MOVING BEYOND CROSSROADS:
TOWARDS A PROACTIVE PATH

BEING PROACTIVE CONFERENCES 2011 – 2013

Looking after the Mental Health and Well-Being of Youth in Our Communities

“They are hurting and they are hurting others and they are hurting themselves. They don’t need to be locked up and further punished; what they need is help. Their disruptive behaviour is indicative of underlying issues or factors that need to be addressed.”

Dr. Theresa Shanahan
York University
Crossing Paradigms, 2011

York Centre for Education and Community (YCEC)
Toronto District School Board (TDSB)
Department of Justice Canada / Ministère de la Justice Canada (DOJ)
Ontario Ministry of Children and Youth Services (MCYS)
Youth Association for Academics, Athletics, and Character Education (YAAACE)

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Executive Summary

The York Centre for Education and Community, partnered in 2011, 2012 and 2013 with the Department of Justice (DOJ), the Ministry of Children and Youth Services (MCYS), the Toronto District School Board (TDSB), and the Youth Association for Academics, Athletics, and Character Education (YAAACE) to host a series of multidisciplinary forums on the problem of youth violence and underlying, often undiagnosed, mental health issues. These three events were a follow-up to a meeting, Community Mental Health Resources for Youth in the Justice System held in Toronto, Ontario, on January 24–25, 2011, organized by YAAACE under the leadership of Devon Jones and in collaboration with the Nine Heavens Healing Academy. While each forum explored the intersectionalities of poverty and race, hopelessness, chronic stress and trauma, academic under-achievement and often escalating involvement with street/gang life, each addressed as well a range of positive, proactive interventions and responses.

Out of rich dialogue and debate, Crossing Paradigms panelists and participants in 2011 articulated a vision to guide the hard cross-sectoral work ahead:

- Do not give up on kids who are in conflict with the law.
- Do not catastrophize their behaviour.
- Do not label them in ways that will circumscribe their future.
- Do not assume they are someone else’s responsibility.
- Do place importance on early childhood proactive strategies that promote emotional intelligence.
In shifting the focus away from individual disruptive children and troubled youth to the contexts in which their lives are embedded, Being Proactive I presenters and participants in 2012 explored the linkages of race and poverty, trauma and violence, education, mental health and the criminal justice system. Dr. Kwame McKenzie noted that the biggest problem with developing robust mental health in racialized youth is the constant daily trauma of discrimination which he described as “socially inflicted trauma” leading to and exacerbating economic and social inequality. He suggested that if we want to challenge racism, we must build a better future for people in general and for youth in particular. In this regard, psychologists Sarah Yanosy and Landa Harrison of U.S. Sanctuary Institute suggested that the central question that should be put in our examination of disruptive children and youth in trouble with the law, is “What happened to you?” rather than “What’s wrong with you?”

In 2013, Being Proactive II presenters and participants sharpened the focus on mental health for improved youth outcomes. While addressing the socio-cultural determinants of mental health, they identified a range of creative interventions to re-engage children and youth who have experienced disengagement and disconnection from their schools and communities. Dr. McKenzie made the case for Canada’s need to foster and protect “mental capital” – a term that comprises both Intelligence Quotient (IQ) and Emotional Quotient (EQ), recognizing the importance of social capital and mental health. He notes that EQ is often a better predictor of future success. Perhaps because the challenges are so complicated and daunting, the resiliency research introduced by Dr. Michael Unger suggested ways to bolster mental capital and struck a powerfully resonant chord as important for a proactive stance.
The resounding theme of all three conferences was that the mental health of marginalized and racialized youth is compromised very early in life by racism, violence, poverty, street involvedness of young people in conflict with the law and other related institutional and systematic factors and that the damage cannot be easily undone. While the hard work is just beginning, and cross-sectoral partnerships are as necessary as they are complex, a model for action also emerged, based on four foci:

- Address the social-political context of violence, racialization, trauma, children and youth mental health and the education and justice systems.
- Reach out to create partnerships across education, mental health and the justice system.
- Support community-driven initiatives for healing and re-engagement.
- Develop and implement asset-based approaches to build from strengths.

Recommendations, targeted to (1) education/schooling, (2) mental health support, and (3) the criminal justice system, are identified at the end of the report to guide proactive work in these three core areas.
Overview

This report offers a summary of three York University conferences designed by the York Centre for Education and Community and its partners to explore a range of issues – pertaining to such things as poor mental health, academic underachievement, and gang involvement, which are affecting disproportionate numbers of children and youth in marginalized and racialized communities.

In Part One, the report identifies the Review of Roots of Youth Violence as Ontario’s call to action to address the social political context of the youth violence problem. The report then offers a synopsis of the conferences as a response to this provincial warning, exploring “the roots” – poverty, racism, violence, hopelessness and undiagnosed mental health issues – from a social justice perspective. While acknowledging that complex and inter-related themes criss-cross the presentations and discussions of each event, this report focuses on a major articulation or emphasis for each. It suggests, for example:

- The first forum, Crossing Paradigms, March 18, 2011, articulated a vision for proactive work.
- The second forum, Being Proactive I, February 16–17, 2012, reframed the contextual question to “What happened to you?” from “What’s wrong with you?”
- The third forum, Being Proactive II, March 22, 2013, sharpened the focus on bolstering the mental health of children and youth growing up in marginalized and racialized communities.

In the report’s Part Two, a model for action is presented, culling from presentations and discussions, four large themes – (1) the need to address the social political context of youth violence, (2) the importance of continuing to build partnerships across education, mental health...
and the justice system to problem-solve and respond, (3) the significance of support for community-driven initiatives to build community agency, (that is, capacity and empowerment originating from the community itself to identify, determine and bring about desired change) and (4) regardless of the diversity of the programs and approaches, always build from individual and community strengths.

Part Three of the report captures, recommendations, from presentations and discussions from all three conferences, for further reflection, discussion and action. These might serve to engage, re-engage and heal at-risk children and youth.

It is important to note that this report is based on three larger reports, prepared separately for each conference, and all available online:

- Being Proactive II (2013): Looking after the Mental Health and Well-Being of Children and Youth in our Communities Conference Report
Part One: The York Being Proactive Path in Brief

Ontario’s Call to Action for Youth and Social Justice

The authors of The Review of the Roots Youth Violence, published by Ontario government in 2008, said that Ontario society was at a crossroads. “We see powerful signs,” the Honourable Roy McMurtry and Dr. Alvin Curling wrote, “that core social bonds are being stretched beyond the breaking point. As those bonds break, violence is normalized, sensibilities are brutalized and communities are isolated.” They also said that poor and racialized communities in Ontario were still in “relatively early phases” of the degree and kind of violence experienced in American cities. They acknowledged the leadership and positive networks developing in the most disadvantaged communities. And they issued a challenge to the professionals working across the sectors of education, social services, health and the criminal justice system to find ways to work together to comprehensively understand, articulate and address the roots of violence involving youth.1

While many individuals and agencies were already concerned about the growing number of poor and racialized youth being expelled from school and ending up in court, and the high rates of recidivism following detention, the Roots of Youth Violence report lent a new sense of public urgency to the issues. It was time, the authors argued passionately and convincingly, to develop an aligned and sustained approach to repairing Ontario communities ravaged by poverty, violence, racism and hopelessness – “the conditions in which the immediate risk factors [for violence] can grow and flourish.”2

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1 The Review of the Roots of Youth Violence, Vol. 2 Executive Summary
2 The Review of the Roots of Youth Violence, Vol. 2 Executive Summary
Rather than reacting to the problem of youth violence, they called for understanding it, and on that basis designing an effective response – the essence of a proactive approach.

Developing a Proactive Vision for Youth in Crisis


On March 18, 2011, the York Centre for Education and Community (YCEC), with support from the Department of Justice, the Toronto District School Board (TDSB), and the Ministry of Children and Youth Services hosted its first discussion forum, and possibly the first of its kind in Ontario, to explore proactive and creative alternatives to the problem of youth violence from a cross-sectoral perspective. “Our best hope for wayward youth,” McMurtry had said a month prior at Osgoode Hall, “lies in our education system, not our justice system.”³ Forum participants – from education, mental health and the law – wrestled with the complexity of the challenge of keeping all children and youth in school, including the most disruptive ones.

Dr. Bruce Ferguson from the Hospital for Sick Children, who acted as facilitator throughout the day, noted that school failure, poor mental health and involvement with the law are factors that exert influence both independently and interactively. Dr. Ferguson encouraged participants’ input, saying: “We know that certain groups are more likely to be in conflict with the law, and that there are risk factors – please dig into your experiences today and help us to understand how

³ Crossing Paradigms
we can address issues of equity – so that we have not only equal access but also equal outcomes for all our youth.”

