October 25, 2004

To: CVRD Community Safety Advisory Committee

From: Terri Dame

Re: Background and Information on Youth outreach proposal

History

Over the past ten to fourteen years, community service providers in the Cowichan Valley have identified a pressing need for a comprehensive program of outreach, safe places and activities, particularly for at risk youth.

These services providers, who have included counselors, educators, and law enforcement members, expressed concerns relating the increasing numbers of young people who are experiencing a range of issues, from lack of adequate opportunities, to crime and victimization. They have identified the need to connect with youth who are on the streets, who may not 'fit' into mainstream recreation, who may not have access to the same opportunities as other, and who are considered 'at risk'.

Many organizations in the central (Duncan) area have worked together in an effort to develop outreach programming and a youth centre, but have struggled due to lack of available funding. Efforts have come and gone because of a lack of time on the part of organizations to sustain the effort.

During 2004, the Community for Youth Committee revived the work on this project. The committee has sponsored activities for youth in the central (Duncan) area, and has undertaken consultation to ask youth what they need. With the participation of elected representatives and staff from North Cowichan, the CVRD and the City of Duncan, the committee identified options and recommendations to address these needs. The result was a proposal for a recreational youth outreach worker through the Cowichan Centre.

Youth offending

Youth offending and negative behaviours of youth draw a great deal of public and media attention in the Cowichan Valley and pose a range of concerns not only for public safety, but also in terms of the costs of such things as vandalism and thefts.

However, service providers have stressed that we must look at the underlying causes and go beyond strategies that 'move kids on' to other places, to take a more developmental perspective with our youth. As one agency leader said: "*Where do we want youth to go?"*

Research has shown that deterrence and incapacitation have only modest effects on crime rates; trying youth as adults and schemes such as 'three strikes laws' have had

less effect in areas where they have been enforced than in other areas, and excluding at risk youth from school increases their vulnerability. [1]

What we know about risk factors

There is a strong relationship between being a victim of crime and offending. One study found that teens are 2 times as likely to be victims of crime than others, and that victimization is strongly related to offending, delinquency, alcohol and drug abuse, school problems, and running away. [2]

Many forms of crime and victimization experienced by teens do not make it into the public eye. Dating violence, harassment and bullying, discrimination, violence in the home, homelessness, etc., are examples of issues faced by many youth on a daily basis. These issues affect the well-being of youth, the likelihood that they may engage in crime and delinquency, and also their risks for many negative outcomes, such as becoming disengaged from community, homelessness, and suicide.

There are indications that many youth and their families in Cowichan are experiencing issues around achieving a good quality of life and well-being. For example:

➢ The unemployment rate of youth 15-24 in the CVRD in 2001 was 19%. This was highest in the Duncan area which had 32% youth unemployment.

➢ About 14% of the population of the CVRD overall live in low income situations. The average incidence of low income in the central sector in 2000 was 16.2% and for some central neighbourhoods this rate was as high as 30%. Many families living in low income situations have difficulties affording decent housing, food, quality childcare, and recreational opportunities for their children.

Key risk factors for youth:

→ early childhood health and experiences
→ poverty,
→ parenting and family life
→ adverse neighbourhood conditions
→ housing conditions
→ illiteracy (for example, approximately 65% of Canadian offenders test at lower than Grade 8)
→ lack of connection to community, family and school
→ inadequate community facilities
→ cultural alienation,
→ racism, sexism

National Crime Prevention Strategy (1995*); Risks or Threats to Children;* Ottawa, Author.

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[1] Richard Mendel; *Youth, Crime and Community Development: A guide for collaborative action;* Columbia: The Enterprise Foundation; 2003.
[2] CSR Incorporated (1997); *Understanding Youth Development: Promoting Positive Pathways of Growth;* US Department of Health and Human Services.

What works?

Enhancing protective factors is key for healthy youth development. The basics need to include:

> ➢ *Safe, positive environments that offer a sense of safety, clear purpose and rules, and attention from caring adults.*

> ➢ *Leisure, arts and recreation programming for after school, weekends, summers and vacations, particularly for at risk youth and low income youth.*

> ➢ *Targeted programs to address problematic behaviours and developmental issues.*

> ➢ *Assistance, direction, training and mentorship toward developing assets that will foster young people into adulthood – academic assistance, employment training, life skills, and community service.*

The following are examples from a 2003 study on successful youth crime prevention[3]:

> ➢ *Safe Spaces: Beacon schools in New York found that 80% of youth said that they were helpful in avoiding drug use, avoiding fighting, doing better in school and becoming a leader.*
> ➢ *Gap Activities: Operating youth activities in the after school hours helps to prevent victimization. One program that was provided in a public housing complex over 32 months saw the juvenile arrest rate decline by 75%. These rates rose after the program was withdrawn.*
> ➢ *Mentoring: In one evaluation, Big Brothers and Big Sisters programs found youth with mentors were half as likely to engage in drug use.*
> ➢ *Learning, Training and Employment Assistance: Youth in the Quantum Opportunities Program in the US were less than half as likely to drop out of schools than; participants had fewer than half as many arrests than non-participants.*

In examining the crime prevention benefits of recreation, Witt and Crompton[4] found that:
> ➢ *When Phoenix Arizona opted to keep its recreational facilities open for longer hours during summer juvenile crime rates dropped 55%.*
> ➢ *Cincinnati, Ohio, reported a 31% decrease in crime incidents in the first six months after the Winton Hills prevention programs began.*
> ➢ *In Fort Worth, Texas, crime statistics supplied by the Police Department indicated in a one mile radius of the community centers where the midnight basketball was provided, crime dropped 28%. At five other community centers where these programs did not exist, crime rose an average of 39%.*

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[3] Richard Mendel; *Youth, Crime and Community Development: A guide for collaborative action;* Columbia: The Enterprise Foundation; 2003.
[4] Peter Witt and John L. Crompton (1996); The At Risk Youth Recreation Project; Journal of Park and Recreation Administration, 14(3), 1-9.

