Everyone is Part of the Solution: A Study of Youth Violence in Ottawa West

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Executive Summary

This report was produced in 2016 with partial funding from a Government of Canada student summer work initiative through Employment and Social Development Canada provided to the Canadian International Institute of Applied Negotiation (CIIAN) and the Civilian Peace Service Canada (CPSC).

The aim of this research is simple and straightforward: we set out to understand the causes and prevalence of youth violence in Ottawa West-Nepean, what is being done to address youth violence and how future youth violence could be prevented.¹

In order to meet our research goals we conducted an extensive literature review, administered a survey to 22 youth living in Ottawa West-Nepean and interviewed a number of experts currently working on this issue.

We discovered from this inquiry that while any act of violence is both an individual and community tragedy, Canadian media reports often reinforce a perception that violence is ever-present and on the rise. Individual, sensationalistic descriptions of violent crime reinforce public fears of crime and contribute to the false belief that violent crime is getting worse. In reality, whether looking nationally, provincially or municipally (such as in Ottawa West-Nepean) rates of violent crime are on the decline overall. The literature review, interviews and survey respondent data also reflect this trend.

Despite the fact that violence levels are actually on the decline this is still an important issue that needs to be studied. For a true and accurate understanding of youth violence, a broad approach that looks at numerous factors at multiple levels needs to be employed. That is, we must resist using simple explanations to describe such a complex problem.

Because the root causes of youth violence cut across numerous sectors, geographic boundaries and occur at different levels (individual, family, & community) the solutions also need to be cross-sectoral and work towards addressing these various root causes of violence at different levels.

Therefore, success in efforts to curb youth violence will to a great extent be determined by the degree of coordination and collaboration between agencies and organisations plus the type and
amount of funding provided for their numerous different programs and activities. In the concluding section of this report we present a number of recommendations to help prevent youth violence that are organized along the lines of Programming Aspects; Awareness, Advocacy and Support; and lastly, Socioeconomic and Political Considerations.

In sum, our research has revealed that youth violence needs to be understood broadly in the wider context. In this sense, everyone is part of the solution and has an important role to play in preventing youth violence. Providing safe spaces for youth to congregate in where they can be engaged in positive activities with peers, controlling drug trafficking and access to weapons, providing economic opportunities and working towards the development of healthy families are all activities that will help to prevent and reduce youth violence by creating safe and healthy communities in which children can grow up to reach their full potential.
Acknowledgements

We would like to say a special thank-you to the various Ottawa institutions and community organizations who provided valuable feedback and assistance with this project. This includes; various staff members at The City of Ottawa, Crime Prevention Ottawa, The John Howard Society, The Ottawa Police Service, YOUTURN, Pinecrest-Queensway Community Health Centre, and the Carlington Community Health Centre.

This report is also reflective of many local organizations which may not have been directly interviewed but should be mentioned as well. We received various referrals, valuable insights and support with from numerous contacts throughout Ottawa. The Youth Services Bureau, Family Services Ottawa, Youth Links, Youth Ottawa, and the Ottawa Boys and Girls Club are just a few of organizations who contribute to positive youth development in Ottawa. Another key component is the important contribution of local community volunteers.

The direct primary research component (meetings, interviews attended in Ottawa throughout summer) were by far the most enriching part of the research process. We are extremely grateful to all the offices and community centers who welcomed us and provided such valuable insights. Thank-you for taking the time out of your busy schedules to share your insights with us.

A special thank-you also needs to go out to Ms. Anita Vandenbeld, the Liberal MP for Ottawa-West Nepean for her efforts in supporting this research project.

Lastly, thank you to the various different federal and provincial agencies which provide a strong evidence-based foundation of knowledge on the topic of youth violence. Without the contributions of Ontario Ministry of Child and Youth Services, Public Safety Canada, The Department of Justice, Corrections Services Canada, RCMP, CSIS and Statistics Canada many insights about youth justice issues would be non-existent.
**Research Methodology**

As a descriptive picture of youth violence, this report provides insights which apply not only to Ottawa West-Nepean, but to the city as a whole. While this report focused on a limited geography of the city, it quickly became apparent that observing a specific area requires an understanding of wider city and national trends. When assessing youth violence it is also important to understand larger notions of structural violence as well (for example, the links between poverty and violence) and how various federal, municipal, and local community strategies work together to change these realities. Our research methodology is outlined below.

**Formulation of Research Question** The research question is centered around youth violence prevention. Our research asks interview subjects and respondents questions like “what would work to curb youth violence?” and “what are the main causes of youth violence?” These qualitative questions were designed to gain perspectives from different organizations and youths regarding what they perceive the main causes youth violence to be and what they believe could be done to help prevent it from occurring (the Interview Questions are contained in Appendix D).