Panelists and participants, including research scientists, psychiatrists, school teachers, and youth workers, discussed the implications of the mounting evidence that youth who appear in court not only over-represent poor and racialized communities but also have low literacy, numeracy and life skills and experience the education system as antagonistic and punitive. They also looked at the looming mental health issues that often underlie the low academic achievement and disruptive behaviour of children and youth growing up in these communities. And they grappled with the inherent and rising tension between school safety issues and social justice issues. Noting that even though the Progressive Discipline Policy that is currently implemented in Ontario schools is intended to promote positive student behaviour, in practice it is often criminalizing poor and racialized youth while failing to address the circumstances that may underlie their behaviours.

Discussion was wide ranging, and many possible interventions and policy changes were discussed, yet there was a strong consensus among participants that they would like to see a provincial plan aimed at helping and supporting youth who get in trouble, not punishing them.

Many participants said they wanted action – multidimensional, co-operative, accountable action implemented on several levels – to bring about this paradigm shift before it is too late. To this end, it was recommended that

4 Crossing Paradigms
Actions focused on the co-ordination of mental health services across sectors, with education, mental health and criminal justice sectors taking leadership roles, and giving priority to:
  o developing mental health literacy across all sector staff;
  o reducing the stigma of mental health issues, and;
  o implementing a systemic approach to strengthening links between schools and their communities.

While acknowledging many challenges, participants articulated a vision to guide the hard cross-sectoral work ahead:

☐ Do not give up on kids who are in conflict with the law.
☐ Do not catastrophize their behaviour.
☐ Do not label them in ways that will circumscribe their future.
☐ Do not assume they are someone else’s responsibility.

☐ To access the report that arose from this event, please see: Crossing Paradigms (2011) – Youth, Mental Health and the Justice System: An Educational Concern Discussion Forum Report.
Exploring the Linkages of Poverty, Racism, Trauma, Academic Underachievement and the Youth Violence Problem

Being Proactive 1, February 16–17, 2012 (Toronto, Ontario)

While York’s first inter-professional dialogue on youth violence, Crossing Paradigms, arrived at a vision to guide proactive work, its second, Being Proactive 1, held on February 16–17, 2012, built up the research base for a rehabilitative, mental health approach. Some 200 participants, mostly from schools and community-based agencies, spent a day and a half hearing keynote presentations and attending breakout sessions to drill deeper into the intersections between racialization, violence, trauma, children and youth mental health, and the education and justice systems.

Toronto District School Board Teacher, YAAACE Executive Director and key participant on the organizing team, Devon Jones, issued an emotional challenge to participants when he said, quoting the Toronto Star’s Royson James, “Yes, we may have smashed the Ardwick Blood Crew but we didn’t get the conditions that bred such deviants. In our hearts we know that. In our hearts we must find the courage and empathy to ease the social conditions that incubate such evil.”

University of Toronto criminologist, Dr. Scot Wortley, set the parameters for this difficult discussion. He argued that public beliefs about escalating crime justify a reactive or police approach to youth criminal behaviour and undermine more effective, proactive strategies. Deflating these beliefs as misconceptions, Wortley showed evidence that while violent victimization has been decreasing since the 1990s in Canada’s general population, and that

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Canada is a “safe” society by international standards, violence has been increasing among poor minority men, mostly Black and Aboriginal. Growing economic polarization in major urban centres will compound this trend, he suggested, with the most economically disadvantaged communities becoming more highly racialized and more highly criminalized – a concern expressed in the *Roots of Youth Violence* report. 6

Other presenters, among them psychologists, psychiatrists and counsellors, working locally and internationally, focused on the lived experiences of children growing up in communities where systemic and institutional apathy prevail as poverty, racism and violence take their daily toll. The stress of living in poverty, participants reported, creates trauma, often leading to mental health issues that interrupt social-emotional and cognitive development, as does the stress of being subjected to racism in all its many forms on a daily basis.

The evidence base for the importance of a mental health perspective was reinforced by psychiatrist, Dr. Kwame McKenzie, of the Center for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH). Reporting on extensive comparative research on race and mental health, he described the experience of racism as socially inflicted trauma resulting in greater overall risk to mental health and well-being. The daily stress of being subjected to discrimination, he reported, causes changes to the body’s physiology, triggering dysfunction in response to stress, and increases the likelihood not only of being unable to control impulses but also of being able to develop social-emotional skills, to self-regulate and to learn. He also showed evidence of there being dramatic linkages between being subjected by the daily stress of racism, experiencing isolation from one’s

6 *Being Proactive I*
own ethno-cultural community, often as result of the quest for "upward mobility," and the suffering of serious psychiatric illnesses previously considered as largely biologically based.\footnote{Being Proactive I}

Psychologists in the New York-based Sanctuary Institute, Sarah Yanosy and Landa Harrison, lent further credulity to the massive links between racism, class, poverty, mental health issues, academic under-achievement, and disruptive/criminal behaviour. Drawing on a large U.S. study of traumatized children, they identified the Adverse Childhood Experiences syndrome (ACEs) as more prevalent among poor visible minority children\footnote{Being Proactive I}

Yanosy and Harrison noted that teachers often have to deal with students who show behavioural problems, such as poor social skills, restlessness, aggression, or dishonesty. Often these young people are labelled as disruptive when in fact they have been traumatized by Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) that leave them with mental health deficits. These adverse experiences might be physical, psychological, or sexual abuse. Alternatively, they might stem from dysfunction in the student’s environment, such as family members who are absent, are substance abusers, suffer from mental illness themselves, are incarcerated, or are traumatized by domestic violence. ACEs, Yanosy and Harrison suggested, are often played out in schools in the guise of disruptive behaviour and in the wider community in the form of criminal behaviour. For example, students with poor social skills may be showing the signs of a lifetime of disrupted attachments while students who are hyper-vigilant may actually be acting out their fear of danger. Educators need to intervene with students who are aggressive or dishonest, they said, but they also need to ask themselves, “Why is this student acting in this way?” When we stop responding reactively and begin trying to understand the reasons for disruptive or “bad”...
behaviour, and referring students to mental health professionals, when appropriate, we create opportunities, they said, for helping kids as well as de-escalating conflict.\(^9\)

Toronto District School Board (TDSB) psychologist, Dr. Glendon Rayworth, shared a psychological profile of children suffering Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), a portrait of aloneness and sadness, low self-esteem, anger and trust issues, all too familiar to participants working with both disruptive children and young offenders.\(^10\) He, too, made the link to racism, noting that PTSD is found more frequently in inner-city African Canadian and Latino youth than in other groups, where the exposure to violence is more prevalent and intense. Drawing on a number of studies, he suggested a formula, \(\text{More violence exposure/PTSD} = \text{more behavior problems and less school achievement}\). He also suggested that students who are exposed to violence are more likely to use violence.

In shifting the focus away from individual disruptive children and troubled youth, as Professors Lance McCready and Carl James had urged, “to the contexts in which their lives are embedded,” \textit{Being Proactive 1} generated ways to reframe the youth violence problem, to look at what is disadvantaging children in their environment and what is helping them. Or, to use Yanosy and Harrison’s proactive reframing, we need to ask “What happened to our youth?” rather than “What’s wrong with them?”

On the one hand, the themes and recommendations of \textit{Being Proactive 1} overlapped and intersected with one another forming a tangled web of issues of poverty, racism, and violence and a range of possible responses – from the Sanctuary Institute’s trauma-informed care model to

\(^9\) \textit{Being Proactive I} \\
\(^10\) \textit{Being Proactive I}
Jamaica’s Peace Management initiative for rehabilitating street corner youth to TDSB work with disruptive children and youth suffering stress-induced emotional disorders.  

On the other hand, as presenters and participants worked at untangling the web, what became apparent was, that whatever particular model was used, bolstering the mental health and well-being of poor, marginalized and racialized children/ youth, families and communities were essential aspects to the way forward. To this end, recommendations clustered around early intervention and education-mental health partnerships, such as including screening for mental health issues at school registration and in developmental screening processes, and implementing collaboratively supported proactive interventions.