Cowichan Youth Survey

Between March and July, 2004, Community Options Society and Community for Youth undertook a survey of 44 youth in the central Cowichan area. The responses indicated a range of needs for youth development in the central Cowichan area. Tabulated resulted of the survey are below:

Services Identified for Youth Centre

job search	86%
counselling	69%
health clinic	67%
support services	67%
teen parenting	60%
drug and alcohol outreach	57%
independent living worker	57%
social workers	52%
day care	50%
probation	24%
rcmp	17%

Other Services and Amenities Identified

computer	81%
telephone	69%
coffee shop	57%
pool table	55%
athletic programs	50%
resource info	45%
restaurant	26%
other	14%

Conclusion

This report has outlined the rationale for youth outreach and development in the Cowichan Valley, and has given a brief overview of formal research from other areas that demonstrate crime prevention benefits of youth programming. However, there are many examples of various kinds of programs, both locally and elsewhere that are demonstrating positive results. As part of our assistance to the Community Safety Advisory Committee, Safer Futures will work to compile this kind of information over the next six months.

APPENDIX A:
Features of Successful Recreation Programs for At-Risk Youth

From: Witt, P.A. & Crompton, J.L. (1996). The at-risk youth recreation project. <u>Journal of Park and Recreation Administration</u>, 14(3), 1-9.

The following are some basic elements of successful programs that have been gleaned from the literature, case studies presented at national and regional conferences, and discussions with recreation program providers.

Assessment of Underlying Community Issues
* Teen pregnancy
* School dropouts
* Delinquency
* Drug and alcohol abuse
* Poverty
* Perceived lack of opportunity
* Lack of safe places to play

Role of Recreation
* Recreation as a "hook," the means of attracting youth to programs
* Provide a safe environment for youth to interact
* Deal with "unproductive" time within which youth can get into trouble

Long Term Goals and Specific Objectives
* Focus on early identification and intervention
* Give major emphasis to prevention
* Target those most in need
* Programs should be purposive
* Programs need to have clearly articulated goals
* Parents and youth should be active agents in program design and planning

Constraints
* Make programs accessible (e.g., insure adequate transportation)
* Provide appropriate equipment and safe environment
* Provide opportunity for participants to learn appropriate activity and social skills

Program Content
* Programs should be comprehensive and/or part of a comprehensive system of services
* Create programs that are culturally appropriate
* Provide opportunities for positive social relationships with peers and adults
* Avoid one-shot programs
* Make provisions for transportation
* Serve children on site when appropriate (e.g., public housing)

Program Process
* Provide opportunities for mentoring
* Provide intensive and individualized attention
* Programs should be responsive (kid-centered)
* Participation incentives should be relevant to youth served

* Rules and behavioral expectations clear and respected by youth

Resources
* Pricing: fees, scholarships
* Leverage available funds through collaborative efforts with other agencies in development
and delivery of services
* "Who gets the credit is less important than getting the job done"
* Work to develop ongoing base-level funding,
i.e., not all services contingent on soft money (permanence)

Staffing
* Provide pre- and in-service staff training
* Develop procedures and incentives for retaining quality staff
(e.g., implement good system for advancement and pay)
* Create appropriate administrative structures
* Generate volunteers

Promotion
* Develop mechanisms for promoting services to participants and stakeholders
* Use catchy acronyms

Evaluation
* Document program success via testimonials, surveys, outcome measures,
comprehensive evaluations
* Involve stakeholders and participants in program evaluation process
* Use evaluation information to fine tune program content, process and leadership
Develop mechanisms for disseminating outcome information to stakeholders

APENDIX B: YOUTH PROBRATION STATISTICS

Number of Cases Probation and Diversion, Vancouver Island

YEAR	PROBATION	DIVERSION
1994	966	33
1999	818	2
2003	367	25
2004	213+	89

Source: MCFD, Duncan Office, August, 2004-09-24

Duncan Probation Community Admissions

Fiscal Year	Total Admissions
99-00	86
00-01	114
01-02	82
02-03	78
03-04	46
04-05 (to date	25

Community (Youth) Offender Profiles, Duncan

Probation	2003/2004	Jan-May, 2004
Age:		
13	10.9%	21.4%
15	15.2%	0
16	32.5%	35.7%
17	19.6%	28.6%
Gender:	**2003/2004**	**Jan-May, 2004**
Male	80.4%	85.7%
Female	19.6%	14.3%
Ethnicity:	**2003/2004**	**Jan-May, 2004**
Aboriginal	41.9%	21.4%
Non-Aboriginal	58.1%	78.6%
Offense:	**2003/2004**	**Jan-May, 2004**
Person	29.5%	35.7%
Property	59.1%	28.6%
Serious	9.1%	7.1%
Theft Under	13.6%	7.1%
Weapon	9.1%	14.3%
No Previous Contact	45.7%	64.3%