**Ethical Considerations** The report utilizes an ethical framework which embraces the “do no harm” tenets reflective in social science and ethnographic field research. This included clear explanations and signed respondent consent forms for research participants. The research process was voluntary, consent-based, anonymous and confidential (the Consent Form can be found in Appendix E).

**Literature Review** There is a large literature base for the topic of youth violence. Various federal, provincial and local sources were used to understand national and regional aspects of youth violence. This included; Statistics Canada, Ministry of Child and Youth Services, The Department of Justice, Public Safety Canada, the National Crime Prevention Centre and a multitude of organizational publications.
Media perspectives are also included to provide context to the academic and policy based perspectives.

Choice of Research Design When referring to the objectives of this research project it was important to choose a framework which facilitated our objectives without losing sight of research limitations. This research is meant to provide a snapshot of youth violence in Canada and Ottawa West-Nepean more specifically. The report was produced within a limited time scope and with limited resources.

Sample Selection The interview samples are reflective of organizations providing community resources to youth living in Ottawa West-Nepean. The survey responses are reflective of two age cohorts: 13-15 and 16-21. All survey data was collected anonymously and with participatory consent.

In terms of geography, a federal riding elections map was used to define the research area (see Appendix C for a Map of the Ottawa West-Nepean Riding). This was important as it narrowed the physical geography of this research, however from a practical point of view, it became evident that these issues of youth violence and community support programs are not easily isolated or localized to one specific region. Although catchment areas for groups like police are clearly delineated, multiple organizations are offering services to Ottawa West-Nepean in addition to the wider regional area. It should be mentioned that our sample size was small and biased towards youth that are already positively engaged within community (attending community centres for social and recreational activities). Direct research with perpetrators or victims of youth violence was outside of the scope of this research.

Collection and Analysis of Research As a qualitative research report the reflections are meant to highlight trends and look for overlap areas between survey and interview responses. These smaller
narratives are also reflective of larger structural elements of youth programming trends in Ottawa (and Canada in general).

**Literature Review**

**What is Canada’s Current Approach to Young Offenders?**

In 2001, a Department of Justice Canada documentary film on youth crime highlighted some of the positive impacts of youth rehabilitation and reintegration programs across Canada but also released startling figures describing how at the time Canada had a higher youth incarceration rate than the United States.ii Since then, amendments to the Young Offender Act and America’s prison privatization boom have lifted that historical cloud from Canada’s legacy. However, Canada still incarcerates a lot more youth than numerous OECD countries which are economically and socially comparable.iii

Many youth (and adults) involved in the criminal justice system experience a multitude of risk factors including a lack of education, addiction, sexual abuse and mental health issues. In recent years Canada’s justice reputation has been critiqued by international observers and even appears regressive to federal policy critics in Australia, Britain and even the United States. For example, Texas, Washington D.C and even Mississippi have been moving towards rehabilitation/reintegration. While these traditionally punitive U.S. states observe the benefits of using more restorative models (which Canada initially lead the way with) in recent years Canada had moved towards reintroducing tough on crime” approaches.iv In 2016, tough on crime laws were legally amended by the Supreme Court of Canada – citing an “unconstitutional” violation of Canada’s Charter of Rights and Freedoms.v

In 2003, Canada introduced the Youth Criminal Justice Act (YCJA). The YCJA reflected a shift in public policy designed to address various concerns about youth justice which included an "overuse of the courts and incarceration in less serious cases, disparity and unfairness in sentencing, a lack of effective reintegration of young people released from custody, and the need to better take into account the interests of victims."vi
The YCJA looked at a number of key factors including positive social development, the role of families, an increased emphasis on prevention, providing support and fair/proportionate accountability. In 2012, the YCJA was amended which changed the sentencing of youths that were convicted of violent and repeat offenses. Non-custodial attendance, community service, volunteering and compensating victim for example all represent alternative sentencing options which are indicative of these changes. The federal government has mandated a youth justice model which emphasizes early intervention, prevention, community-based responses and the encouragement of extra-judicial measures which support non-court responses. The most popular of these measures is probation. Other outcomes include discharge, reprimand and both open/closed custody. The changes represented within the YCJA are present within the regional context as well.

These policy changes have lowered youth recidivism rates and represented an overall decline in youth crime.

How Serious is Youth Violence?

Some critics argue that various forms of diversion programs manipulate youth crime statistics. While issues of data accuracy in crime reporting and an array of issues which muddy the images of crime statistics (witness intimidation, fear of reprisal, false accounts) are important to observe, even 15 years ago in 2001, a government film described how “every 1 dollar of early intervention saves $7” in public revenues. However, there is more recent evidence of a decline. For example, “in 2014, the rate of youth accused of homicide declined 36%, reaching its lowest point since 1969. Overall, there were 25 youth accused of homicide in Canada in 2014, 15 fewer than the previous year.”

