A lot of the parents who came to the barbecues and those interviewed at home were concerned about crime, drugs, drinking and violence in the neighbourhood. The feeling was that things are not getting better. Those who had lived in the area for a long time felt that regular transients contributed to the problems because they were not proud of the neighbourhood. They felt that not enough was being done to help Aboriginal families new to the city adjust to urban living. They also saw no support for young single mothers who were struggling to provide recreational entertainment for their children.

The stress for many young parents was obvious and many could not take care of their children properly. Some were depending on alcohol and drugs to cope, and a lack of community events and neighbourhood support contributed to the rowdy parties. While these were going on, the children were often neglected and left unsupervised, putting them at risk. A lack of employment and poverty contributed to the lifestyles highlighted in the survey.

There residents were concerned about gangs and their involvement in drugs, break and enter, violence and other crimes. They were recruiting in the neighbourhood further expanding their membership, market and misery by creating more addicts and more poverty. Concerns were also expressed about university students who rented townhouses in the area. Many were from out of town and had no ties to the city. Instead of being role models and lending a helping hand to improve the area and their less educated neighbours, many contributed to the noise with noisy parties. They also drove their cars fast putting kids at risk. This made them lose the respect among many local residents.

In regards to curfews, there is the overwhelming feeling that they should be introduced across the city. It was common to see kids running about unsupervised late at night. Parents who care watch over their children all the time and keep them indoors after dark. There is concern that a great number of children are wandering alone outside even after dark, in spite of the many incidents of violence and assaults. Curfews would compel parents and guardians to keep their kids at home after set times.

The few who object to the city mandated curfews said that kids will naturally disobey them, and enforcing them will take police away from other more serious issues or crimes that may be occurring, thereby putting lives at risk.
The following are personal comments from a team member who lives in the Academy community housing area:

Student #1

In my neighbourhood of Academy Drive, drug use is high. There are young children in the area addicted to drugs such as weed. This is the most common drug teenagers can get or buy. Some get into drugs starting at grade five, and we have teens dropping out of school to look for drugs and alcohol.

There are parents who do not care if their teenagers come home early, or choose to stay out until past midnight. The neighbourhood has dances for teens where they can have fun and enjoy themselves. But there are no activities for younger children, but mini dances are being planned during the day.

With the support and some helping hands, parents can get their children home on time and not past curfew. This is one way to keep teens safe, away from drugs and drinking at a young age to avoid getting into trouble.

My neighbourhood would need groups for the youth and young adults. The groups would be created in order to tell youth and young adults what could happen if they do an over dose of drugs or if they get drunk in addition to what the consequences are. When I was living in this neighborhood I had friends that will not go home at all. We would always find drugs; mostly weed, around the playground.

Some teenagers that are 18 or 19 would go down to the neighborhood to sell their drugs. They do not care if they are as young as I was back then. When my friends and I were only five or six years old we tried drugs. We had a stage of not going to school for a long time and just sitting in the nearest baseball field to do the stuff we bought.

I quit drugs at the age of 14 when I got into high school. I made a new life for myself and made new friends who support me in whatever I do that they believe is good.

I started to go to school every day and started to get good grades and pass all my subjects. When I look back at my friends I had at Academy, I see them not going to school, skipping a lot, and failing their classes. Furthermore, some are still in elementary school.

In conclusion, the drugs in Academy Drive are high. The young children are getting into drugs at the age of five, and teenagers are selling drugs to young children raising the crime rate.

Many Academy residents want their neighbourhood to feel safer particularly for children. But some seem to have given up that anything will change.
The barbecue at Crestwood Townhomes in Westfort was held at the children’s playground between Georgina Bay and Holt Place. Sheets of paper and markers were provided for residents to write down comments, and teams of youths also visited those who stayed home.

We had the highest number of children and youth come out to the barbecue. The following is a summary of what we gathered at the event and from interviews in the homes.

1. **What are the top safety concerns in the neighbourhood?**
   - Parents not watching their kids
   - Bullies / Bad kids / There are no good friends
   - Broken glass and broken bottles
   - People using parks as a babysitter, not okay
   - Smoking / Cigarette butts everywhere
   - Drug dealers
   - Violence
   - Children playing near streets and cars speeding
   - Crime
   - Theft / Stealing bikes
   - Vandalism
   - Too much garbage
   - Needles / syringes left everywhere
   - Children running around with no supervision
   - Scary people when they go home from the bars

2. **What can be done to protect kids and prevent them from getting into trouble?**
   - Parents supervising children / Closer supervision
   - Family time
   - Good role models
   - Better adult and peer influence
• Look out for kids
• Show children the difference between right and wrong
• Police driving around / Police patrols
• Get them a cell so you can always contact them
• Keep them inside/watch them
• More activities outside school / After-school program
• Speed bumps on the streets around the neighbourhood
• No violence / teach them good ways
• Deal with poverty
• Need shoes (for protection in playgrounds)

3. What supports do parents need to keep their children safe?
• A fence for protecting kids in neighbourhood
• Security and supervision
• Checking yards for glass and needles
• Community access centre (recreational place to organize events)
• Knowing and using past experience
• Family support
• Neighbourhood Police
• More police patrols
• Good neighbours
• Parenting program
• Just be a parent / Parenting skills
• Learn to spend more time with their children
• More rules to guide and discipline kids
• Neighbourhood curfew needs to be put into effect
• Supervised activities to keep their children safe
• Support for struggling families and teen moms
• Home visits
• Daycare
• Neighbourhood watch
• Drop-in centres
4. Will curfews help?  YES: 15  NO: 8

YES:
- Children should be inside at night
- If police enforce them, and charge parents
- If parents enforce them
- They will help parents to control kids
- As Ronald Regan said "nothing good happens at midnight"
- Reduce vandalism and damage
- No kids will go out of their way to be outside alone at night
- Not as many teens will be out getting drunk and getting into trouble
- Protect kids from harm
- They will encourage parents to be responsible for their children
- Shows that adults care about kids
- Parents will supervise their children
- Reduce problems in the neighbourhood
- Reduce crime

NO:
- There's already a curfew and nobody listens
- No one to enforce it
- Not really
- Police too busy to worry about poor kids
- Some parents don't care
- Kids lack discipline

General observations:
We had the highest percentage children in relation to adults come out to the barbecue. The parents shared the same general concerns about kids running around unsupervised day and night, drug and alcohol abuse, crime, noisy parties, violence, racism, poverty, and litter. We also saw dirty yards and a playground littered with broken glass and bottles, needles, cigarette butts, pop cans, coffee cups, empty food containers, plastics, and so forth.
The kids talked about bad people, drunks, drug users and bullies. They know why their parents want them home when it gets dark. Even though they like to play outside with their friends late at night, they like it when parents show that they care and are concerned about them. Most of the kids at the BBQ had a curfew, and some said they had been grounded for breaking it. But, they all agreed that a curfew was not punishment but a means to keep children safe.

**Summer Student:** “I have lived in the Wesfort area since I was 12 years old. I am 16 years old now. Sometimes it can be very quiet, but at times, kids in the Crestwood Townhouses can be really bad, especially when they are in groups. Peer influence can make them rowdy and get into trouble. Some parents are always parting and hardly there to take care of their kids. They just let them run around everywhere, anytime. This is when kids commit crimes such as breaking into cars, vandalism, starting garage fires, break and enter, and other misdemeanors.