☐ To access the report that arose from this event, please see: Being Proactive I (2012): Supporting Children and Youth Mental Health and Wellness in Schools and Communities Conference Report

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11 Being Proactive I
Sharpening the Focus on Mental Health for Improved Youth Outcomes

Being Proactive 11, March 22, 2013 (Toronto, Ontario)

The third Being Proactive event, held on March 22, 2013, approached the challenges of bolstering child and youth mental health in poor, marginalized communities from a “think big” perspective. As world economies shift to densely populated countries like India and China, Canada risks becoming a 51st state, unless we build our mental capital, warned revisiting keynote speaker psychiatrist, Dr. Kwame McKenzie. “We need to out-think countries which out-produce us!” Then, referencing David Hulchanski’s study of income polarization in Toronto, Dr. McKenzie urged the about 200 youth workers and community activists, social workers and teachers as well as researchers, policy makers and administrators in attendance to continue to advocate on behalf of the poorest, largely immigrant and more densely populated communities on the perimeter of the city’s wealthy, racially white downtown core. “We need to find ways,” he said, to disrupt pattern of judgments and assumptions, which lead policy- and decision-makers to treat these marginalized, resource-less communities as “funding dumps” with little sense of connection to or responsibility for them. Rather, he said, we need to see their strengths. With their links to the booming economies across the world, they may be Canada’s keys to ongoing prosperity.

Taking this big picture approach, Dr. McKenzie argued that by supporting the development of the social-emotional (EQ) and cognitive skills (IQ) in children across socio-economic classes and across regions of the province, we are strengthening Canada as a nation. He suggested a formula, EQ + IQ = mental capital, for working towards Canada’s survival as an independent nation.

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12 http://www.urbancentre.utoronto.ca/pdfs/curp/tnrn/Three-Cities-Within-Toronto-2010-Final.pdf
And so *Being Proactive II*, the third in the series, sharpened the focus on youth mental health and well-being as vitally important not only from a social justice perspective but from a national survival perspective as well.

Dr. McKenzie also urged participants to focus on youth mental health as an aspect of the youth violence issue, but cautioned that we should not treat the connection between them causally. Rather, he argued, those suffering poor mental health, often as a result of the compounding factors of poverty and racism, growing up in bleak urban landscapes and suffering deprivation of nurturing and support at home and school, are much more likely to hurt themselves than others. Perhaps, he said, they are more likely to be “caught” in their deviant behaviour, leading to higher instances of incarceration, which can create a higher chance of developing mental health problems.

A number of presenters, among them Dr. Alvin Curling, in his role as Strategic Advisor to the Minister of Children and Youth Services, and Toronto District School Board psychologist Dr. Glendon Rayworth, drew attention to the painful realities experienced in Ontario today, highlighting that 1 in 5 children in the province experience a mental health problem or behavioural disorder requiring intervention. But the vast majority of these young people do not receive mental health services or support. Dr. Rayworth focused on the learning challenges for “at-risk” youth, sharing a tragic recipe of “how to create a criminal” from undiagnosed hyperactivity and attention deficit disorders. Somewhat tongue in cheek, he, too, offered a formula:

*Step 1:* Find the most disadvantaged children in society (e.g., LD/poor/racialized).

*Step 2:* Kick them when they’re down (e.g., punish them when the LD causes failure).
Step 3: Applaud them when they’re down (e.g., Let them fail and/or give them front page attention when they do).

Step 4: Repeat as necessary.

Dr. Rayworth implored those who work in education to “treat all children as if they were their own, to set limits when they fail, to reward them when they succeed, to accommodate their deficits, to correct their defiance (i.e., recognize the difference between ‘can’t do and won’t do’), and to repeat as necessary.” He also urged that educators be better trained to identify and deal with the behavioural manifestations of learning disabilities and that they be given greater access to mental health experts both to avoid misdiagnoses in the classroom and the use of counter-productive disciplinary measures which escalate problem behaviours.¹³

The Honourable Justice Brian Weagant also reported on the tragic intersection between mental health issues and the law, suggesting that 50 to 70 % of youth involved with the justice system have undiagnosed mental health problems. For them, getting charged is sometimes the last chance for rehabilitation.¹⁴ Justice Weagant introduced participants to the constructive potential of “therapeutic jurisprudence,” using the law to ameliorate the outcome for individuals. He described his project, “Community Youth Court” on Jarvis Street in Toronto, which provides “charged” youth access to coordinated support and diversion programs, and suggested the value of extending the program to other jurisdictions.

While lamenting the current delivery of youth services, from police to front-line workers, as a “billion dollar blood industry,” Victor Beausoleil and Kofi Morris of Toronto’s Redemption and Reintegration Services also called for new approaches that will break the cycle of

¹³ Being Proactive II
¹⁴ Being Proactive I
criminalization, incarceration and recidivism. Their approach to the undiagnosed socio-emotional issues of the poor, racialized young men they work with in Toronto’s “priority neighbourhoods” is to engage each in a new “journey to manhood.” Drawing from both discarded cultural roots and each young man’s untapped inner strength, their program is designed to foster, perhaps for the first time, a sense of belonging, “home” and responsibility.

Other speakers and presenters, while addressing the socio-cultural determinants of mental health, identified a range of creative interventions to re-engage children and youth who have experienced disengagement and disconnection from their schools and communities. Perhaps because the challenges are so complicated and daunting, the resiliency research introduced by Dalhousie University’s Dr. Michael Unger struck a powerfully resonant chord. Once considered an intrinsic quality of “the invulnerable child,” resilience - the ability to recover from significant adversity, Dr. Unger said, is now considered a capacity that can be strengthened by promoting self-esteem and self-efficacy, and learning how to reduce risks and negative chain reactions. Resilience, he said, is a learned response.

It was this articulation of the importance of timely and strategic interventions to build a child’s capacity to survive and thrive in a difficult world that anchored the many perspectives and programs shared at Being Proactive II. In this vein, recommendations included:

- expanding schools and community programs to offer extracurricular activities that appeal to a range of personal interests and provide viable alternatives to activities involving guns and gangs, and
- implementing strategies to help youth transfer the skills that they use on the street, such as the math and business skills required for drug dealing, to use in activities that offer them more positive outcomes.
To access the report that arose from this event, please see: *Being Proactive II (2013): Looking after the Mental Health and Well-Being of Children and Youth in our Communities Conference Report*
Part Two: A Model for Action

Ryerson University’s Professor. Grace-Edward Galabuzi, in his role as moderator of Being Proactive II, commented on the important function the York conferences have played to date as a catalyst and champion for proactive work. He emphasized how crucial the evolving relationships and partnerships, supported by the York conferences, are to understanding and addressing the social-political-emotional roots of the youth violence problem. He urged conference participants, practitioners and academics alike from education, mental health and justice, to continue to work collaboratively to support and engage young people in taking action on their own behalf, to build their own agency from untapped strengths, and to work towards “changing the story of our society.”

In the spirit of acknowledging that the hard work is just beginning, that the evolving cross-sector partnerships are as necessary as they are complex, and that solutions must engage youth and include their voice, an emergent model for action was suggested. It is hoped that the model will be helpful as a guide to schools, boards and ministries getting started in designing their own locally-based proactive interventions and productive alternatives to aggressive policing and incarceration.

Address the social political context of violence, racialization, trauma, children and youth mental health, and the education and justice systems.

Dr. Alvin Curling described the Roots of Youth Violence report as starting out to be about youth and ending up about being about the rest of society.\textsuperscript{15} He relayed to Being Proactive II participants that when the Premier of Ontario asked him and Justice McMurtry to find out why a

\textsuperscript{15} Being Proactive II
Ontario teenager would go out and get a gun to kill another teenager, the Premier was not looking for a rationale for more resources for police or prisons; he was looking for something deeper and more lasting – he was looking for understanding; he was asking “why?”

When the McMurtry-Curling Commission went out to consult across the province with families and police officers, school teachers and community leaders, Dr. Curling said that they discovered, like many before them, the complexity and interconnectedness of the roots of youth violence. They found a socio-political quagmire of racism, poverty, eroded family structure, bleak urban landscapes, ineffective education and mental health supports, and unfair policing practices – an incubator of hopelessness, mistrust and alienation. Here is how the Commission described the impact of these factors, which they called the “the immediate risk factors,” that create a state of “desperation and put a youth in the immediate path of violence.” These youth, they said,

- Have a deep sense of alienation and low self-esteem;
- Have little empathy for others and suffer from impulsivity;
- Believe that they are oppressed, held down, unfairly treated and neither belong to nor have a stake in the broader society;
- Believe that they have no way to be heard through other channels;
- Have no sense of hope

When the Commission anchored their recommendations to the Premier in this social-emotional profile of a developing “youth criminal,” they were not abandoning a larger concern for public community safety. Rather, by focusing on the social political context, and then on the effects of violence, poverty and racism on loss of well-being and eroded mental health, they were

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16 The Review of the Roots of Youth Violence, Vol. 2 Executive Summary
reframing the provincial dialogue. Only by creating supportive, safe communities for communities and youth, they urged, would we be able to reduce the immediate risk factors that lead to criminal behaviour.

Key points from the Curling-McMurtry “four pillars strategy” have been extracted and paraphrased below:

**Pillar 1: A Repaired Social Context: Social Opportunity and Anti-Racism**

- Reduce poverty and address the circumstances that accompany poverty ranging from substandard housing to recreational and arts facilities to transportation – address “economic segregation that has come to characterize some of our cities.”