In 2005, the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics released a study looking at how financial inflation, unemployment and alcohol consumption compare with crime trends. A follow up report in 2013 highlighted a police reported crime rate at its lowest point in over 4 decades. There is no clear consensus on why exactly crime has gone down, however a number of multi-leveled analyses provide strong insights. For example, Statistics Canada highlights how experts tend to cite multiple influences including “an aging population, changing policing practices and strategies, the rise of technology, shifts
in unemployment, variations in alcohol consumption, neighbourhood characteristics, or changing attitudes towards illegal and risky behaviour. It is clear that avoiding generalities is critical when assessing the complex causes and solutions to youth violence.

Perhaps most important is the focus on contextualizing youth violence along with other issues and fully understanding the role of these other factors in contributing to youth violence. For example, the National Crime Prevention Centre of Public Safety Canada states that Canadian youth joining gangs tend to come from the most socio-economically disadvantaged groups. Whereas, a report from Public Safety Canada highlights key pieces of information regarding the “adverse conditions” and “psychosocial development” factors which lead to potential involvement within the criminal justice system. Moreover, a report entitled “Statistical Snapshot of Youth at Risk and Youth Offending in Canada” looks at how family structure, income, employment, mental health, youth victimization, child welfare, substance abuse and school dropout rates all play a role in youth crime (links to these publications are listed in the endnotes).

**Youth Survey Reflections**

This component of the research sought to gather insights directly from youth between the ages of 13-21. A total of 22 youth completed our survey and these youth survey results are presented below.

**The Prevalence of Youth Violence**

There were some distinctions between the age groups of 13-15 and 16-21 when assessing the prevalence of youth violence. After collecting survey data from a total of 22 respondents, the majority of respondents (70%) aged 13-15 answered “no” to witnessing or experiencing any major youth violence in the last year. However, when respondents said yes, these acts of violence were concentrated around “fights between youth” and “one shooting”. In the 16-21 age group, an overwhelming majority of respondents answered “no” to witnessing youth violence, only 1 respondent described witnessing a “gang fight”.


When respondents were asked about the prevalence and significance of youth violence, both age groups had similar responses. In age 13-15 group – 40% of respondents felt the problem was “not serious”, 40% thought it was “serious”, 10% respondents indicated a flux between “serious/very serious” with only a small portion of respondents (10%) stating the problem was “very serious”. Within the 16-21 age group similar trends were observed – 45% felt it was “not serious”, 36% thought it was “serious” and 18% thought it was “very serious”. Overall the experience and perception of youth violence stayed similar between both respondent groups.

**Is Violence Getting Worse or Better?**

Despite a clear indication of an overall youth violence decline in Canada within the literature review and interviewees, asking respondents questions on this issue brought forth a number of interesting insights which reflect both success and challenges.

Ages 13-15: Perspectives on this question demonstrated a wide range of responses. For starters, approximately 27% of respondents answered “I don’t know”, another 9% omitted the question and 9% stated “neither” (Which equals to about 45% of respondents in this group not answering either “better” or “worse”). Most interestingly, of the 55% of respondents who did answer better or worse, 27% stated it would get worse and 27% said it would get better. For those answering “worse” – respondents highlighted the need for communities to continually “be intertwined with the City of Ottawa”. For those who said it was getting better, respondents were able to cite reasons such as “gangsters get older and move out” and “better, because dangerous people are leaving”. It is interesting to note that this is an often remarked observation made by police and other community service providers as well.

Ages 16-21: What was interesting here is that the “I don’t know” or “neither” perspective does not show up in the older youth respondent group. Where as in the younger respondent group, over 45% indicated neither a positive or negative shift, the opposite emerged for respondents aged 16-21. For this group an overwhelming 72% of respondents said that the problem of youth violence is getting “better” and only 28% said “worse”. Of the 72% of respondents who answered “better” – statements
like “good people directing youth in community”, “learning from our mistakes”, “a lot of community support” and “better, as security is constantly patrolling” highlight the range of perspectives of those stating the problem is getting better. Although a majority of respondents answered “better” - it is of equal importance to highlight that of the approximately 28% of those answering “worse”, respondents stated things like “I think it will get worse if kids don’t know what they are surrounded around”, “Kids should avoid getting involved with certain older kids/adults”, “worse, each year it seems to be getting worse and nothing is happening to stop it” and “worse, I do not see any progress”.

What Would Work to Prevent Youth Violence

Both age groups came up with a number of interesting suggestions to help prevent youth violence.

