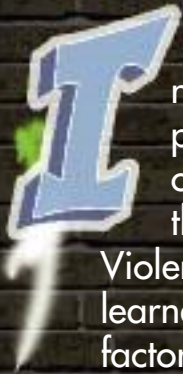




May 2009
A Community Report

Strong neighbourhoods come from strong connections



In conversations with young people, the police and community organizations, the members of the Peel Youth Violence Prevention Network have learned a great deal about the factors that contribute to youth violence and the daunting challenges faced by those who are trying to make a difference. We know meaningful change takes time, but we are continuously uplifted by the hard work being done by so many individuals and groups who are dedicated to improving the lives of young people.

The activities undertaken by the Steering Committee and four working groups during the past year have been ambitious and have yielded promising results. Those results are directly related to engaging with youth and community groups and building strong connections. We invite you to read about our progress in addressing violence in this Community Report. Our work is far from done but we remain hopeful and committed.



Taking action on youth violence: our work continues

Message from Gael Miles

Chair, Peel Youth Violence Prevention Network Steering Committee

It's hard to believe that the Network is celebrating its third year! Great progress has been made but the more we learn the more we realize this issue is made even more complex by the diverse needs of our community. To find an effective solution, we have to understand and be sensitive to a broad range of cultural differences and reach out and engage our diverse communities.

The sad reality is that violence is still very much an issue in Peel. Peel Regional Police Chief Mike Metcalf called 2008 one of the worst with a record 27 homicides and disturbing increases in other serious crimes. The real issue for us is that some of these crimes – verbal abuse, intimidation, gangs, attacks with knives, and fights – are being committed by youth at schools and in our neighbourhoods.

The effect of these crimes on our communities is real and devastating. From youth being stereotyped to increased police presence, there is growing pressure on our community and on social services. The members of the Peel Youth Violence Prevention Network Steering Committee and our partners realize that the need for concerted community efforts like those we are engaged in is urgent and growing. The vision that formed the basis of the Network when it was developed in 2006 is still very much what guides our efforts today – we want youth to feel engaged in their schools and communities; to feel they are listened to and involved; to feel safe; and to know they have opportunities and places to learn, play and grow.



Making connections that count

If there was a theme to our work this year it was the power of connections. Members of our working groups dedicated themselves to connecting with groups and individuals within our community, and based on those connections, moved their plans from the discussion table to action and results. I've been exhilarated by their many achievements.

The atmosphere was positive as we collaborated to determine next steps at our Annual Symposium attended by members of the Steering Committee, the working groups and many of our community partners. We reviewed our progress, brainstormed and made plans for the year ahead. A highlight was hearing from the dynamic founders of **Jane-Finch dot-com**, Paul Nguyen and Mark Simms, who sent a powerful message about the importance of accepting young people for who they are and letting them voice their opinions.



Paul Nguyen

Last spring we were pleased to be consulted by the Province and its Roots of Youth Violence initiative and saw our comments and experience reflected in their report. We share their insight that ending youth violence requires a multifaceted approach which embraces youth at its core and fully involves them.

Thank you to everyone who has worked with us during the past year and for sharing in our commitment to helping us build a stronger community in Peel and addressing the needs of our youth.

GAEL MILES

Regional Councillor, City of Brampton

Chair, Peel Youth Violence Prevention Network Steering Committee

Drawing ideas and inspiration from young people

As we enter our fourth year, it's clear that any strategy for reducing and preventing youth violence in Peel must involve an action-oriented and collaborative approach. Strategies must also ensure the meaningful involvement of youth and encourage the inclusion of their experience and insights.

Our Symposium demonstrated our commitment to continuous growth and improvement. The working groups developed plans for the next three years and during the course of discussions many valuable insights were shared: don't judge young people based on their past, use their interests (music, sports, rap, etc.) for positive results, give them meaningful work, and be accessible.

We supported a series of meetings of 200 young people who brainstormed the creation of a new network brand and



image reflective of youth and their spirit. This collaboration produced the new VOICE logo and upcoming VOICE website featuring the Network's community charter, parenting tips, and links to over 40 network affiliates.

Other activities this year included:

- Development of a new quarterly newsletter for Network members
- Ongoing efforts at obtaining sustainable funding for the Peel Youth Violence Prevention Network, including collaboration around federal government granting opportunities
- Collaborating with Peel Regional Police on the creation of a website, www.connect2ENDviolence.ca that will serve as a hub for community discussions on all forms of violence and violence prevention
- Brampton Safe City Association produced a 10-point call to action to the community as a result of increased violence
- Developing closer connections with community initiatives such as Success By 6 Peel, The Peel Committee Against Women Abuse, United Way's Neighbourhood Strategy, Peel Region's Neighbourhood Capacity Initiative, Rapport Youth and Family Services and local parks and recreation departments

- Six Peel secondary schools succeeded in receiving support through the Province's Urban and Priority funding program which clearly demonstrates a growing awareness and commitment among levels of government to collaborate and support Peel schools in developing programs for youth
- Throughout the year we continued to hear from community agencies speaking on key issues that are affecting our community

Working groups build on their strategies for change

With their visioning exercise complete, the four working groups considered numerous ideas and began implementing feasible actions for confronting youth violence within their areas of focus. The diversity of members and their multidisciplinary perspectives have been invaluable in building an understanding of the roots of youth violence.