I live about 2 blocks from Crestwood Townhouses, and have not encountered many problems because I don’t hang out in bad areas. Things were quite bad when a student from Webequie First Nation who lived in the area went missing. His body was pulled from the Kaministikwia River in the spring. This scared and continues to worry a lot of youths and their parents.”

**Highlights from the interviews and discussions:**

Un-kept neighbourhood:

- Needles and broken glass are a health hazard for kids. Litter and the feeling of neglect did not make the residents proud of their neighbourhood.

Poor parenting and a lack of supervision:

- Kids running around alone at odd hours made them vulnerable and put them at risk.

- Unsupervised kids and cars driving fast in a residential area is disaster waiting to happen. University students are the worst culprits.

Poverty is a contributing factor to crime, social problems, and related safety issues:

- A lack of employment and small welfare payments caused some people to resort to trafficking narcotics and selling prescription drugs for income to pay bills and live on.
• There are teens getting pregnant, and young mothers having more children so that they get baby allowance for income, and to be on priority list for housing.

Racism a social and economic barrier:

• The problem of racism was identified by many Aboriginal people. Differences in culture, social values and lifestyles, particularly with Aboriginal people new to the city who lack urban social skills and have a hard time adjusting to city life, is creating divisions.

A lack of recreational facilities and after-school program for children and youth:

• Boredom is a contributing factor as kids do not have ideal play areas. The kids' park consists of just one slide, four swings and a discontinued set of monkey bars.

• There are no programs locally for kids or structured after-school activities to engage children and teens in something positive, and keep them occupied.

Solutions:

• A neighbourhood police office and regular patrols should be implemented to provide safety and peace of mind to those concerned about drugs, drunks, assaults, fighting, and other forms of violence. Police presence is a good deterrent to crime.

• A neighbourhood police office can serve as a convenient community resource hub for planning meetings, hosting events, and a youth drop-in centre for after-school activities.

• Create and support a neighbourhood committee to co-ordinate activities and organize events for children, parents and families. Local residents can form support groups, plan garbage clean-ups, and work together on their priorities.

• Introduce curfews to control kids from hanging out unsupervised late at night, and to minimize the risks of harm, violence and crime.

• The city should up-grade the playground at Crestwood. The area should have a recreational park for the youth and families to hang out.
CASTLEGREEN – September 1, 2011
By Sarah Foglia, Nyasha Makuto, Stephanie Kawei, & Sarah Nascimento

The barbecue at Castlegreen was organized at short notice after reviewing the compliments from other neighbourhoods. We hosted the event in front of the administration offices, where staff were very friendly, and helped to promote our visit through internal memos.

We used the same promotional format — large sheets of white paper for residents to write comments. However, the questions were different because we wanted to get information on why people felt Castlegreen was such a great place to live in. We also sent teams door to door to conduct interviews. We did not get a large turn out of adults because many were at work. There were youths, and some mothers came along with their children.

1. Why do you like living in Castlegreen?
   * Very friendly and convenient
   * Community oriented
   * Lots of events and entertainment
   * Lived here for 20 years. A great neighbourhood to raise kids
   * Neighbours help each other to look after children and keep them safe
   * Community attitude
   * People help each other out
   * People are encouraged to be neighbourly
   * Like co-op living
   * Like co-op housing
   * Love it
   * Good for kids
   * Like community feeling
   * Neighbours get along
   * Everyone chills in
   * Everyone watches out for everyone else
   * Everyone looks out for each other
   * Everyone participates in clean-ups, etc.
   * Community Centre offers events for all ages
   * Everyone helps each other
2. What is there to protect kids and prevent them from getting into trouble?
   * Neighbours
   * Having other parents around to help kids
   * Special opportunities for children
   * Special events for kids
   * Planned activities: Easter, Canada Day 1, Halloween, Christmas, etc.
   * Things are reported as soon as they occur
   * Lots of clean play space
   * Well supervised
   * Everyone watches out for each other
   * Well supervised neighbourhood
   * Everyone watches out for each other
   * Police presence
   * Security night-walks
   * Open Parks, quite visible
   * Neighbourhood watch
   * A community which is not all low income
   * Friendly neighbours
   * Parents
   * Parents are responsible
   * Rules to abide by
   * Parents and the community plan activities
   * Each cluster watches out for the kids

3. Is there a set time for kids to be indoors? YES: 15 NO: 4
   * What the law requires
   * No minors should be outdoors after midnight
   * It's a personal decision
   * The neighbourhood helps to send kids home after dark
   * Around 10sh
   * 9:00 p.m. for kids
   * Kids stay indoors after dark
4. What do you think makes Castlegreen such as nice neighbourhood?
* Everyone cares and watches out for others
* Neighbours help out when needed
* The people care about each other
* Neighbours are very helpful, shoveling snow, cutting grass, etc.
* Friendly and convenient
* Quiet
* Everyone we meet is friendly
* The Community is quiet
* Active involvement
* Based on Co-operative model, opposed to for profit
* Everyone looks out for each other
* Neighbours become friends
* We care for each other
* There is constructive criticism
* Screening process to live in Castlegreen to weed out those who do not care about their living environment, respect property and their neighbours
* Lots of clean play space

Comments
The visit to Castlegreen revealed why it is such a nice safe place to live. The reception from the main office and the support to host the event was unprecedented. While visiting houses to drop-off promotional flyers, we saw a very clean neighbourhood, well-kept yards, friendly people, no noise or yelling, no litter, garbage or needles. The playground was well kept and kids were being supervised. The young people we talked with liked the clean safe places to play, the getting along, and how they were looked after. Everyone chipped in!

Parents who brought their children to the barbecue liked the Co-operative model. They enjoyed living in the area because of the friends they made, the informal neighbourhood watch, and the support people give each other. We talked with people who have been living in the neighbourhood for over twenty years. Some who were raised in the area took over their parent’s homes, and continue to enjoy living in the area.
The RMYC had an information booth in the Children’s Area during the annual CLE Family Fair. For the four days of the Fair, we conducted a survey to gauge support for curfews. Over two hundred and forty (240) people who visited our booth completed a simple questionnaire.

On if they see curfews as: Punishment, or as a Safety Measure? They all regard curfews as a safety issue.

On whether they agreed with the Thunder Bay Crime Prevention Council and City Council’s decision not to introduce curfews? A third supported the City’s decision. While there is unanimous agreement that curfews are a safety measure, those in favour of the city’s decision argued that parents should be responsible for enforcing a curfew – not the city. The comments for and against implementing curfews were similar to what we heard at the barbecues.

On what the City should do to help parents control their children after dark, protect kids from harm, youths harming each other, or minors from committing crimes at night, the comments were again very similar to those from the neighbourhoods.

The following are the comments and suggestions by those supporting the Thunder Bay Crime Prevention Council, and City Council’s decision against introducing curfews:

- I do not agree that a curfew is the answer as that depends on parent and police ‘enforcing’ or ‘buying into the curfew’. Increased activities at night, promoting healthy civic engagement, and community involvement are the keys.