Respondents aged 13-15 stated a continued need for the following;

- More adult supervision
- Access to other activities (x2) and services which bring youth outside of community
- Help from the City of Ottawa
- Increased police to help youth x2
- Role of security (patrols, cameras)
- Increasing support for clubs, activities and various youth resources

Respondents aged 16-21 stated a continued need for the following;

- Increased access to recreational spaces and sports equipment
- Increasing/Continuing to provide services to youth
- Increasing community involvement
- Increasing activities X4
- Boredom deterrence (keeping youth busy/engaged)
- Proving more awareness/advocacy for youth community programming
A number of key themes were highlighted across all respondent groups. Both groups responded that increasing activities and community resource access is top priority. Of particular interest is how youth in the community highlighted so many of the factors demonstrated in literature review. Youth respondents highlighted the role of community/municipal partnerships and the importance of youth resources. Impactful statements like “if people in power do not care, then things will get worse not better” and “drugs and money are the problem” were reflective of wider literature review and interview perspectives.

It was interesting to observe that there seemed to be an overall gap between perceptions of younger and older respondents. The younger respondents had seemed to think the problem was not as prevalent yet had witnessed more violence, while the older participants although mostly answering that it wasn’t serious and getting better seemed to have observed less violence.

Interview Reflections

The research described below illustrates a cross-section of qualitative data collected through interviews with employees from Crime Prevention Ottawa, John Howard Society, YOUTURN, Pinecrest-Queensway Community Health Centre and Carlington Community Health Centre.

Extremism element of youth violence needs to be treated separately

Our research looked to assess the highly sensitive topic of youth extremism and from our interviews with local services providers in Ottawa and local youth it quickly became clear that extremism is not on the radar of local agencies or the young people living in this community. Unlike youth violence, with extremism there is less clear data which can help answer key questions about the extent of this problem, however agencies like Public Safety Canada do address the complexity of this issue, discussing the various nuances and perspectives to understand, additionally reports of CSIS fears of White Supremacist hategroups being a larger threat to national security than Islamic groups highlights how certain facts and figures can help dispel Islamophobic stereotypes. Various other
federal publications provide a general outline of concerns and describe some initiatives which are working to counter violent extremism throughout Canada.\textsuperscript{xv} However, we were unable to locate any literature that looked at this topic within the city of Ottawa context.

Although the problem of extremism in Ottawa may be unclear and speculative at the moment, the continued dedication of community actors to prevent all forms of violence perpetuated by youth and adults is a counter-balance to these forces. For example, Crime Prevention Ottawa’s meeting in June, 2016 highlighted the role of “faith based approaches to crime prevention” and this speaker series reflected on the various ways in which religious groups contribute positively to building community.\textsuperscript{xvi}

We had the privilege of learning about the role that faith-based crime prevention plays in the community while attending this event. While meeting a number of inspiring community leaders, it became apparent that in Ottawa faith is used a tool of peace, dialogue, and justice. For example, the June 15\textsuperscript{th} event highlighted how various community and religious leaders contribute to the positive development of Ottawa youth. Religious leaders reflected on how religious ideology is used to reinforce democratic principles of peace, prevention, rehabilitation and reintegration.\textsuperscript{xvii}

Almost everyone we interviewed suggested that the topic of youth extremism is not only a very sensitive and highly-politicized topic that requires great tact when discussing it but that due to its unique and complex nature it should be treated separately from a study of youth violence. In sum, we conclude that youth extremism appears to not be a major issue at the moment in Ottawa but that further, in-depth research should be done on this important topic in order to confirm this initial finding and help increase our overall understanding of this problem.

\textbf{Youth Crime: Overall Decline}

Our interviews with experts revealed that the problem of youth crime/violence is getting better and that the crime rate is low. Additionally, increased focus on intervention and prevention efforts from agencies like CPO, JHS and YOUTURN have proven to contribute to reducing local youth recidivism rates. Programs geared towards rehabilitation and reintegration ultimately help individual
and community as a whole. These programs have been proven to work not only for at risk or offenders but also to reduce tax burden for rising incarceration costs. xviii

Reflective of the larger changes in the national justice system, Ottawa has continually developed a comprehensive network of organizations providing community support. These programs centre around employment, housing services, recreation and other public health services. Programs offered by Crime Prevention Ottawa run multiple partnerships (John Howard Society and YOUTURN among other) which focus on youth diversion, rehabilitation and reintegration. These organizations have a proven record of providing programming which reduces recidivism risk and providing positive alternatives to Ottawa youth.

Youth Violence is a Complex Issue

The interviews also illustrated how tough it is to narrowly assess and define youth violence issues. For example, organizational funding often overlaps and is not clearly isolated to dealing directly with just youth violence. In most organizations, funding is attained through multiple channels (federal, provincial, municipal and even private sources in rare instances). Continued community coordination and organizational collaboration along with additional financial resources are needs reflected across all sectors and organizations servicing youth. xix

All the organizations interviewed reflected upon the importance of community-based and youth centered strategies to violence prevention. Ottawa organizations work under an ethical framework which relies on consent and consultation with community stakeholders. Another common thread from the interviews reaffirms the role of the multiple underlying root causes of youth violence. For example, things like the “Social Determinants of Health” reinforce which areas youth need assistance in the most. From an enforcement and community police perception point of view, both community members and service providers reflect on an improving relationship with the police.