- Address systematically “the ever-more-entrenched racism in the province” – starting with collection of race-based statistics throughout the justice system and in the domains of education, health, housing and employment because “we cannot ascertain where the problems are, how to address them, what the best solutions are and what is working if we have no data.”

- Require that all public sector bodies, including and perhaps particularly policing, have action plans to address the systemic racism within their domains.

- Expand youth mental health services — “a need that arises in the context of education, families, communities and the justice system” and that needs to be addressed early and is community-based and that makes family-centred treatment available as soon as the need is identified.

- Bolster health promotion efforts including encouraging healthy activities at schools between 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.

- Expand the role for youth workers, including well-resourced and readily accessible arts and recreation facilities available on a reliable, sustained basis (youth should be involved in designing the programs to be offered in those facilities.

- Enhance exercising discretion in the justice system so that sentencing decreases the immediate risk factors for violence rather than increasing them.
Pillar 2: A Youth Policy Framework

- Build on the early childhood learning framework (programming for children up to age six) and base on developmental stages.
- Bring youth-led organizations into both delivery and policy roles and include youth input.

Pillar 3: A Neighbourhood Capacity and Empowerment Focus

- Enhance or create local centres ("community hubs"), around schools, in which opportunities and services for youth and their families can be maximized and community cohesion fostered.
- Support resident engagement, stability for key service providers, and new funding mechanisms for core community building organizations.
- Focus on the most disadvantaged communities – "areas of concentrated economic disadvantage which all too easily nurture the roots and, if not addressed, will keep producing new generations of youth with the immediate risk factors for violence.
- Establish at a university or college a Centre for Excellence through Program Assessments to conduct outcomes-based assessments of major programs that serve as a best practices resource for government, community service providers, funders and agencies.

Pillar 4: Integrated Governance

- Provide new governance mechanisms to enable the provincial government to provide an effective, coordinated and efficient approach to the broad range of issues affecting violence involving youth. These mechanisms are essential if the rest of the overall strategy is to work.
- Provide a community-based approach through which the Province’s integrated governance mechanisms can develop strategic partnerships with the other orders of government to set priorities, develop policies and deliver services, and collectively begin to listen to and work with communities in ways that support their cohesion, capacity and meaningful involvement in governance.

In his role as Strategic Advisor to the Minister of Children and Youth Services, Dr. Curling noted at Being Proactive II, that there is a long way to go but Ontario has come quite far in the five years since the release of the Roots of Youth Violence report. 17 While emphasizing the need

17 Ontario’s Youth Action Plan, Ministry of Children and Youth Services & Ministry of Community, Safety & Correctional Services
for better governance and sustained commitment, he identified significant progress to date, bringing attention to new Ontario’s Youth Action Plan, launched in August 2012, which builds on *The Review of Youth Violence Report*. “We are no longer at a crossroads,” Dr. Curling said, “but we are on the path.” He identified early intervention strategies now being implemented such as Full Day Kindergarten and expanded support for Parenting and Family Literacy Centres as well as new support for mental health and youth workers in schools and community organizations. He drew attention to a Youth Opportunities Fund of $20 million to support community-based initiatives and highlighted the government’s commitment to review reintegration strategies for young offenders transitioning from detention.18 Perhaps most significantly, the creation of a Cabinet Standing Committee entitled, “Poverty Reduction and Roots of Youth Violence,” suggests that addressing the social political context of youth violence is one acknowledgement of a productive and necessary orientation at the highest levels of the provincial government.

Although evidence is not available province-wide, as alluded to above (see second bullet under Pillar 1), statistics for academic achievement gaps for young black men in Toronto in conjunction with suspension/expulsion/detention rates suggests that it is necessary to constantly see the connections between racism, academic underachievement and increased involvement with the criminal justice system.

In relation to black youth violence and the justice system, Dr. Scot Wortley used a “roots” approach as well. At *Being Proactive I*, he sketched out the deep roots of violent behaviour as the legacy of colonialism and slavery and ongoing economic and social class inequalities. He identified the mid-level roots as factors such as poor community design and disorder,
victimization, destructive peer influences, lack of family and educational support, and contemporary racism and issues in the criminal justice system. Among the surface roots of youth violence are the socio-emotional or risk factors such as impulsivity, lack of empathy, social alienation, perceptions of social injustice, hopelessness and/or depression, lack of voice, and cultural isolation identified in the *Roots of Youth Violence*.

The intricacy of the connections between the social political context and socio-emotional behaviour was established for conference participants at both *Being Proactive I and II* by psychiatric research as well. Dr. McKenzie suggested at *Being Proactive II* that not just contemporary injustices, but even the threat of contemporary injustice and social inequality have significant impact on mental health. The traumatic implications of racism on the mental health of racialized communities are well documented. In 2001, the U.S. Surgeon General released the results of a study titled, *Mental Health: Culture, Race, and Ethnicity*, which among other things, looked at the influence of culture and society on mental health, specifically the adverse health effects of internalizing racism and negative stereotypes. The study concluded that chronic racism, made up of micro-aggressions, actually changes human physiology. As human beings, we are biologically primed for fight or flight in the face of aggression; when the trauma is chronic, the body gets confused, Dr. McKenzie explained, and cannot stop the adrenaline release to get back to normal. Consequently, racialized people die younger of every malady. The chronic stress of racism leads to a decrease in “Killer T cells”, which causes “weathering” – essentially, the body wears out.

Dr. McKenzie noted that one cannot run away from racism, or release the stress related to it. This is reflected in a growing body of evidence suggesting that visible minority immigrants have an
increased risk of schizophrenia, with the risk being twice as high among Black immigrants. Dr. McKenzie, citing David Hulchanski’s study of income polarization, *The Three Cities within Toronto*, showed that the buffering effect of community can help; as the concentration of minorities goes up, rates of psychosis go down. However, to have any hope of upward mobility, new immigrants are forced to leave their “newcomer” communities as they seek out improved employment and opportunities in Cities 1 and 2. According to Dr. McKenzie, the level of racism to which the inhabitants of “City 3” are exposed accounts for the high correlation between race and poor mental health. Racism is behind, he suggested, the following social-cultural circumstances:

- Prevalence of socially inflicted trauma—mental, physical, and sexual;
- Economic and social inequality;
- Fewer opportunities for employment and/or for upward mobility within companies;
- Fewer opportunities to move outside of racialized neighbourhoods;
- Greater exposure to aggression and violence;
- Inadequate, inappropriate, or degrading medical care.

Dr. McKenzie made a strong case for Canada to begin to foster and protect the “mental capital” of future generations in all of its communities. While schools focus on nurturing IQ (intelligence quotient), they do not, he suggested, nurture EQ (emotional quotient), which is often a better predictor of success. He explored the dynamics and conditions in schools, communities and families which either inhibit or bolster the necessary nurturing to develop a child’s mental capital, again underscoring the eroding impact of racism, poverty and deprivation on a young developing heart and mind. Finding “face time,” for example, can be a problem for many overburdened struggling families. Yet the brain is built by making connections and children need

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19 *Being Proactive II*
this time with parent(s) to develop skills to cope with life. Without this interaction, a child’s brain development is slowed and/or stunted, resulting in increased risk of developing mental health issues. The importance of family time, he emphasized, is multifold: the child feels important and loved; he or she has an opportunity to model parent’s behaviour; the parent can observe and learn about the child’s strengths and weaknesses in order to better guide them; the child has a chance to voice their thoughts and feelings; and the parent and child develop a stronger bond. The quality of family interactions and frequency of family visits, coupled with the improved socioeconomic status that usually results from a healthy family environment, all can have positive impact on the mental health and well-being of children and youth and can bolster mental capital.

Clearly, then, the social political context that creates the risk factors for disruptive behaviour and violence can be approached in different ways – through the lens of present-day or historical circumstances, from a jurisprudence or governmental or social-psychological stance. However, regardless of the particular slant, the connections and linkages between racism, poverty and disadvantage, trauma and poor mental health, vulnerability to school failure, and involvement in street/gang life must be addressed as we work our way as a society to a sustained proactive response.
Reach out to create partnerships across education, mental health and the justice system.

Individuals, communities, youth-serving organizations and different levels of government need to be engaged in meaningful and vibrant partnerships to address the issues because of their complexity and their “intersectionality.” Productive solutions cannot be developed in one sector to the exclusion of others because the problems are manifested and exist at multiple levels and in multiple domains. While a number of outstanding examples of cross-sectoral partnerships were shared at the York conferences, just two are highlighted below to a) show what promising collaborations focused on improving youth outcomes in disadvantaged communities look like, and b) to reinforce the importance of a range of cross-sectoral approaches.