- I don’t think a curfew is the answer. More city funded programs for youth like Big Brothers/Big Sisters, and Boys and Girls Club, etc. Perhaps some overnight programs, sports, camping, hiking, games etc.

- Parents should discipline children. As an Aboriginal, I notice that Aboriginal youth are not routined, oriented, or disciplined.

- Parents should try to enforce curfews on their children. They should also try to engage them in extra-curricular activities or sports.
• Create places with a great environment. There are no bad kids, just bad environments in some places (zeitgeist.com – moving forward).

• Make parents responsible for the actions of minors,

• More youth directed activities would be extremely beneficial. Thunder Bay youth are at a disadvantage as most activities geared towards that group end earlier than parent-induced curfews, resulting in later night 'spare time'. Keep the activities—all age shows, parks, etc going later.

• Unfortunately there is nothing the city can do.

• Tough issue. Have programs during the day to get youth at risk engaged, build confidence in the positive things that they can do – arts, athletics, etc. Decrease the gaps in our society (socioeconomic) – that's a long-term ideal. Short-term? Maybe a curfew. Look at innovative successful programs in other communities.

There were more comments and suggestions from those who did not agree with the decision against curfews as follows:

* Parents seem to have lost the ability and or desire to provide discipline to their children. Perhaps the City should set a by-law in place for curfews and if the child is found out after this time (11:00 p.m. or 12 midnight, then the parent must attend a seminar or face a fine. My parents never had a problem getting me into the house when the street lights came on.

* Even though there are children at risk when they are at home, there is still a potential for increased danger to them in the community. Kids staying out late makes it hard for them to do well in school'.

* Parents should go on patrol if their children have been reported doing harmful or unlawful activities. That way they could see what the kids are like an what they are doing at night.

* Enforce existing laws for minors to be indoors after dark unless accompanied by adults.
A curfew should be introduced within reason, and if kids are out after the set time, children should have a valid reason i.e. going home, after work, and should have some kind of proof to that effect. Gangs of children found on streets should be taken home and parents called. I am sure with the many people living in Thunder Bay, common sense will prevail and some solution can be reached.

I think they need curfews! I also believe our Community Centres should be open evenings with staff running programs for young teens (11-16 years). Performances and entertainment with music and churches running coffee house programs for youth and staffed by volunteers.

Introduce more indoor programs and open community halls for youth activities.

have more police patrols, or have a buddy system.

I don’t believe that police should have a say because of the “institutional racism” that exists in this city. As an Aboriginal person, I endure racism on an almost daily basis.

The city should have curfews because children need to be safe, and parents should know where their children are.

There should be a curfew for teens under 16 years -- 10:00 p.m. It should be enforced by police and they should bring loitering children home. However, the major problem is boredom. Kids are too bored as there is nothing structured for them to do when they are not at school. There needs to be more after school activities, group events, as well as safe places where youths can go to do homework, or hang out with friends.

Take them home and ask parents if their kids were allowed to be out. Ask parents if they require help with their children.

Put a curfew in place and make the kids and parents comply.

I just think it’s dangerous for kids to be out alone unsupervised because there are a lot of drunks, perverts, and bad drivers.

Support youth centres that offer safe activities and parents should be encouraged and supported to be involved in their children’s lives.
Curfews are necessary and an acceptable safety measure.

Have signs and TV ads to warn children to stay indoors after a certain time. Warning them that they will be ticketed for breaking curfews will keep control of crime rate, and have parents worry less of their children's safety.

The city could best help protect kids after dark by providing facilities and supporting organizations that work with at risk youth. Maybe more skate parks, clubs, youth centres and youth out-reach programs to keep minors off the streets and out of trouble. Other ideas would be more organized programs like music, talent shows, and skills training in the evenings.

Have programs for older youth to go to that run at night, some (not all) free of charge.

The curfew is needed to see that the kids are not out just to get into mischief, but should take into consideration that: The last buses run until 12:20 a.m.; Homeless kids have nowhere to go; Kids out coming from work or a function; Honest kids on their way home should not be affected by a curfew.

The city should have police officers visit schools to tell kids about safety, the dangers of being out late, and inform them how they can keep themselves safe.

There is no reason for minors to be out with no parents/guardians, or at a job after 10:00 p.m.. If they are out because home is not "safe", then that needs to be addressed. Does anyone really believe a 12 year old is safer on the streets at midnight? We are a community, and if some parents will not look after their children, then we have to do something.

Parents need to take responsibility for their children. This will reduce vandalism and other crimes. Those children found wandering after the curfew should be escorted home by the police – perhaps 10:00 p.m. on school nights and midnight on weekends. Names of children should be kept for future reference. After a certain number of warnings (2 or 3), charges should be laid. A money fine is likely one of the few ways irresponsible parents will be 'encouraged' to supervise their children more closely.

There should be a call-in line to report children out after 11:00 p.m., as well as to report people who repeatedly leave their children alone at home unsupervised.
* Children under age of 12 should be indoors by 10:00 p.m. Children ages 13-18, curfew at their parents' discretion. 12 years and under should be accompanied by an adult if out after 10:00 p.m. Also, there should be a government issued identification card or student card for minors for proof of age and identity.

* Have information nights for parents, or home visits to educate parents on curfews and the need to protect kids from crime, being harmed, and vandalizing property. Teach parenting skills to those who need help.

* Kids should have more access to affordable recreation and things to do.

* Enforce curfew already on the books from years ago.

* Have set fines for curfew delinquents, or let them do community work.

* Offer programs at night, and have safe play areas for kids to go that are well lit and regularly patrolled.

* I believe that the city should introduce a curfew because a lot of problems that occur after hours would be solved, and the crime rate would be lowered, while the safety of youths would increase. No kids would be out late at night doing bad things.

* Invest in activities and programs for children. Encourage children and teens to become more involved via free activities and sports. Curfews alone are not helping, and will not get rid of crime. Being more involved with more opportunities has worked elsewhere with more positive results.

* Patrol parks, enforce curfews on streets and make kids leave. Drive them home if necessary.

* Curfews should be in place based on age. They serve as a reminder we all need.

* Organize neighbourhoods and involve local people to take some ownership and be involved in enforcing a curfew.

* It starts at home, and kids who are not trouble makers should not be penalized. Punishment should be harsher as a deterrent, and people of all ages should be made accountable for their actions, regardless.
CONCLUDING COMMENTS

This report covers the Regional Multicultural Youth Council's (RMYC) efforts to engage ordinary people, families and children to tell their stories and invite them to come up with solutions to improve their neighbourhoods. We are sharing the information with decision and policy makers so that they can act on our suggestions to make things better.

There is a general acknowledgement that social conditions in all the public housing projects are deteriorating, and Castlegreen is seen as a model residential area. The main concerns in all neighbourhoods are basically the same—addictions, crime, poverty, racism, unemployment, a lack of resources and limited support to improve conditions. Addiction is a symptom of underlying problems. Not dealing with the root causes compounds the situation because both the original issues and the addiction need to be addressed in order to move forward.