Survey respondents also cited the role of security (in addition to police) playing a large role in community improvement. Workers in the community describe how in some cases, communities are receiving better, yet still very limited resources to work on community issues of which youth violence is
only a small part of. Those cross-organizational descriptions of Ottawa realities provide an emphasis for the representation of broader societal contexts when researchers are potentially interested in youth violence. With youth violence being a small part of larger community health factors, the next section will address many of the issues that also affect youth in a comparable, if not arguably more severe way.

**Youth Violence: What are larger concerns?**

Our interviewees described the importance of assessing not only the perpetuation of youth violence but also the disproportionate victimization of youth as well. Major issues in Canada such as accidents, suicide, addiction, intimate partner violence and disproportionate gender aspects of violence (females at exponentially higher risk) and youth specific family-related homicide victimization should be considered as well. While this information is represented in public policy and community organization publishing’s, this level of understanding is often absent from narratives about youth violence. In this sense youth violence understood as youth harming other youth isn’t the biggest threat to the wellbeing of young people and if we are truly concerned with protecting the overall wellbeing of young people then we should also consider these other more common threats.

**Socio-economic marginalization**

Factors of disadvantaged communities include poverty, housing issues and education challenges. Here in Ottawa, issues of drugs, prostitution and gang activity occur in a cross section of demographics – from affluent to underprivileged communities within the city. Although program initiatives are central to eliminating this discrepancy, inequitable criminal justice realities are present for Canadians of an indigenous Aboriginal background and other visible minority groups. It is important to look at how these larger issues must be looked at more closely especially with the need for an ethical media.

For example, consideration should be given to the importance of programs like SWAG (Students Will All Graduate) which aim to improve education outcomes for youth living in communities where dropout rates are as high as 42% in some areas. Examples like these provide a less-known but equally
important narrative of positive community change. Programs like SWAG are funded through the Ontario Trillium Foundation and operated by local community organizations (Carlington Community Health Centre).\textsuperscript{xxii}

Stigmatization and Discrimination

Reflecting upon the challenges of visible minority Canadians living in socially marginalized communities requires a nuanced understanding of a number of factors. Our interviewees stressed the importance of looking at the intersectionality between socio-economics and justice as being critical to an adequate and nuanced understanding of youth violence. For example, it is important to reflect on the struggles faced by “double vulnerability” and “3\textsuperscript{rd} Culture” youth which are members of socio-economically challenged areas while also being subject to targeting and stigmatization.

Minority Youth Overrepresentation

Another issue which was raised during the interviews is the overrepresentation of visible minority youth in Canada custody. Howard Sapers the Correctional Investigator of Canada describes a number of improvements which are required in the Canadian Corrections System. Sapers recommends that the federal government works towards developing ”a national diversity-awareness training plan and hire new staff responsible for building networks between the prisons and outside cultural groups.” These changes are reflective of a number of Ottawa initiatives which strive for the same principles (OPS Race Relations and Diversity Department, Youth Services Bureau “Ethno-Cultural Advisory Board”).\textsuperscript{xxiii}

Weapons, Drugs and Crime

Another issue cited by Ottawa organizations as a peripheral issue within the context of youth violence was a greater ease of access to firearms. Despite record lows in overall youth homicide rates, in 2012 youth accounted for one in five persons accused of a firearm-related violent crime and in particular “persons accused of firearm-related violent crime were typically young and male”.\textsuperscript{xxiv}
Controlling access to firearms is central to lowering that figure. Fortunately, the government is making amendments to control this issue and lower the devastating social and economic costs of gun violence.

Despite the homicide rate being low overall, Ottawa has seen a recent spike in gang-related shootings. News reports cite the Chief of Ottawa Police, Charles Bordeleau, discussing how despite an average homicide rate a huge influx of shootings have occurred in Ottawa over the last couple years. These incidents are sometimes over drugs and money but they are also described as “trivialized acts of extreme violence” for no reason. Additionally, these spike in violence lead to an overstretch of Ottawa police resources. Rather than providing pro-active gang monitoring and prevention officers are diverted to focus on an increasing amount of open investigations. xxv

Another factor cited repeatedly across organizations was the role of the drug trade and violence. The literature review, interviews and survey responses also reaffirm the impact of drugs in communities. OPS Police Chief Charles Bordeleau also describes how the “Ottawa Police can learn from programs in other communities like CeaseFire Halifax that uses community leaders with street credibility to target young men with a propensity towards violent crimes.” xxvi

Recommendations

Our recommendations are organized into three general categories: 1) Programming Aspects 2) Awareness, Advocacy and Support and 3) Socioeconomic and Political Insights.

Programming Aspects

• Agencies working on the topic of preventing youth violence should strive to coordinate their efforts.