Stop Now and Plan (SNAP)

For Crossing Paradigms participants, one of the most pressing challenges identified was the isolation of the education system from other youth-serving agencies. Educators especially expressed a need not only to work with communities in program development, but also to be able to connect students with other support systems. There are, however, several barriers to these possibilities.

One of these barriers is existing privacy legislation. While there are clear grounds for protecting the privacy of individual children and youths, legislation prevents educators from accessing services on behalf of a child. Further, and perhaps even more significantly, there is an imbalance between how different systems are regulated in terms of privacy. So, for example, schools are

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20 Please see Appendices for Workshops
required to contact the police when students engage in dangerous or violent behaviours, but, on
the other hand, police are not required to contact schools when students have come into contact
with the law. As many participants noted, there is nothing that educators can do to support youth
in trouble with the law if they are unaware of the situation.

Focusing on what she calls “the forgotten group” (children aged 6–12, especially girls), Dr.
Leena Augimeri, Director of the Centre for Children Committing Offences & Program
Development (Child Development Institute, Toronto), shared with Crossing Paradigm
participants an intervention program for children in trouble with the law called “Stop Now And
Plan” (SNAP). SNAP programs are now used with a strong record of success in the United
States and Europe as well as in various parts of Canada. Essential to making the SNAP program
work is school-police-community co-operation in implementing referral protocols in service of
disturbed and disruptive children.

In her panel presentation, Dr. Augimeri emphasized that schools could – and should – play a
more significant role in redirecting troubled children into counselling. Despite the evidence
which indicates that “there are seven years of warning before a juvenile becomes a serious,
violet offender,” she said that many educators unfortunately misinterpret or mishandle early
warning signs. Further, she suggested that these early warning signs are gendered – that young
girls manifest their problems differently than do boys – but that assessments use measures
developed for boys and, thus, provide skewed information.

For youngsters of either gender, though, catching early behaviour is essential. Doing this means
looking beyond misinformation (such as the belief that children with behavioural problems are
“bad”) and understanding more relevant truths (such as the fact that academic failure is not
related to intelligence). Other preconceptions – in particular with respect to family and context – must be handled more carefully. Augimeri’s program is an example of a productive partnership which both “looks beyond misinformation” and “understands more relevant truths” and brings together historically fractured services for children who require early rehabilitation and support in a community.\textsuperscript{21}

\textit{The Community Youth Court}

In the 1980’s, “therapeutic jurisprudence,” – using the law to ameliorate the outcome for individuals charged with crimes – was readily used, according to the Honourable Justice Brian Weagant of the Ontario Court of Justice, but public backlash undermined growth and development of this proactive approach. When drug treatment courts were set up, the outcry was that mental health issues should be taken care of by other sectors, not the legal system!

Today, the Community Youth Court (CYC) at 311 Jarvis St., Toronto is reintroducing this progressive cross-sectoral strategy. At Being Proactive II, Justice Weagant indicated that the potential of “problem-solving courts,” to deal with young people in their turnaround is significant, “as there are a lot of kids in need.” Further, while research may suggest that approximately 50-75\% of adolescents in the justice system have mental health problems,\textsuperscript{22} the stigma is so great that “no teenager is going to go to a mental health institution to ask for help, it’s easier to go to court for assistance.”

\hspace{1cm}\textsuperscript{21} \textit{Crossing Paradigms}
\hspace{1cm}\textsuperscript{22} Justice Weagant cited research by Dr. Alan Leschied.
Once youth are referred to the Community Youth Court, all the resources, including a CYC mental health worker who manages most cases and representation from community agencies, diversion programs and the justice system are in the same room. Usually, as a result of the collaborative decision-making undertaken to identify the best possible outcome, and the provision of support to help complete diversion, 95% of the charges are withdrawn. Currently 40 youth are assigned to this “problem solving court,” with their problems ranging from drug abuse, fetal alcohol syndrome, ADHD and mood disorders – mostly anxiety.

There is no one recipe for partnerships, of course. But from the SNAP program to the Community Youth Court, it should be apparent that these exemplary partnerships are focused on their deep purpose, as opposed to bureaucratic or other agendas, to serve at risk children and youth, that they align people, organizations and resources, as required by the project, and they are rooted in the real, concrete needs of those whom they serve.

**Support community-directed initiatives for healing and re-engagement.**

Consistent with the direction of the *Roots of Youth Violence* report, and the recently launched Ontario Youth Action Plan, conference presenters and participants alike emphasized the importance of collaborative partnerships to support marginalized and racialized youth to confront – and overcome – the significant challenges and multiple barriers to their success. The word *collaborative* in this context needs to be underscored. For, on the one hand, “top-down” government-driven approaches were perceived to undermine the equally important necessary emphasis on asset-based approaches which build strength and resilience from the ground up, and on the other, wholly grassroots initiatives tend to suffer lack of coordination and sustainability.
So, to overcome the difficult challenges and work toward sustained solutions, government and communities must work together in genuine collaborative partnerships. Among the outstanding examples of community-directed collaborative partnerships shared at the Being Proactive conferences, two are highlighted below.

*Mamow Sha-way-gi-kay-win: The North South Partnership for Children in Remote Northern Communities*

Ryerson University’s Dr. Judy Finlay, who serves as Mamow Sha-way-gi-kay’s Co-Chair, invited Being Proactive II panelists and participants to turn their attention to Aboriginal communities in Ontario’s north where there is systemic suffering, institutionalized racism, poverty, and ongoing crises in child/youth mental health. *Mamoshe*, she explained, is the notion of giving with no expectation of return, which describes the intent of this Northern-Southern Ontario partnership. Consisting of First Nation chiefs, elders, youth and community members living in 30 remote communities in north-western Ontario and individuals and voluntary organizations based in southern Ontario, its purpose to begin to redress inequities of the past and to pave the way to a better future.

Dr. Finlay suggested that the age at which most youth attempt suicide in First Nations communities is 13 –14 years old, when they are about to enter into high school and believe that there is no future for them in either staying on the reservation or leaving it. It is within this context that Dr. Finlay laid out the factors that have a particular impact on wellness among First Nations children and youth. Colonialism, loss of language and culture, dislocation, reserve living, and forced dependency have resulted in deficiencies in water, housing, food security, health care and employment in First Nations communities. These social determinants of health necessarily impact the mental health of these communities.
Ways of living, for many First Nations peoples, were nearly abolished in Canada, through the process of colonization, which included legislation and policies aimed at assimilation. The impact of this experience across generations has contributed to high rates of substance abuse and mental health problems, suicide, incarceration and family violence. Many First Nations communities also experience high rates of poverty, shortages of adequate housing, unsafe drinking water, and a lack of educational, employment and economic opportunities, all of which undermine health and well-being.

Dr. Finlay made the case that the historical injustices visited upon First Nations communities in Canada, coupled with contemporary injustices and social inequalities, have real implications on current realities for First Nations children and youth, as they have had direct impact on the social context into which these young people are born. Without addressing these inequities, children and youth in First Nations communities will continue to be impacted disproportionately by mental health challenges.

The North-South Partnership begins by addressing this social political context and fosters, first of all, repairing the relationships, making a 10 year commitment to the project. It fosters, too, self-efficacy and agency, inviting community partners to identify their priorities and then works concertedly to realize improvements with services, resources and opportunities. Some of the priorities to date have been better access to the outside world (all-weather roads!) and improved medical care and housing. A key strategic focus, too, is improved education and employment opportunities for youth.
The Youth Association for Academics, Athletics, and Character Education

The Youth Association for Academics, Athletics, and Character Education (YAACE), introduced by its program director, Devon Jones, at Being Proactive I, is a well-established Toronto-based community organization. Its mission is to “engage children and youth from all communities – particularly those from poor racialized communities – in activities that promote opportunity, civic/social inclusion, identity development, resilience, accountability and self-advocacy.”

The association, now in its sixth year of operation, has successfully solicited private and public sector funding, working, for example, with Telus Mobility, York University, the Department of Justice and the Toronto District School Board, to offer a range of programs from week-end academies and summer institutes, to sports and arts programs, to leadership development opportunities. Committed to building youth voice and engagement, it uses a social inclusion framework “that enables participants to access opportunities, engage in academic activities, build self-confidence and enhance self-identification. The wraparound strategy is designed to micro-manage the lives of children and youth so that they grow, learn and play in a context that is responsive and supportive of their needs, interests, expectations and aspirations, thereby enhancing their capacity to become productive members of society.”