Children are a reflection of how they are raised. Those growing up in bad neighbourhoods regard what they see as normal. Aboriginal children socialized on remote isolated reserves where the community suffers from the legacy of residential schools are socialized accordingly, and the negative experiences become a way of life. Family breakups, addictions, dysfunctional homes, violence, suicide, poverty, over-crowding, unemployment, and a lack of parenting skills resulting in the absence of structure, morals, manners, a work ethic and hopelessness. The internalized values and conditioned behaviour create problems in the city that feed the racism.

Residential schools are a unique experience other Canadians never had, and mainstream solutions have failed to deal with the consequences as evidences by the prevailing social situations that continue to deteriorate. Special approaches are required to intervene and address the complex problems compounded by colonization and restrictions imposed by the patronizing Indian Act that governs the lives of First Nations. The Indian Act has fostered a culture of dependency and welfare mentality. Obviously, more work needs to be done educate the general public on how past government policies destroyed Aboriginal families and created the results we see today. We should be cognizant of devastating effects of residential schools on communities and families, the traumatic experiences of individuals, and the on-going intergenerational impacts on children and youth. Many Canadians do not realize the horrendous situations many Aboriginal people have lived through and are reflected in daily actions and interactions in our community.
The fact that there are more Aboriginal children in care today than the numbers that went to residential schools confirms that and what we have been doing is not working. A lack of stable family is the norm among many Aboriginal children, and it should bother us when they are joining gangs to belong to something that resembles a family. Crime statistics reveal high numbers of Aboriginal youth caught in the correctional system. Criminal youth gangs such as Manitoba Warrior, Native Syndicate, Indian Posse, Redd Alert are busy recruiting inside and outside penitentiaries raising fear in the community. Jails have become the main recruiting centres for native youth gangs, and it is estimated that the numbers will double in the next ten years. The problem is compounded by the high incidents of fetal alcohol syndrome that make Aboriginal youth vulnerability to gang recruitment. In Thunder Bay, gangs are involved drug trafficking, prostitution, bootlegging, break-and-enter, intimidation and robberies, and this creates anxiety and resentment among neighbours.

According to Corrections Canada, the high rates of imprisonment for Aboriginal people remain despite changes made by Parliament to the sentencing provisions of the criminal code. Aboriginal gangs are a major contributor to the over-representation of Aboriginal people in the criminal justice system. The poor home environment creates a self-sustaining cycle of criminal activity, and once caught in the correctional system, it is hard to break free. The social conditioning and pattern of behaviour due to a lack of identity and respect feeds the negative stereotypes, prejudice, racism and discrimination that exists in the community. It is common for Aboriginal youth not to be invited for interviews or get job offers, not be offered a place to rent, be targeted by racist graffiti or racist comments, and to have items such as eggs, pizza, pop, coffee cups and so forth thrown at them at bus stops or on the streets.

The racial tensions are escalating into violent assaults. Growing numbers of Aboriginal kids have been jumped walking home. Those fighting back report the assaults becoming bigger as people gang up on each other. There is a sense of hopelessness and powerlessness as polarizing attitudes making it hard to forge harmony. The Youth Council's Racist Incident Reporting Forms is intended to engage victims and involve them to help come up with solutions. The call for curfews will also help to remove kids from the streets after dark. Keeping them indoors at night will reduce their presence outside at night. This will certainly have an impact on racial incidents after hours and protect them from being exposed to, and involved in crime. Any help to protect the youth, get them to stay out of trouble, provide structure and support them to stay in school and succeed will make a difference.
In the RMYC’s 25 year history, we have seen the erosion of social programs and a dismantling of our safety nets which impact the poor. During the same time, we have observed more teens becoming parents at very young ages. Many are engaging in unprotected sex under the influence, risking the spread of sexually transmitted diseases, and having babies affected by fetal alcohol syndrome and related health issues. A study by the Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres revealed that Aboriginal children are having sex as young as young as 11 years old, and unwanted pregnancies are perpetuating cycles of poverty, despair, and a demand for foster homes. Addictions, the spread of sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS add to rising health-care costs that have nearly doubled during the past ten years.

Trends where young girls are becoming mothers to access welfare, free housing, food banks, and other basic supports for up-keep in the city have become a way of life. Family planning studies confirm that once a teen becomes a mother, chances of more pregnancies increase with greater frequency. This puts education on hold, and immaturity together with a lack of parenting skills contribute to problems that are affecting children, and the rest of society.

It is disturbing that there are many young women falling pregnant while under the influence of alcohol and drugs, and continue to drink and abuse drugs during pregnancy. In discussions, they are not aware of the link between abusing alcohol, substances, or sniffing with mental illness, fetal alcohol syndrome fetal alcohol effects, fetal alcohol spectrum disorder, attention deficit disorder and other addiction-induced diseases. This disconnect is feeding the mental health epidemic that is causing learning disabilities that contribute to the high numbers of young offenders caught in the correctional system.

The RMYC initiated the Revolution Girls Style/Girl Power Program for young women in 1998, and several years later, Brothers (Boys Rights Of Themed Habits Encouraging Right Skills) for young males to empower the youth to realize their potential. Youths communicate better with each other and peer pressure exerts a lot of influence on how young people behave. Training peer leaders and developing role models who use positive peer influence has enabled the RMYC to initiate change. This has been an effective strategy to connect with children and youth to discuss issues such as teen pregnancy, addictions, fetal alcohol effects, education, jobs, violence and racism, healthy lifestyles and other topics of mutual interest. While we are pleased that the City of Thunder Bay and Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) have adopted our Girl Power Program to connect with young females, the RMYC is struggling financially to exist.
The Youth Council also pioneered an Orientation Program to welcome Aboriginal students to city schools twenty years ago. Modelled from settlement services to welcome newcomers to Canada, the reception and orientation helps to ease transition from small isolated reserves to city life, and creates opportunities to share survival skills to succeed. The program has helped to reduce attrition rates (see letter from The Lakehead School Board in appendix). In spite of the positive impact of this youth-led initiative, a lack of funding resulted in the RMYC failing to host orientations and organize follow-up activities to help students to graduate.

The Youth Council has participated in consultations and prepared reports for Justice Canada on Teen Courts, Youth Criminal Justice Act, Premier Dalton McGuinty’s ‘Review of the Roots of Youth Violence’, Ministry of Education’s ‘Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy’, Ministry of Children and Youth’s ‘Youth Engagement Strategy’, and the Ontario Provincial Advocate’s Office on the ‘Reggie Bushie Coroner’s Inquest’. We have co-ordinated projects and held forums on youth priorities for school boards, education authorities, First Nations and so forth.

We have received many awards for our accomplishments during the past twenty years (see Appendix) but continue to experience funding problems after a Casino opened downtown in 2000. This has been siphoning the proceeds we used to earn from fundraising bingos. The City and Ontario Trillium Foundation are getting the Casino profits but do not compensate us for lost revenue. In addition, granting agencies such as United Way will not fund us because Revenue Canada will not give us a charitable number.

As a dependent population with no capital to run our youth-led activities and sustain programs, we are struggling to make ends meet. We are spending more time fundraising to keep our youth centre open, instead of using our skills and talents to network with peers and help each other. Consequently, we cannot maintain successful initiatives on high-risk neighbourhoods. We have been able to keep going because our executive director volunteers his services and gets paid from a small restaurant he runs, and sponsors some activities when profits are good.