• Donors should fund violence prevention efforts occurring at different levels and increase inter-agency collaboration via encouraging the development of joint projects.
• Youth violence prevention projects should be based on up-to-date needs assessments that accurately reflect the local context and have a high degree of input from youth.

• Many different organizations currently provide funding (such as the Ministry of Child and Youth Services, Ontario Trillium Foundation, Safer and Vital Communities, Crime Prevention Action Fund, Young Gang Prevention Fund, National Crime Prevention Centre Ministry of Child and Youth Services, Federal Government, Justice Canada and John Howard Society of Ottawa and Public Safety Canada), however, greater funding for preventing youth violence and promoting overall youth wellbeing is needed. For example, strengthening funding for agencies like YOUTURN (which provide services to 40 youth each year, yet operate with only approximately 9,000$ maximum per individual) are integral as they provide clients with one on one consultation.

• Specialized programming to change the anger and impulsivity struggles of young males in particular while also looking at increasing gender responsive programming geared towards female youth is needed.xxvii

• Youth violence prevention programming needs to be tailored to different age groups.

• Further development of program evaluation tools is important in order to accurately gauge success of efforts.

• Projects should be designed (and funded) for the long-term and not be at risk of losing funding when a new government is elected.

Awareness, Advocacy and Support

• The media needs to provide clear, objective and non-misleading narratives that do not sensationalize youth violence.xxviii

• A strong case needs to be made to potential funders that investment in low income or “at risk” communities are a worthwhile and valuable expenditure of funds.

• Greater efforts should be made at promoting a culture of peace in which gun violence isn’t glorified.
Socioeconomic and Political Dimensions

- Political will is a necessary ingredient to prevent youth violence: elected officials be they at the city, municipal, provincial or federal levels need to make preventing youth violence a top priority and work to dedicate greater resources to youth wellbeing. Moreover, the policies they support can have a direct, positive impact on reducing youth violence so they should support evidence-based policies that are beneficial to Canadian youth.xxix

- More research needs to be done to understand and adequately address the disproportionate incarceration of visible minority and Aboriginal Canadians within the Canadian justice system.
Appendices

Appendix A – About the Authors

**Ryan Doucette** is a graduate of Media and Communications at Algonquin College and completing final year of Conflict Studies degree at St. Paul University in Ottawa, Ontario.

**Evan Hoffman**, PhD is a Senior Associate at the Canadian International Institute of Applied Negotiation (CIIAN) and a mediator with Concorde Inc. Over the last ten years, he’s conducted workshops and trainings with hundreds of community leaders, university students, police officers, and government officials from around the world.
Appendix B – Background Info on CIIAN and CPSC

Founded as an NGO in 1992, the Canadian International Institute of Applied Negotiation (CIIAN) is dedicated to the prevention and resolution of destructive conflict and to building sustainable peace at local, national, and international levels.

CIIAN has recently been acquired by Concorde Inc. and operates as a division of it. Concorde Inc. is a private, family-owned and operated company active in negotiation, mediation, violence prevention, peacebuilding, and multi-party consensus building. Concorde Inc. and CIIAN have a long history of working together as Concorde’s founder and President, Dr. Ben Hoffman, is a co-founder of CIIAN.

Civilian Peace Service Canada (CPSC) is an incorporated not-for-profit corporation registered in October 2013 under the Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act. It is wholly funded through contributions and supported by volunteer services. CPSC also works as a partner in the internship coordination department at Saint Paul University.

CPSC provides a process of “Assessment and Accreditation” which reinforces the important role of values and competencies towards ethical peacebuilding. CPSC has also been involved in past projects such as the “Career Path for Youth” workshop which provided students with knowledge about the steps towards building a career in peace work. CPSC’s initiatives and current roster of accredited members represents a wide cross-section of government, non-government, and private sector experience.
Appendix C – Map of Ottawa West Riding

Appendix D- Interview Questions

1) What is your budget allocated for youth violence work on gangs & extremism (approximate)?
2) How many and what types of youth violence (gangs & extremism) projects does your organization run? (i.e, training, dialogues, rallies, marches, etc.)
3) Who are the main donors for your youth violence (gangs & extremism) projects?
4) What is the approximate number of youth involved in your youth violence projects?
5) Are youth involved in the design of the projects (that is, do they have input)?
6) What is the tangible evidence of success from your youth violence gangs & extremism projects (in other words, what are the main impacts)?
7) How serious would you say the problem of youth violence (understood as gang violence or extremist violence) currently is in the community?
8) In your view will this problem likely get better or worse? Why?
9) What would work to help curb youth violence (in other words, what are the main causes of gangs & extremism and what can be done to effectively address those causes?)
10) What are the main “triggers” of youth violence? (i.e., turf disputes, influx of drugs into the community, mental health issues, family problems, etc.)
11) Is there anything else you would like to add or share with us about youth violence?
Appendix E – Consent Form

CIIAN-CPSC Research Project on Youth Violence in Ottawa West

Consent Form

What is this research about?
You are invited to participate in a research study about youth violence in Ottawa West. The goal of this research study is to identify the extent of this problem and what could be done to help prevent and/or reduce youth violence.