The association engages in research projects as well to further understanding of reintegration and rehabilitation approaches, working presently in a school-university/Ministry of Justice partnership exploring systemic issues impacting educational attainment for young people in conflict with the law and those at risk in guns, gangs and drugs activities.
While the communities served by these two partnership are enormously distinct, one a string of First Nations communities struggling to survive in the remotest regions of northern Ontario, and the other a largely newcomer community of poor and racialized families in Toronto’s Jane-Finch community, what they share is their commitment to working on behalf of young generations to build each child’s and young person’s capacity to be a functioning, productive member of society. In this sense, what aligns these two exemplary community-driven partnerships with more central agencies of government and enables them to sustain their proactive efforts is their emphasis on the potential of youth themselves to contribute to their communities. This emphasis simultaneously strengthens each community’s capacity to ensure the well-being of all members.

Develop and implement asset-based approaches to build from strengths.

Dr. Kwame Mackenzie had asked *Being Proactive I* participants, “Are we producing kids who know jiujitsu?” Are we showing children how to use their attackers’ energy against them?” In *Being Proactive I*, he had said that the biggest problem in improving mental health and well-being for at-risk racialized youth was the constant daily trauma of discrimination together with the ravaging impact of poverty. He also said that this might also be turned into a potential strength, anticipating the range of asset-based approaches explored in *Proactive II*. There, Dr. Mackenzie introduced the notion of building mental capital in poor, marginalized and racialized communities as a way to anchor a reframed “think big” approach.

Among the many promising rehabilitative and therapeutic models discussed across the *Being Proactive* conferences, just two are highlighted below, for they capture the dual emphases on addressing intersectionalities of racism, poverty and trauma, and building from strengths identified in Mackenzie’s “think big” approach.
Sanctuary Model for Changing Outcomes and Challenging Assumptions

The Sanctuary Institute Model, presented by therapist Landa Harrison and the Sanctuary Insitute’s director, Sarah Yanosy, to Being Proactive I participants, is a healing methodology for traumatized children and youth (and organizations, too) which anchors the therapeutic response in “What happened to you?” vs “What’s wrong with you?” This successful intervention (used to date in 90 organizations across the United States and in five other countries) is based on the importance of:

1. providing safety for both those who receive services and those who provide them,
2. understanding the causes of childhood trauma (e.g., abuse and/or household dysfunction, including substance abuse, domestic violence, separation from parents, incarceration),
3. addressing childhood trauma’s devastating lifelong effects (e.g., disrupted neurodevelopment, emotional and cognitive impairment, adoption of health-risk behaviours),
4. orienting to each individual traumatized child as manifesting maladaptive survival responses (e.g., disrupted attachments … if attachment causes pain, don’t do it; hair-trigger temper … trauma causes hyper vigilance), and
5. providing support for new responses – “a personalized tool kit” (or new skills) for coping with adversity.

Traumatized children with tendency toward rigid or extremist thinking, have poor impulse control and often pay attention to threats while ignoring less threatening, but important information. Yanosy and Harrison suggested that these qualities of mind characterize communities as well where adversity is unrelenting. The same principles – providing safety,
understanding /addressing causes, orienting to healing and reintegration rather than punishment and suppression – apply.

Resilience Building Instead of Problem Treatment

Family therapist and professor, Dr. Michael Ungar of Dalhousie University’s Resilience Research Centre, shared his research and clinical experience with Being Proactive II participants on resilience among children, youth and families and how they together survive adversity in culturally diverse ways. Dr. Ungar described psychological resilience not as an inherited trait of the “invulnerable child, as once thought, but as a capacity that can be strengthened in individuals and communities to help them survive adversity.”

He demonstrated that resilience has two aspect. The first involves the capacity to navigate one’s way to the resources (whether psychological or social / cultural or physical) that are needed to sustain well-being.” The second involves the capacity to “negotiate one’s access” to these resources in “culturally meaningful ways.” He then identified seven “resources” or foundations for a sense of well-being, as follows:

1. Access to supportive relationships
2. Development of a desirable personal identity
3. Experiences of power and control
4. Experiences of social justice
5. Access to material resources
6. Experiences of a sense of cohesion with others and
7. Adherence to cultural traditions

In essence, context and culture, identity and voice are what matters most to children/youth/communities in crisis; this is where the work needs to be focused.
Part Three: Recommendations for Moving Forward on the Proactive Path

In a recent issue of Law Times, announcing federal funding to assess the cost of crime in Canada, Osgoode professor Margaret Beare was quoted as saying that the government “might be wiser to spend the money funding the recommendations in the roots of youth violence study.” She reflected that, “maybe prevention-type numbers with dollars attached to them” is the only thing that might reverse “the totally dangerous and crime-producing get-tough tactics” that are currently being pursued. In other words, rather than using research dollars to assess the cost of policing criminals, why not invest in assessments of excellence in early intervention and prevention, healing, rehabilitation and reintegration? Why not focus on supporting evidence-tested programs and strategies to reduce child and youth criminal behaviour to begin with?

What follows is a summary of the recommendations for action which emerged from the York Conferences, a rich place to start for reflection on this promising direction.

Education, Mental Health, Criminal Justice Partnerships

The education, mental health and criminal justice sectors should co-ordinate their work in engaging, re-engaging and healing children and youth in order to:

- develop effective ways of working with and sharing information with one another, without ignoring legitimate privacy and parental involvement concerns;

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23 Law Times, Monday, 20 May 2013 07:00 | Written by Elizabeth Thompson |
create opportunities for pre-service training across the different systems, including the possibility of joint programs, in particular in faculties of health, and education;

promote cross-sectoral, asset-based initiatives developed through partnerships among youth-serving organizations and their communities and across government (education, mental health and justice);

promote positive images of ethnic minorities in the media and ensuring that stories of crime and violence are not racialized; and

invest in infrastructure and planning that fosters growth and health in marginalized and racialized communities.

Schooling/Education

Schools should promote good mental health and reduce the stigma of mental health issues by developing mental health literacy among staff in order to:

- include screening for mental health issues in school registration, particularly in schools in poor, marginalized and racialized communities;
- align services in marginalized and racialized schools and their communities to promote mental health and prevent issues that may result from racialization;
- work closely with board staff and professional and community agencies to:
  - develop awareness of the symptoms of mental illness and trauma
  - assist in implementing proactive interventions
  - recognize situations appropriate for referral to health care professionals
make the classroom environment user-friendly for students who are suffering from mental illness or trauma by:

- addressing behavioural issues privately, using appropriate language and terminology,
- offering opportunities for choices appropriate to the needs of the student;
- fostering the development of resilience; and
- providing opportunities for students experiencing behavioural issues to take part in conflict mediation with school staff support before the police and courts become involved.

improve training for school personnel to support them in identifying and addressing the behavioural manifestations of learning disabilities

School boards should implement a systemic approach to strengthening links between schools and their communities and valuing home and community contexts by mandating that schools establish both a community council and a parent council, each reflecting the communities within the school and its neighbourhoods.

Schools should build parent-school relationships that focus on inviting parents to “teach us about your child” and that support understanding of the importance of healthy life choices related to exercise, diet and sleep.

School boards should recruit teachers, administrators and other staff from within each school’s own community to reflect the cultural diversity of the student population.
Schools should track and analyze data related to racialized youth and should ensure that materials developed to support racialized youth be written by and reflect the experiences of young people with similar backgrounds.

Ministries of Education should formally evaluate programs intended to create safe schools to determine which are effective and which are not.

**Mental Health**

Agencies servicing children and youth should become better coordinated to ensure comprehensive care when necessary.

Leaders across institutions, organizations and communities should prioritize working together to end the stigma associated with mental health issues.

Providing services to newcomer, marginalized and racialized communities should be a priority where the incidence of suicide and homicide are prevalent.

Language-appropriate information about mental health issues and the services available should be accessible to various economic, social and cultural communities.

Schools and community programs should offer a variety of extracurricular activities that appeal to a range of personal interests and provide viable alternatives to activities involving guns and gangs.
Strategies should be implemented to help youth transfer the skills that they use on the street - such as the math and business skills required for drug dealing – to use in activities that offer more positive outcomes.

Social development efforts should be focused on interrupting the criminalizing gang process.

A formula should be created and implemented to evaluate the efficacy of programs designed (and funded) to reduce youth violence.

**Justice System**

A portion of the funding currently being directed to policing and prisons should be redirected towards education and systemic change.

Police officers placed in schools should have a mentoring, not a punitive, role.

The Community Youth Court model should be appropriately adopted in other jurisdictions to ensure that youth experiencing mental health challenges, who find themselves in the justice system, receive proper care.