We are pleased that the City now has an Aboriginal Liaison to address the needs of Aboriginal people. Unfortunately, the response has been reactive to deal with problems rather than being proactive to prevent issues happening. In spite of our recommendation in 2008 for the city to create a “Welcome Wagon” to meet, greet and identify the needs of a fast-growing Aboriginal population from reserves, no formal reception and orientation program exists. The need is obvious from the feedback in neighbourhoods, and the problems are growing out of hand.
Financial problems have seriously affected the Youth Council's ability to train peer leaders, create role models who can work with children and youth in all neighbourhoods across the city, and various communities in the region. This has been an effective strategy to connect with peers, engage students, empower them to assume responsibility for their well-being, and support them to contribute for the betterment of the community.

The RMYC welcomes the assistance of Nishnawbe Aski Chiefs-in-Assembly who passed a unanimous resolution to work with the Youth Council and support our activities targeting their youth. Given the apprehension Aboriginal people have about assimilation, we believe that we are the only multicultural group in Canada being sustained by First Nations. However, individual bands only pay for their students, and this limits our services to those who are sponsored. As an inclusive multicultural group, it is a constant challenge to secure funding to serve everyone, as well as train and develop the capacity of peer leaders from diverse backgrounds to work with Aboriginal children and youth on and off reserves.

We are pleased that since last year, the Ministry of Health Promotion has been funding our After-school Program to run three days a week for three hours a day at the Youth centre. But, given the problems of alcohol abuse in the community, it has been a real challenge to organize after-school activities at our Youth Centre downtown next to Newfies Pub. Thanks to Dennis Franklin Cromarty High School for offering space to organize after-school activities away from the bar, even though this has left kids in the south-core with no facility. We need new space and funding to expand the program to run more than three hours a day all days of the week.

The RMYC is grateful to those who sponsored this project listed under Acknowledgements. The $1,000.00 donation from the Urban Aboriginal Strategy (UAS) enabled us to include more neighbourhoods this year. We support the UAS's activities to improve students' success and retention rates. With the correlation between school drop-outs, crime and incarceration rates, this is a proactive approach to improve the standard of living in the Aboriginal community, deal with poverty, combat racism, make our communities safer, and foster positive race relations.

The RMYC is also targeting students and focusing on education's potential as a strong foundation to transform individuals and their communities by opening doors to more opportunities. We are working at DFC to reduce student attrition, which was high as sixty percent in 2009. Our after-school program and extra-curricular activities have so far helped to reduce the drop-out rate by thirty percent, and we are promoting safety among the students.
Issues of alcohol, drugs, violence, gangs, poverty, racism, crime, unemployment and so forth identified in city neighbourhoods make finding good boarding homes in safer areas a real challenge. All four deaths of Aboriginal boarding students in the past two years happened in areas we visited. Racism is a top priority among native youths who say that harassment on the streets and while riding the city transit affects school attendance. The RMYC supports the idea of a students' residence at DFC as recommended during our consultations for the Reggie Bushie Coroner's Inquest. Housing students by the school will reduce safety risks, lateness and absenteeism. It will also be easy to run orientation sessions to provide urban life-skills. Staying by the school will encourage students to participate in extra-curricular activities, attend after-school programs for academic up-grading to help them graduate, as well as involve them in special initiatives to prepare for the mainstream work-world.

A pilot project funded by the Ministry of Children and Youth last year enabled us to train student leaders at DFC. We were able to train role models who used peer influence to involve other students in positive activities. The ripple effects have far-reaching impact beyond the school by having an impact in their home communities. We believe that engaging youth to realize their potential, and making them part of the solution to the problems they are facing, empowers them to be agents of change. Unfortunately, pilot projects and one-time grants undermine efforts to apply best practices and build on successful initiatives. It is hard to keep kids involved when we cannot maintain popular activities they like, and sustain good programs.

The Youth Council has been able to connect with Aboriginal children and youth, and we have forged positive relations with First Nations who support our work. In the context of the racial tensions and divisions in the city, we believe we have a unique position as a trusted and honest broker. The Aboriginal youth and students we are working with reside in the city, boost our population base and contribute to the growth of our economy. They are also future leaders in their communities surrounded by natural resources Thunder Bay needs to grow. Providing good experiences for them while attending school, and providing the special supports they need to succeed is an investment in this great human potential that is here to stay. We should take advantage of this opportunity and build bridges for harmony and prosperity.

The RMYC needs funding to stabilize our operations so that we continue to engage children and youth and involve parents in positive activities that create healthy families, and make our communities safer and prosperous. We hope that City Council will step-up and fund our work.
City falling apart, says new report
Council accused of missing trouble in neighbourhoods

BY JIM KELLY
THE CHRONICLE-JOURNAL

Thunder Bay city council seems to be more concerned with the waterfront and refurbishing city hall than it is about neighbourhoods that are crime-ridden and falling apart at the seams, says the executive director of the Multicultural Association of Northwestern Ontario.

Moffat Makuto was responding to a report by the Regional Multicultural Youth Council (RMYC), “Thunder Bay Neighbourhood Profiles, A Youth Perspective”.

The report focuses on Limbrick Place, Academy Park, Windsor Place and the city’s south core as hotbeds of gang activity, violence, sexual and physical assaults, and drug dealing.

“The south core scares us,” said Makuto. “You can get just about any pill you want there.”

“The city hall is next door and they’re spending over $4 million to refurbish it and yet the neighbourhood is rotting. We’re hoping council starts to realize that,” he said.

“We know they have big business with the waterfront, but they seem to have missed what’s happening in the neighbourhoods.”

The report stems from a project conducted in July and August that gathered information from discussions, interviews and focus groups in the selected neighbourhoods.

The goal was to identify the issues affecting children and youth, but also includes input from parents and other adults.

“The thing that bothers a lot of us working with young people is that if nothing is done, these young people today in five years will be parents, and what are they going to pass on to their kids?” Makuto asked.

He said many of the parents living in these neighbourhoods are addicts and hunger is a problem for their children since what money is available is spent on drugs.

Children are force to shoplift and the become vulnerable to being recruited by gangs, he said.

“We won’t win all the kids because the gangs have more money than we do, but we can help some of those who have parental support to do something positive,” Makuto said.

Moffat Makuto, Courtney Towegejick and Tabitha Papassay look over posters created by Thunder Bay youths to express their feelings about their neighbourhoods. The input was considered in a Multicultural Youth Services report released Tuesday.

City department tuned in: mayor

• Continued from page A1

The Ogden/Simpson Street area was also identified in the report as an area where alcohol, drugs, prostitution, violence and gangs are everyday problems.

One 13-year-old boy interviewed said a woman standing on a street corner openly asked him if he wanted to have some fun.

Of the 12 recommendations in the report, Makuto said a key one is that city council commit a percentage of its casino revenues to promote the Thunder Bay Children’s Charter, which was developed “to state a vision for the children of Thunder Bay, based on the United Nations convention on the Rights of the Child.”

The recommendation says the city should provide financial support to local charities working in troubled neighbourhoods with the focus on disadvantaged children and youth.

“Funding from city hall would show appreciation for the worthwhile services volunteers are dedicating to the well-being of our community,” says the report.