Why are you asking me?
You have been invited to participate because you are knowledgeable about this topic.

What will I be doing if I agree to be in the study?
You will be interviewed for approximately 30-60 minutes to collect your views on the topic of youth violence in Ottawa West.

What are the dangers to me?
Risks to you are minimal, meaning they are not thought to be greater than other risks you experience every day. Your interview responses will be kept strictly confidential, and will be used only to compile relevant data for test purposes. You will not be asked to publicly divulge any aspect of your personal experience at any time. Participating in this study may not benefit you directly, but it will help us learn. You may skip any questions you don’t want to answer and you may change your mind about participating at any time.

If you have any questions about this study please contact Dr. Evan Hoffman by email at ciian@ciian.org or telephone at 613-633-0491.

Are there any benefits for me taking part in this research study?
By participating, you will be potentially assisting with the prevention and/or reduction of youth violence in Ottawa West.

Will I get paid for being in the study?
There will not be pay associated with the study.

How will you keep my information private?
To avoid confidentiality issues, we have established secure procedures to protect the identity of participants, which may prevent potential harm. The following procedures will be used to ensure confidentiality:

1. The researcher will not use actual names for purposes of data analysis or for any other aspect of the final published research report or any other derivative publications that could be linked to the participant’s identity.
2. All electronic data will be saved in a password protected computer, accessible only by the researcher.
3. All hardcopy information will be saved in a password protected computer accessible only by the researcher.
researcher.
4. The researcher will seek the participant’s consent prior to sharing any information.
5. The researcher will inform the participants that all information will be kept for three years after the completion of the study.

IMPORTANT NOTICE: All information obtained in this study is strictly confidential unless disclosure is required by law.

What if I do not want to participate or I want to leave the study?
You have the right to choose not to participate or to leave the study at any time without penalty or negative consequences. If you decide to leave the study, any response data collected from you before the date you leave the study will be securely retained in the research records for 36 months from the conclusion of the study and may be used as part of the research.

Other considerations:
If significant new information regarding the study becomes available, which may relate to your willingness to continue to participate, this information will be provided to you by the investigators.

Voluntary Consent by Participant:
By signing below, you indicate that:
• this study has been explained to you
• you have read this document or it has been read to you
• your questions about this research study have been answered
• you have been told that you may ask the researchers any study related questions in the future or contact them in the event of a research-related inquiry
• You are entitled to a copy of this form after you have read and signed it
• you voluntarily agree to participate in the study

Participant’s Signature: ________________________________

Participant’s Name (Print): ________________________________

Date: ________________________________
Endnotes

1 For the purposes of this study we defined youth violence as, “direct, physical violence committed against people or property for extremist or gang related reasons (whether religious, ideological, etc.) by anyone aged 13-21 years of age”. That is, while we recognize the importance of online bullying and other forms of youth violence they were outside the scope of this study.


11 The links between rehabilitation and reintegration and lowering recidivism rates are also part of the framework employed by a number of Ottawa community organizations.

John Howard Society (http://johnhoward.on.ca/ottawa/services/) offers numerous community resources and has produced a number of publications discussing the role prevention in lowering recidivism (http://johnhoward.on.ca/download-category/research-reports/)

YOUTURN is another vital Ottawa organization which provides various services and resource for Ottawa youth (http://www.youturn.ca/resources/) and adults who have recently exited criminal justice system or are at risk of criminal involvement. Currently John Howard Society and YOUTURN run a joint program as well (http://www.youturn.ca/intensive-support-supervision-program/)


Although our interviews and surveys did not reveal any findings related to extremism. There was clear evidence suggesting a number of locally based initiatives aimed towards violence and extremism prevention. There were also a number of interesting perspectives which diverted attention of extremism away from a singular perspective typically associated to violence of Islamic extremists and situated extremism within a broader spectrum of conflict analysis.