Despite limited time and resources, each working group rose to the challenges to effect positive change. They have worked diligently to find ways of meaningfully engaging youth – and youth-at-risk in particular – in their schools, communities and within the family. Here are some of the projects they are currently working on:

Education, Policy and Programs: Making our schools safer

Sgt. William Stewart, Peel Regional Police,
Anne Burke-Gauthier, Community member – Working Group Chairs

- Collaborated with the other working groups and a number of community agencies to draft a concept for a funding proposal to reach under-served and at-risk youth
- Supported the Working with Families Working Group on the creation of the Middle Years Parent and Youth Program, designed to improve relationships between parents/caregivers and youth

- Designed and actively planned for a youth symposium to be held in 2009

Working with Families: Developing positive communication between parents and youth

Leslie Moreau, Region of Peel,
Ontario Works – Working Group Chair

- The Working with Families Working Group collaborated with the Education, Policy and Programs Working Group to create the Middle Years Parent and Youth Program. The focus of the six-week program was on helping parents and youth between the ages of six and 12 develop positive communications skills, proper discipline methods and anger management. These programs were delivered in Brampton (Knightsbridge), Mississauga (Meadowvale), and Caledon (Bolton)
- A post-session evaluation of the Parent Program is being undertaken and will help us move forward with future programs
- Work has begun on the creation of a 'family's toolkit' that will be community-specific and provide information on parenting skills, community supports and tools for enhanced communication

Services and Support for Youth: Creativity leading to change

Melissa Punambolam, Community member,
Chris Pimento, Youth Justice Services, Brampton, Ministry of Children and Youth Services – Working Group Chairs

- At focus groups held in Brampton, Mississauga and Caledon, youth expressed a desire for more community activities, improved safety in schools, and better relations with the police
- Developing and implementing youth engagement through tasks and strategies on an ongoing basis (focus groups and regional visioning processes)
- Giving youth a direct voice: actively listening to what they have to say and using their expertise to formulate next steps and action plans
- Forming a youth advisory group to guide and direct youth focused activity and program initiatives that the Supports and Services for Youth Work Group will assist with. IMPACT is the name chosen by the youth members for this group

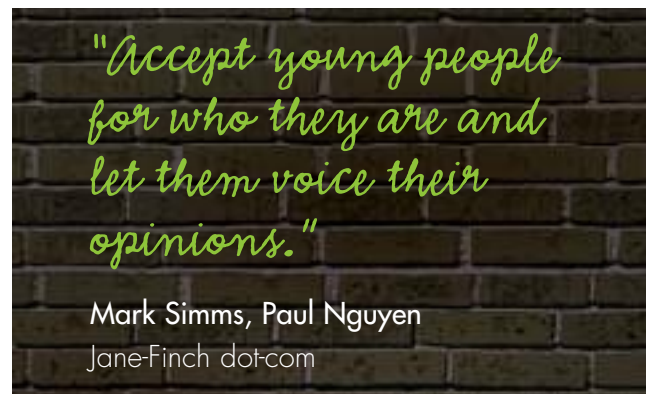


- Active participation in the creation of a new network brand and image for the Youth Working Group. This collaboration produced the new VOICE logo and upcoming VOICE website
- Successful in receiving a grant from Mayor McCallion's 2008 Annual Golf Tournament to support youth activities

Community Development: Building an understanding of vulnerable populations

Janine Symanzik, Community member – Working Group Chair

- Networking between community development leaders in Peel Region
- Strategic planning to develop a 3-year vision for the Community Development Working Group
- Facilitated the program design for a Youth Gang Violence Prevention proposal for the Peel Youth Violence Prevention Network
- Working with neighbourhood groups to maximize the use of existing resources



Working together with focus and purpose

This journey would not be possible without the contribution of our partners, who during the past year have given generously of their time, energy, and ideas.

Associate Youth Services of Peel

Brampton Neighbourhood Resource Centre

Brampton Safe City

Caledon OPP

Canadian Mental Health Association

City of Brampton, Parks & Recreation

City of Mississauga, Recreation & Parks

Community Environment Alliance of Peel (CEA)

Dixie-Bloor Neighbourhood Centre

Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board

Elizabeth Fry Society of Peel-Halton

Erin Mills Youth Outreach Program

Family Education Centre

Family Services of Peel

John Howard Society

Ministry of Children and Youth Services – Probation

Mississauga Church of God

Nexus Youth Services

Our Lady of Mount Carmel S.S.

Our Place Peel

Peel Committee Against Woman Abuse

Peel Committee on Sexual Assault

Peel District School Board

Peel Regional Police

Rapport Youth & Family Services

Rapport Youth & Family Services – Eclipse

Region of Peel – Health Services

Region of Peel – Peel Youth Village

Region of Peel – Human Services

Safe City Mississauga

The Bridge – Prison Ministry

The Centre for Education & Training

The Dam Youth Drop-In

The HEAL Network

Town of Caledon – Caledon Youth Services

United Way of Peel Region

Various Community Members

West Edge Outreach Centre

"The need for concerted community efforts like those we are engaged in is urgent and growing."

Gael Miles, Chair, Peel Youth Violence Prevention Network Steering Committee

Peel Youth Violence Prevention Network Steering Committee Contact List - 2009

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Larry Zacher	Brampton Safe City	larry.zacher@brampton.ca	905-793-5484

Tell us what you think

We are also committed to keeping you informed as our work continues. Your interest and involvement isn't just encouraged, it's essential. Please tell us what you think. Visit our website: www.endyouthviolence.ca or call the Region of Peel, **905-799-7700**.