“We will go a long way to reach out and benefit more kids.” Another recommendation urges council to look at the issues specific to neighbourhoods and work with police to tackle criminal activities.

Mayor Lynn Peterson said the city has an office of the neighbourhood that has been “absolutely and totally focused” on the south core for the past two years.

“They asked the community about the issues and how to move forward on them,” she said.

“And certainly there was an entire plan which came to council which was (partially) funded.”

“A lot of the issues identified in the report have been identified in the office of the neighbourhood work plan and there’s been considerable effort put forward,” Peterson said.

She said that after reading the report, she thinks that not enough information is received by the public about city programs and how they can be accessed.

Jim.kelly@chroniclejournal.com

• Continued on page A4
South-side crime wave

Attack on teen focuses attention on neighbourhood safety

THUNDER BAY

By Jodi Lundmark - TB Source

Standing in front of a broken window at the Regional Multicultural Youth Centre on Victoria Avenue East, Moffat Makuto said it’s hard to work with young people and tell them a neighbourhood is safe when vandalism and violent crimes are commonplace.

“We’ve had big issues since the bar opened next door,” said the executive director of the youth centre. “It’s not very compatible with what we are trying to do to promote to young people about safety. We all know in Thunder Bay we have gangs – that’s a big issue – drugs and alcohol abuse. They can lead to violence, which really threatens our safety.”

Makuto said the Victoria Ave and Brodie Street area has really gone downhill in recent years and people are frustrated. He said the number of times police get called to the area speaks for itself and at night he’s even worried about walking by himself.

“It’s not so comfortable anymore like it used to be,” he said. “When we are doing programs here we have to keep the doors locked and you never want to feel something like that for a drop-in centre.”

He’s not the only one worried, especially after last Saturday’s incident when a 16-year-old male was robbed by three adults on Victoria Avenue at 9:15 a.m.

Getting worse

Ski Haus manager Steve Scollie said he does feel crime is worsening in the area, but he is optimistic with the changes occurring in the south core.

“There is some light at the end of the tunnel,” he said. “We’re hoping to survive the construction of the new courthouse and with the destruction of the bus terminal, I feel the area will be improved dramatically. It’s unfortunate to hear about recent incidents. I think in a downtown area that’s not unusual but unfortunate nonetheless.”

But Scollie isn’t afraid to walk down the street.

“I’ve been working in the area for 20 years starting part-time as a high school student,” he said. “I’m very comfortable in the area.”

Caryll Watkinson, owner of Caryll’s Yarns, also isn’t afraid of the area.

“It doesn’t scare me,” she said. “I guess I’m a tough old lady.”

Other than a couple of broken windows, Watkinson said she hasn’t had any trouble.

“I feel pretty secure in my building,” she said. “I haven’t had anything that has worried me as far as fearing for my life or anything like that so I’m fine.”

Despite incidents like last weekend’s robbery, Thunder Bay Police Services’ Chief Bob Herman said the vast majority of violent crimes happen outside of the city’s two downtown cores, with only about 19 per cent happening in the north and south cores. And just 12 per cent of property crimes occur within the cores.

“If you look at incidences we have to respond to as a police service, the bigger issue is obviously outside of the cores,” he said. “But at the end of the day because you do have people congregating into the cores, it doesn’t really matter what the statistics are.”

“What it boils down to is if they feel safe,” Herman added. “It’s making people understand that sometimes what they see may not be a criminal act or people involved in criminal activity but are certainly involved in disorder issues that they feel the police should be dealing with.”

Limitations

But the police can only deal with it to a certain point, Herman said.

“At some point the community has to come together to deal with those issues,” he said. However, the police have addressed people’s concerns in the area with a number of initiatives including the beat officer program, which Herman said they are planning to enhance.

“At the end of the day we want the cores to be a place where people feel safe to go,” he said. “In order to do that, we’re going to have to increase our presence. There are issues around contracts – collective agreements that we have to deal with – but the association has been very good coming to the table to discuss those issues with us.”

Herman said the police are also going to revamp their neighbourhood policing model and they have their drug, gang and special units that do routine walks through the south core.
Neighbourhood cleans itself up

Rock Around the Block Party on Saturday celebrates area’s success

BY PHIL ANDREWS
THE CHRONICLE-JOURNAL

A Thunder Bay neighbourhood hurt by crime, violence and substance abuse in the past is gearing up for a block party Saturday to celebrate its successes.

Joan Beckingham, a community housing worker with the Thunder Bay District Housing Authority, said it doesn’t matter how many people attend the Windsor Street area’s Rock Around the Block Party.

“It’s more important that people here know about the positive partnerships and programs they have in this community,” said Beckingham, whose agency administers a 51-unit public housing project on Windsor Street.

“This is a good place and the people in this neighbourhood are good people,” she said.

Beckingham said she and other agency leaders organizing the event had proposed a street dance for youths.

But area teenagers said they wanted a celebration in which their younger siblings and other people in the neighbourhood could participate.

Planning began on a party and a show of pride that will include a powwow, crafts produced in the neighbourhood and an open house featuring programs running out of the Windsor Street Family Resource Centre.

“We’re going to close off the whole block,” said Maggie Rocheleau, the centre’s program co-ordinator.

Rocheleau said Mayor Ken Boshcoff and Port Arthur MPP Michael Gravelle are to attend and several other dignitaries and heads of local social service organizations are also invited.

A 1 p.m. ribbon cutting and an open house at the centre will kick off the event.

The centre, at 16-288 Windsor St., is a converted three-storey home. It houses a youth drop-in centre, a community kitchen, a clothing depot, a neighbourhood police office and other services.

John Briand, a resident of the Windsor Street complex, said the centre has changed the neighbourhood and he’s looking forward to the party.

“It was really bad here with the drinking and the drugs and a lot of (property) damage. . . . It’s not anymore.”

For more information about the party, call 345-9357.

Our thoughts/A6
December 7, 1998

Mr. Moffat Makoto, Executive Director & Regional Multicultural Consultant
Multicultural Association of Northwestern Ontario
Fax# 622-7271

Dear Moffat:

I am pleased to provide you with a letter of support for you to include in your request for funding under the City of Thunder Bay, Financial Assistance Program. The Regional Multicultural Youth Council has been a valued partner to the people working in the Windsor Street Family Resource Center and to the people who live in this neighbourhood.

As Community Relations Worker for the Thunder Bay District Housing Authority, much of my work focuses on community development. Liaisons with community agencies and individuals are vital to our efforts to foster healthy communities. Much of our concern centers on the youth and the need to provide them with programming and leadership. Over the summer months, the Youth Leaders of the Multicultural Youth Center made it possible to host weekly sports and fund raising activities. In addition, the summer camping trip with the Community Police Officer may not have occurred without the assistance of these youth leaders. We also appreciate the availability of the Multicultural Youth Center sound system and the van which allowed us to provide transportation.

I hope that this letter is beneficial to the Youth Center as the work done by these youth leaders was successful and meaningful to the young people living in the Windsor Street area. We are grateful for the work done by the Regional Multicultural Youth Council and look forward to continued partnership activities in the future.