Steps should be taken to ensure transparency in governmental crime control measures and their outcomes.
Recommendations Wheel

The “wheel” summarizes the recommendations identified above, a birds-eye view of the suggestions for action emerging from Crossing Paradigms (2011), Being Proactive I (2012) and Being Proactive II (2013).
Appendices

Keynotes and Presenters

_Crossing Paradigms, March 18, 2011_

**Leena K. Augimeri**, Ph.D. (panellist) is the Director, Centre for Children Committing Offences & Program Development at Child Development Institute in Toronto. This scientist-practitioner developed a comprehensive crime prevention model for young children engaged in antisocial behaviour which is being adopted worldwide. She is the co-founder/developer of the longest evidence-based intervention for children under 12 years of age in conflict with the law (the SNAP® Model). She is also a noted author and researcher and skilled group leader who co-authored the *Early Assessment Risk Lists* for Boys (EARL-20B) and Girls (EARL-21G), which have been translated in various languages to assess risk for future antisocial behaviour in young children. In addition, she is known for chairing a task force that led to the development of Canada’s first police-community referral protocol for children under 12 years of age in conflict with the law, which has subsequently been adapted by other communities. She represented Canada United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime Summit (2011) in Vienna entitled *Communicating Globally: Crime Prevention Works*. Dr. Augimeri is a Fellow of the Academy of Experimental Criminology and the recipient of the Child Welfare League of Canada’s inaugural Outstanding Achievement Research and Evaluation award.

**Deborah P. Britzman** (panellist) is Distinguished Research Professor in the Faculty of Education, York University. She completed her psychoanalytic training at the Toronto Institute for Contemporary Psychoanalysis and carries a small psychoanalytic private practice in Toronto. Dr. Britzman’s area of research is psychoanalysis and education, with a focus on: the emotional world of teaching and learning in schools and the university; the psychology of teaching; and problems in social thought and freedom. She has authored over 80 articles and book chapters and has written five books; her most recent one, *Freud and Education* (2011), is published by Routledge Press. Dr. Britzman’s current research analyzes mental representations of mental health in education, literature, and university life.

**H. Bruce Ferguson**, Ph.D. (facilitator) was the Director of the Community Health Systems Resource Group at the Hospital for Sick Children. He is also a Professor in the departments of Psychiatry and Psychology and the Dalla Lana School of Public Health at the University of Toronto. Dr. Ferguson taught psychology at Carleton University and then moved to leadership positions in the health care system at the Royal Ottawa Hospital and the Clarke Institute of Psychiatry. Dr. Ferguson founded the Community Health Systems Resource Group (CHSRG) and has been involved with the children’s mental health measurement project of the Ministry of Children and Youth Services since 1999. In 2004–05, Dr. Ferguson led a team which carried out the Early School Leavers study for the Ontario Ministry of Education. Since then he has worked with the Ministry on the Learning to 18 and Student Success programs. Currently, his team has just completed a study on the transition from Grade 8 through Grades 9 and 10 and is studying the implementation of changes in classroom instruction to foster academic success in students.
Llewellyn W. Joseph, MD, FRCP(C) (panellist) is Clinical Director, Disruptive Behaviours Program, Child & Adolescent Mental Health, Southlake Regional Health Centre, Newmarket, Ontario; and Associate Professor of Psychiatry, Department of Psychiatry, University of Toronto. His practice and teaching have been in child and adolescent psychiatry except for a nine-year period (1987−96) as Psychiatrist-in-chief and Clinical Director of the London Psychiatric Hospital. This role provided the opportunity for participation in two of the most significant processes that have been responsible for the movement of mental health patients from hospital beds to the community: the restructuring of mental health services in Ontario as per the Graham Report and, as a member of Weisstub Commission on competency and consent, the revision of the Ontario Mental Health Act to comply with the requirements of the newly instituted Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. He was a member (2009−10) of the National Framework Review Committee within the Child and Youth Advisory Committee of the Mental Health Commission of Canada (the Kirby Commission).

Theresa Shanahan, LL.B., Ph.D. (panellist) is a lawyer who was called to the Bar of Ontario in 1990. She practised law in Toronto for several years before obtaining her Ph.D. (Education) in 2002 from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto (OISE/UT). An Associate Professor in the Faculties of Education and Graduate Studies at York University, she is also a member of the Graduate Programme in Public Policy, Administration, and Law. She was Associate Dean, Research and Professional Development, in the Faculty of Education. Dr. Shanahan’s research interests include education law and policy, the political economy of post-secondary education, university governance (system and institutional decision-making), professional education/ governance/ethics, human rights and access and equity issues in education (especially for women, minorities, “at-risk” groups, immigrants and foreign-trained persons). She has authored numerous refereed articles, book chapters, and conference papers on higher education policy, legal education, and university and professional governance. She has been involved in a SSHRC-funded project, Making Policy in Postsecondary Education, 1990−2007 with colleagues Paul Axelrod, Roopa Desai-Trilokekar, and Richard Wellen.

Being Proactive 1, February 16–17, 2012

Keynote Address Speakers

Dr. Christopher Spence is a renowned educator and dedicated community advocate, and was the Director of Education for the Toronto District School Board. Dr. Spence has more than 15 years of senior administration and teaching experience and has authored several books. He has been widely recognized for his leadership work within the broader educational community in promoting issues related to student engagement and achievement.

The Everyday Trauma of Discrimination and its Links to Mental Health Problems

Dr. Kwame McKenzie is a Psychiatrist, Researcher and Policy Advisor at the Center for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH). In addition Dr. McKenzie is a Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Toronto and sits on the Service System Advisory Committee of the Mental Health Commission of Canada.
Being Proactive: A Community Approach to Community and Youth Violence

Dr. Horace Levy is a professor at the University of the West Indies in Kingston Jamaica (Mona Campus). For the past few years his area of research has focused on urban violence. He is also the coordinator of the “Peace Management Initiative” an initiative dedicated to reducing community violence. A recent publication by Levy is *Killing Streets and Community Revival*.

The Roots of Controversy – Research on Youth Violence and Crime Prevention in the Canadian Context

Dr. Scot Wortley has been a Professor at the Centre of Criminology, University of Toronto since 1996. In 2001 he was appointed the Justice and Law Domain Leader at the Centre of Excellence for Research on Immigration and Settlement (CERIS). Professor Wortley has also recently conducted research on youth violence as part of the TDSB’s School Community Safety Advisory Panel (chaired by Julian Falconer) and the Ontario Government’s Roots of Youth Violence Inquiry (chaired by Roy McMurtry and Alvin Curling).

Sanctuary: A Model for Changing Outcomes and Challenging Assumptions

Landa C. Harrison is a Licensed Professional Therapist and a certified Special Education Teacher with experience as an Adventure-Based Therapy facilitator. Landa has worked extensively with children with severe mental health challenges. She is also the coordinator of the “Transforming Violence Intervention in Health Care through Trauma-Informed Practice” learning cluster and a staff member at Drexel University’s Center for Nonviolence and Social Justice.

Sarah M. Yanosy, LCSW, is the Director of the Sanctuary Institute at the Andrus Children's Center in Yonkers, NY. A clinical social worker for over ten years, she has collaborated with Dr. Sandra Bloom and colleagues to develop the curriculum for the Sanctuary Leadership Development Institute training, and has overseen the training and consultation process for over 90 organizations across the United States and five other countries to implement the Sanctuary Institute Model.

Being Proactive II, March 22, 2013

Keynote Speakers

Dr. Alvin Curling is the Strategic Advisor on Youth Opportunities to the Minister of Children and Youth Services. He began his career as an educator and entered the arena of provincial politics in 1985 serving the public as the MPP for Scarborough. In 2003, he was elected Speaker of the Ontario Legislature. In 2005, he accepted a diplomatic posting as Canada’s Ambassador to the Dominican Republic. He also served as Co-Chair of the Premier’s Task Force on the Review of Youth Violence along with the Honourable Roy McMurtry.

Dr. Michael Ungar is both a family therapist and a Killam Professor of Social Work at Dalhousie University where he co-directs the Resilience Research Centre that coordinates more than five million dollars in funded research in a dozen countries. That research is focused on resilience among children, youth and families and how they together survive adversity in culturally diverse ways. He has published over 100 peer-reviewed articles and book chapters on this topic and is the author of 11 books including *The Social Worker*, his first novel. Among his
books for professionals are *The Social Ecology of Resilience: A Handbook for Theory and Practice* and for parents and educators *We Generation: Raising Socially Responsible Children and Teens* and *Too Safe For Their Own Good: How Risk and Responsibility Help Teens Thrive*. In addition to his research and writing, Michael maintains a small family therapy practice in association with Phoenix Youth Programs, a prevention program for street youth and their families, and was the recipient of the 2012 Canadian Association of Social Workers National Distinguished Service Award. His blog, Nurturing Resilience, can be read on *Psychology Today*’s website.