"Islamic extremism accounted for 15 per cent of such attacks, the document noted, while left-wing extremism and "black power" groups followed with 13 per cent. Anti-abortion activism (8 per cent) and nationalism/separatism (7 per cent) rounded out the list, while in 40 per cent of cases there was no clear ideological motivation." https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2015/03/15/csis-highlights-white-supremacist-threat-ahead-of-radical-islam.html


The Centre for Initiatives on Children, Youth and Community (CICYC) is a multi-disciplinary, multi-sector collaboration among Carleton University faculty members and students, independent researchers, and community leaders and facilitators.

http://carleton.ca/cicyc/

"It is important to mention that these figures like those of youth violent homicide are on a general decline, however observations can still be made within various publications. For example;

For Canadians ages 1 to 14 the leading causes of death were; 1) Accidents (145), 2) Cancer (119), 3) Congential abnormalities (67), 4) Influenza/Pneumonia (29) and 5) Homicide (28). For ages 15 to 24 the leading causes of death was; 1) Accidents (822), 2) Suicide (479), 3) Cancer (165), 4) Homicide (157) and 5) Heart Disease (65)

For ages 1 to 14, homicide represents 0.07% (28), suicide (25) represents 0.06% of total deaths (388), with accidents accounting for over 37% (145). For ages 15 to 24, homicide represents 0.09%, suicide represents over 28% of total deaths (1,688), with accidents accounting for over 48% (822).


"Six in ten child and youth victims of homicide were killed by a family member" - "Since 2003, 319 children and youth were victims of familial homicide and accounted for one in five family-related homicides. Between 2003 and 2013, 59% of all children and youth victims of homicide were victims of family-related homicide compared to 30% of adult victims.”


"Gang Related Activities Affect Everyone - They cause fear, destroy property, threaten community security and drive out businesses. The gang problem affects all races, ethnicities, socioeconomic classes and neighbourhoods, including suburbs and rural areas. Studies show that prolonged involvement in gangs can wreak havoc on a child’s life and development.”


"Youth Intervention and Diversion - The Ottawa Police Service (OPS) Youth Section provides consultation, support, and training to both police members and the community for youth at risk. We facilitate referrals of youth at risk to youth services agencies, support early intervention for identified youth, and work closely with various organizations including the Children’s Aid Society (CAS) who provide advice/expertise on CAS related matters. Our School Resource Program is coordinated centrally out of the Youth Intervention and Diversion Unit. The purpose of the SRO Program is to liaise with schools within the four public school boards, as well as private schools, in the City of Ottawa.”


"Dropout rates average an “alarming” 42 per cent for students in Bellevue-Caldwell, Shillington, Debra Dynes and Parkwood Hills neighbourhoods, said Cameron MacLeod, executive director of the Carlington Community Health Centre.”


"Minorities make up a disproportionate percentage of the country’s prison population, but the faces of the guards don’t match the faces on the other side of the bars, Canada’s prisons watchdog (Howard Sapers) said today.”


"Youth Intervention and Diversion - The Ottawa Police Service (OPS) Youth Section provides consultation, support, and training to both police members and the community for youth at risk. We facilitate referrals of youth at risk to youth services agencies, support early intervention for identified youth, and work closely with various organizations including the Children’s Aid Society (CAS) who provide advice/expertise on CAS related matters. Our School Resource Program is coordinated centrally out of the Youth Intervention and Diversion Unit. The purpose of the SRO Program is to liaise with schools within the four public school boards, as well as private schools, in the City of Ottawa.”


"This study found that, in comparison to their proportion in the Canadian population, Caucasian and Asian offenders are under-represented, while Black offenders are disproportionately represented."
http://www.csc-scc.gc.ca/research/r144-eng.shtml#LinkTarget_24738


"Majority of victims are male (67%)" - 1.1 Firearm-related Crime in Canada http://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr/csj-sjc/crime/rr13_7/p1.html#ftn5


"The Direct Action Response Team (DART) is responsible for monitoring gang members. They do traffic stops and drop in unannounced on the homes of known gang members and drug dealers to ensure they’re abiding by their parole and bail conditions. If conditions are broken they make arrests. But since Dec. 1, DART officers have been removed from doing proactive checks on gangsters. Instead, for the past four months as part of a strategy to make more arrests, the six DART officers have been reassigned to a reactive role, investigating shootings."


"OPS Chief Bordeleau added that Ottawa Police can learn from programs in other communities like CeaseFire Halifax that uses community leaders with street credibility to target young men with a propensity towards violent crimes. However, he added that it is also up to friends and family members of criminals to report them to help end the ongoing violence.
http://ceasefirehalifax.com/


"Where To Go for Help" - City of Ottawa directory providing a list of valuable community resources providing support to Ottawa youth http://ottawa.ca/en/where-go-help


"The Ottawa Coalition to End Violence Against Women (OCTEAVAW) received funding from Status of Women Canada for a project targeting students at four post-secondary institutions in Ottawa: The University of Ottawa, Carleton University, La Cité and Algonquin College. In partnership with the Ottawa Rape Crisis Centre (ORCC), this project sought to identify and respond to the issues of sexual and gendered violence affecting young women and other marginalized people on Ottawa campuses."

In this regard, one interviewee noted the problems created by the ‘if it bleeds, it leads’ mentality that the media has. A key element reflected upon within research the role of ethical media depictions of youth violence.


“Across all local Ottawa organizations an emphasis on “evidence-based” approaches remained constant.