Yours truly,

Joan Beckingham
Community Relations Worker
September 23, 1998

Moffatt Makuto
Multicultural Youth Center
711 Victoria Ave E
P7C 5X9

Dear Moffatt:

Katherine and I would like to express our deepest thank you for all your help, support, and time in the organization of the Rock Around The Block.

Moffatt we are grateful for having the opportunity of working with the Multicultural Youth Center. Kwasi, Bill, and Kevin were wonderful youth leaders, and are missed in our Youth Zone. We look forward to working with you again in the near future.

Your passion for children and the youth show how good, and kind your heart is and we thank the Lord for more people like you. Moffatt keep up the good work your doing and again thank you.

Maggie Rocheleau

Program Coordinator Maggie Rocheleau

Katherine Augustine

Secretary Katherine Augustine
All cleaned up

Adam Nebenionquit, left, and brothers Ryan, centre, and Travis Hay paint over graffiti in Thunder Bay’s East End underpass as part of the launch of Stand Up And Paint The Town Clean Day, set for Aug. 25. The painting program, sponsored by the Community Coalition Unified for the Protection of Children and Youth, Thunder Bay Neighbourhood Police, Neighbourhood Watch, Graffiti Watch and the Youth Multicultural Organization, is an ongoing effort to wipe out graffiti as it appears.
parents... do you know where your kids are hanging out tonight?

we provide support & direction, before it's too late.
CREATING HEALTHY NEIGHBOURHOODS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

The Regional Multicultural Youth Council (RMYC) is reaching out to parents concerned about the safety of children and youth in our neighbourhoods. From local surveys, consultations and meetings, the RMYC has developed a plan of action with the following goals and objectives:

GOALS: Forming action committees and working groups that bring people together to create healthy neighbourhoods for children, and safer communities for everyone.

OBJECTIVES:

* To encourage parents and youths to form action-oriented committees and working groups to address quality of life issues and safety concerns in areas where they live.

* To create young leaders who engage their peers to be part of the solution to problems they face, and train role models to use positive peer influence and make a difference.

* To assist committee members and volunteers to acquire leadership and organizational development skills for planning, organizing and co-ordinating their own activities.

* To seek resources and supports for neighbourhood action committees to consult with residents about their priorities, develop strategic plans that empower them to make improvements, and engage them for input and feedback on the programs, services, supports and resources they need to improve their social conditions and quality of life.

* To liaise with the City of Thunder Bay Children’s Advocate on the Thunder Bay Children’s Charter, work with agencies, service providers, businesses, police, city departments, potential funders and other stakeholders to enhance the wellbeing of children and youth, and collaborate to deal with inequities that impact our standard of living.

* To organize activities for parents and children to have fun together, host events that promote healthy lifestyles and wellness, and co-ordinate celebrations for families from diverse backgrounds to respect each other and learn to get along.
When parents can’t cope with problem kids

During July and August, the Regional Multicultural Youth Council (RMYC) visited several Thunder Bay neighbourhoods to talk with parents and children regarding their primary concerns. Alcohol and drug abuse, crime, violence, gangs, racism, poverty and employment were the top priorities.

After surveying over 1,000 people in the community housing projects, the south core, and visitors to our children’s area booth during the CLE, we have discovered that there is overwhelming support for curfews.

A curfew acts as a safety measure to protect children from harm and reduce crime by unsupervised minors. The general consensus is that parents should be responsible for setting times children should be home and enforcing curfews.

But what happens when parents do not know how to take care of their children? Or when parents cannot cope with kids with mental health issues, or control those suffering from fetal alcohol effects, and are unable to discipline their children properly?

Such problems are more pronounced amongst aboriginal families and First Nations communities affected by the legacy of residential schools. This is acknowledged in Prime Minister Harper’s apology on June 11, 2008, that had unanimous support of Parliament:

“... The legacy of Indian residential schools has contributed to social problems that continue to exist in many communities today ...”

“We now recognize that it was wrong to separate children from rich and vibrant cultures and traditions, that it created a void in many lives and communities ...”

“We now recognize that, in separating children from their families, we undermined the ability of many to adequately parent their own children and sow the seeds for generations to follow ...”

“Not only did you suffer these abuses as children, but as you became parents, you were powerless to protect your own children from suffering the same experience ...”

It is unrealistic to expect socially damaged parents to nurture, teach manners, provide structure and serve as positive role models for their children. In such cases, interventions such as Children’s Aid Societies and curfews are needed to protect these vulnerable children.

Unfortunately, the numbers of parents who cannot cope, and kids with mental health issues are increasing. According to The Millennium Scoop, Number of Native Children in Care Surpasses Residential School Era (C-J, Aug. 2), more aboriginal children continue to be innocent victims of the intergenerational impacts of residential schools. Finding foster homes is challenging, and placing youths in a correctional system thriving with criminal gangs is not an ideal option for handling children who are abused, neglected or mentally sick from dysfunctional families or addict parents.

An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. We need to find new ways of teaching healthy family values and become informed on new methods of passing traditional parenting skills to future generations. Schools, community centres, churches, social service agencies, out-reach workers, support groups, etc., play an important role in helping break this negative cycle. The RMYC started the Revolution Girl Style/Girl Power program in 1999 for young women as life-givers/child-bearers to reduce preventable diseases and maternal health disorders such as fetal alcohol syndrome.

It takes a village to raise a child. Sharing information, learning from experiences and supporting one another will build a stronger community. We believe that providing parenting skills to struggling families and teens will enable them to make informed decisions and wise choices about raising healthy children.

Gurleen Chialal, Brittney Buchanan, Steph Kawel, Kaine Kindla, Nyasha Makuto, Sarah Nascimben, Marella Meekis and Shane Turde
The Regional Multicultural Youth Council
THUNDER BAY
Youth council supports curfew proposal

CHILDREN AND YOUTH are as concerned about safety as everyone else. Ten years ago, the Regional Multicultural Youth Council (RMYC) conducted a study where 80 per cent of the youth surveyed agreed that curfews are an effective way to protect children at night, 15 per cent disagreed, and five per cent were undecided.

The reasons given in favour were to protect kids from strangers, from being harmed, and from harming others. Those against said that they do not address the root causes of problems.

Other advantages were the need to protect property and the community from crime and other delinquent acts. Curfews also make it easier for single and working parents or guardians to keep children safe at home at night.

In Thunder Bay, with a large population of young boarding students from surrounding communities, curfews give peace of mind to families when they know the time kids they send away to school should be indoors. Controlling the movement of ununsupervised kids after dark also makes it easier for neighbours and the police to rebuke youths wandering about alone late at night.

We shared our findings with city council and Thunder Bay Police and there were community consultations and debates at City Hall. Concerns were raised about a constitutional challenge over age discrimination and enforcement. Being aware that other communities had curfews, and that age restrictions apply on voting, purchasing alcohol or cigarettes, driving, and so forth, RMYC wrote to then Ontario attorney general James Flaherty for advice.

His response was as follows: "With regard to a curfew bylaw, the establishment of bylaws is the responsibility of the local municipality subject to the Municipal Act and other statutes that may apply to municipal bylaws. I would suggest that you continue to pursue this matter with the Thunder Bay council and municipal staff."

Unfortunately, our efforts at City Hall went nowhere.

Our youth council is glad that mayor-elect Keith Hobbs is revisiting the issue and wants to engage the community to find ways of dealing with truant kids bent on harming others, vandalizing property and committing crime in the cover of darkness. Having a formal regulation to protect children shows that the community cares for the well-being of its young and vulnerable population.

Mr. Hobbs has the Thunder Bay Children's Charter (adopted June 14, 2004) to back him. While the charter acknowledges the key role parents and guardians play in raising children, the city needs to do more and help families needing parenting skills and other supports to prevent their kids ending up on the streets.

But city is failing to support programs, services for children

From our continuous financial struggles at the Multicultural Youth Centre, the Underground Gym and other facilities, the city is failing to ensure enough funding for youth-led and community-driven children's programs. Plans to close swimming pools, hockey rinks, etc., also go against ensuring safe places for kids to play and access to affordable recreational activities.

Adopting curfews to punish kids for loitering without making parents accountable will not stop runaways, or kids who are abused, neglected or homeless from hanging out on the streets. Arresting them without addressing the causes, or offering positive alternatives may just create a revolving-door syndrome similar to what is happening in our correctional services where remedial and rehabilitation programs have been cut back.

Trying to save on preventive programs and services today will cost us a lot more down the road.

As Mr. Hobbs develops strategies to make our community safer, we hope that he gathers input from child-protection agencies, family support groups, churches, social services, and so forth on what supports struggling families need to cope and remain in their homes. We are not aware of parents who take pride in being bad role models, or rejoice at losing their kids to children's aid societies. The community should step in and help when the well-being of children is at risk.

Consultations should also be held with youth service agencies, youth centres, youth groups and schools to hear their perspective on what children need to give them hope, and make them part of the solution to the problems they face.

Society should invest the resources needed to break the cycle of juvenile delinquency. The youth council is ready to help in any campaign to create a safer Thunder Bay for everyone.

Gurleen Chahal
Candace Ferguson
Co-presidents, Regional Multicultural Youth Council
THUNDER BAY
Rally cries for action to protect youths

BY KAREN MCKINLEY
THE CHRONICLE-JOURNAL

People are calling on the Ontario and federal governments to do more to protect First Nation youths and give better funding for aboriginal education.

A rally was held outside Thunder Bay-Superior North MPP Michael Gravelle’s office on Friday to address the recent death of Jordan Wabasse, First Nations education funding, and to demand an inquiry into the death of Reggie Bushie and create a committee to work with the city and education boards to better protect students.

Over 100 people demanded to have their concerns heard in the legislature and Parliament.

“We are here for the four main reasons, plus to tell the provincial (Aboriginal Affairs minister) Chris Bentley to proceed with the inquest and will no longer tolerate of delays and excuses and want action now to protect our youth,” said organizer Anna Achneepineskum. “We are all here to honour the families of these youth who have left us.”

Several youth were named who had died in the last 10 years, Jordan Wabasse, Reggie Bushie, Robyn Harper, Jethro Anderson, Curran String, Kyle Morriseau and Paul Panacheese were among them. All had come to Thunder Bay for high school from their communities and died, their bodies recovered from streets and rivers. Most of their deaths were ruled accidents or suicides, which Achneepineskum said has to be addressed as many believe they met with foul play.

“To me, this is too many, even losing one child is too many, something should have been done years ago,” Achneepineskum said. “We have to begin to work together to prevent this from continuing.

“I don’t want to be gathering here again next year because we are burying another one of our young people.”

Gravelle said he was honoured by the high turnout of supporters and family members of those who lost a family member who was going to school in the city. He said this is not just an aboriginal or political issue, it impacts the entire city and region.

“It’s impossible to feel the level of sadness of those who have lost a family member,” he said. “I hear your message loud and clear and will be taking it to Premier McGuinty and Aboriginal Affairs Minister Bentley.”

Gravelle added there is an inquest the provincial government is working to get underway specifically for Reggie Bushie, but there are legal and coroner procedures to observe, plus aboriginal involvement in the process is needed. Prime Minister Stephen Harper has also agreed to a First Ministers’ summit to address aboriginal education in the future.

Gravelle said he is well aware of the funding discrepancies in aboriginal education.

Achneepineskum said what she and others would like to see are high schools in the remote north that serve the northern communities rather than sending students to large urban centres for high school.

The deaths of so many young people, averaging one per year, has far-reaching effects for the city and the school most of them went to, Dennis Franklin Cromarty High School. Principal Jonathan Kakegamick struggled to control his emotions while he spoke about the students he knew personally and called on the federal and provincial governments to take action to help their communities.

“Seven deaths is too much, after the death of Jethro Anderson something should have been done, nothing was and that’s wrong,” Kakegamick said. “Too many of our youth are gone because they left their homes to make a better life for themselves and with the position we are in, with no proper funding for services, is wrong.”

He spoke warmly about some of the young people that he knew, like Bushie, whom he played chess with in his office and Harper, who was in the school for three days before she died. He said Harper was excited to be in high school.

Seeing so many people together gave him confidence that the city was ready and willing to work together, Kakegami said. He challenged the crowd to find a way to work together to make positive change and bring justice.
Walk to promote youth peace

Members of the Regional Multicultural Youth Council and the Nishnawbe-Aski Nation Decade Youth Council travelled from the Lakehead Labour Centre to city hall Friday during a Peace Walk to raise awareness about youth violence and to promote youth peace.
ONTARIO is conducting a review of the roots of youth violence, ("Tough is not enough — Chronicle-Journal, Nov. 27). Thunder Bay is one of the five cities (in addition to Hamilton, Kitchener, Ottawa and Toronto) selected for community consultations on this growing concern. The Regional Multicultural Youth Council (RMYC) is co-ordinating local efforts to gather information for a report to be submitted to Premier Dalton McGuinty in May 2008.

We were privileged to have former chief justice and attorney general Roy McMurtry, and former Speaker of the Ontario Legislature Alvin Curling in the city Nov. 26-27. They were appointed by the Premier last June to lead the review. The RMYC organized a meeting at City Hall for the co-chairs to meet with our civic leaders, the Police Chief, and representatives of the First Nations. We also arranged consultations with the Lakehead Public Schools, Thunder Bay Catholic District School Board, and the Northern Nishnawbe Education Council.

I facilitated a special session with the co-chairs at the Multicultural Youth Centre. A select group of adults and youths were invited to discuss the kind of youth violence in our schools and in the community, the root causes, and solutions to the problem. I was very impressed with the ideas shared, and suggestions brought forward. I believe that Mr. Curling and Mr. McMurtry gained an insight into what is happening here, our unique situation, and what we feel needs to be done.

But, since only a few people could participate in the focus group, we welcome more ideas to prevent youth violence. We have until Jan. 15 to make a final submission. Please drop your comments at the Multicultural Youth Centre, 511 E. Victoria Ave.

Local youth council is seeking public input to a study on preventing youth violence. "Thunder Bay is one of the five cities selected for community consultations on this growing concern."

You can also send them via fax to: (807) 622-7271, or by e-mail to: rmycvoice@gmail.com.

Martin Zhang
President, Regional Multicultural Youth Council
THUNDER BAY