**Dr. Kwame McKenzie** - see his bio under Being Proactive I (2012) Keynote Speakers

**Dr. Judy Finlay** is an Associate Professor at Ryerson University in the Faculty of Community Services at Ryerson University. Her current research includes: *Mamow Ki-ken-da-ma-win: Enhancing social determinates of health* through a partnership-based approach to child, family and community wellness in First Nations in northern Ontario. As Principal Investigator she leads a team of researchers from across three universities (Ryerson, University of Western Ontario and Lakehead). Dr. Finlay is the co-chair of Mamow Sha-way-gi-kay-win: the North South Partnership for Children in Remote Northern Communities. This is a partnership that represents the coming together of First Nation chiefs, elders, youth and community members living in 30 remote communities in north-western Ontario and individuals and voluntary organizations based in southern Ontario. Dr. Finlay is appointed to the Ontario Government Child and Family Services Review Board. She was Ontario's Child Advocate from 1991-2007, and was instrumental in the creation of an independent Office of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth which reports to the legislature. Dr. Finlay has also participated in the development of children’s rights agendas and community capacity building in Jamaica, Japan and Sierra Leone.

**WORKSHOPS**

**Facilitator: Justice Brian Weagant** (Ontario Court of Justice)

**Brian Weagant** was called to the Bar of Ontario, Canada in 1980. A lawyer in the City of Toronto, he regards his most meaningful experience as his time spent as Director of a Legal Aid Clinic called Justice for Children and Youth when he appeared at all levels of court and on all matters relating to children and the law. In 1994, Brian Weagant co-authored with (then) defence counsel Mavin Wong, “Defending Young Offender Cases,” in Carswell’s Canada Practice Guide series for lawyers. Brian Weagant was appointed to the Ontario Court of Justice in May of 1995. He has presided in the adult criminal, juvenile and family courts. He currently presides at the main family court in downtown Toronto, which also houses the juvenile criminal court. This is the last model of court in Ontario dealing with this particular configuration of laws. Justice Weagant has taught family law at Osgoode Hall Law School, and has lectured at Ontario Studies in Education (University of Toronto), Ryerson University (Toronto), University of Ontario Institute of Technology (Oshawa), and Nara Women’s University (Japan). He is regularly on the faculty of educational training sessions for prosecuting attorneys, criminal lawyers, child welfare lawyers and Legal Aid Duty Counsel.
Facilitator: Irwin Elman (Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth)

Irwin Elman holds an extensive background as an educator, counsellor, youth worker, program manager, policy developer and child and youth advocate. In working with young people in our systems of care, he has carried out these roles with respect — borrowing from the courage and hope of the young people he served to create innovative approaches for youth in Ontario, Jamaica, Hungary, and Japan. For over 20 years, Irwin was the Manager of the Pape Adolescent Resource Centre in Toronto, a program of the Children’s Aid Society of Toronto and the Catholic Children’s Aid Society of Toronto. Later, he was the Director of Client Service at Central Toronto Youth Services, an innovative children’s mental health centre. As Ontario’s first independent Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth Irwin works to partner with children and youth in elevating their voices to create positive change.

The North America School to Prison Pipeline and its impact on the well being of our youth today
Facilitator: Victor Beausoleil and Kofi Morris (Redemption Reintegration Services)

Victor Beausoleil is a facilitator and lecturer on youth engagement, educational attainment and community development. Mr. Beausoleil has worked and volunteered in the broader equity seeking communities across Ontario for the past ten years. He is a trainer, conflict mediator, youth advocate, and community organizer, and has lectured on cultural competency, cultural considerations of care, diversity, and developed curriculum for agencies and organizations throughout the city of Toronto. As a lecturer, Mr. Beausoleil has travelled throughout Canada and the United States to speak to the RCMP, community organizations and American juvenile justice agencies. Mr. Beausoleil volunteers with the Rites of Passage program which is an intensive thirteen week process to assist young men in character development, critical thinking, and peer accountability. Victor has worked as a Provincial Youth Outreach Worker, Youth Engagement Coordinator and Project Manager in the social service sector for the past ten years and currently works as the Executive Director of Redemption Reintegration Services. Victor volunteers on multiple Boards in the city of Toronto. Victor Beausoleil is currently the Chair of the Board of Directors For Youth Initiative, as well is a Board member of the Atkinson Charitable Foundation, and The Harriet Tubman Community Organization.

Newcomer Youth Mental Health: A Discussion of Needs, Barriers and Promising Practices
Facilitator: Sheeba Narikuzhy, M.A (Psychology) Clinical Supervisor at East Metro Youth Services

This presentation highlighted the key components of a successful newcomer youth mental health program and the major themes emerged in our work with immigrant youth and their families. The participants learned of the many barriers/challenges facing these communities in accessing mental health services and promising practices to engage the newcomer youth and their families. In addition this presentation promoted discussion on the existing gaps between newcomer youth and mental health services and possible ways of bridging the gap to enhance the services to newcomer communities

How to Build a Criminal: Psychosocial Implications for Prevention
Facilitator: Dr. Glendon Rayworth (Psychologist Toronto District School Board)

The purpose of this presentation was to examine the relationship between learning disabilities, behaviour problems, and criminality, considering related social constructions. Participants
learned how to differentiate deficient behaviour from defiant behaviour, applying related principles of informed mitigation. A cursory review of other implicated mental health problems as also be provided. Related implications for accommodation and prevention was discussed, ultimately providing the recipe for how to build success.

Resilience Building Instead of Problem Treatment: A Social Ecological Approach to School-based Interventions with Children, Adolescents, and their Families
Facilitator: Dr. Michael Ungar
When working with children and adolescents from poor, violent, and emotionally difficult backgrounds, we often focus too narrowly on individual problems---like delinquency or conflict with caregivers---and miss the broader sources of healing and resilience in young people’s lives. This workshop presented a strengths-focused, resistance-proof Social Ecological Approach to intervention that draws on the child’s educators, friends, extended family and community and cultural mentors as potential sources of resilience and positive development. Those attending learned how to identify and encourage children’s sense of personal self-control, agency and power, social justice and fairness, belonging and purpose, spirituality, and cultural rootedness, and to use this ecological “map” to better engage young people at school.

Take Back Your World Navigate Your Life
Facilitators: Farley Flex, Roderick Brereton and Diane Hill - Urban Rez Solutions
The Urban Rez Solutions/R.E.A.L School workshop entitled “Take Back Your World NAVigate Your Life”, focused on Engagement, Prevention and Healing. Facilitators Farley Flex, Roderick Brereton and Diane Hill conducted an overview of how their program challenges convention and utilizes various concepts to inspire “out of the box” thinking as a catalyst to making conscious choices that are customized and appropriate for one’s life.

Farley Flex, B.A. Fin., Entrepreneur, Founder R.E.A.L School, is a recipient of the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Award for his outstanding work in support of UNICEF’s efforts to protect and promote the rights of children. Flex’s commitment to help improve the lives of the most vulnerable children around the world is underlined by his R.E.A.L School program, which utilizes the appeal of Pop Culture to engage youth in the life skills necessary to become leaders in their own lives. With an extensive background in media ranging from managing a platinum selling recording artist, launching FLOW 93.5 and as judge on Canadian Idol, Flex understands the influence that media can have on the minds of youth who are in need of self-direction but tend to live vicariously through outside influences. R.E.A.L School has impacted communities from Alberta to Newfoundland and is increasingly sought after as an effective, engaging program.

Roderick Brereton, BA Sociology, Lead Facilitator, Urban Rez Solutions, is founder of the culturally specific conflict management consultancy, Urban Rez Solutions. He has 15 years of experience working in the mental health recovery, supportive housing and social services sector. Brereton’s expertise is facilitation and designing self-empowering conflict management (Anger Management and Conflict Resolution) programs. Utilizing participant experiential learning and the ‘Ounce of Prevention’ pedagogy to address conflict, Urban Rez Solutions minimizes the likelihood of participants resorting to violent behaviour when faced with adversarial situations.
Brereton, who finds music and pop culture conducive to engaging and empowering youth, is a partner with the Canadian Juno Award Winning Music Production Team, Kornerstone.

**Diane Katsitsawaks Hill**, Integrative Programs Consultant, PhD Candidate in Adult Education Program Administrator/Lead Animator, R.E.A.L. School – Get REAL, and Become the Leader in Your Life – First Nations/Aboriginal Peoples is a member of the Mohawk Nation, Bear clan from the Six Nations of the Grand River Territory, Ontario. As an Integrative Programs Consultant for the past 27 years, Hill has been consulting on various Aboriginal education initiatives both nationally and internationally. Her work is distinguished in the fields of education, social work, and cultural studies. She has written several articles and books and has lectured on the topic of “Ethnostress” and Indigenous models of learning and teaching. Hill has been facilitating practices of quantum healing and wellness in an integrated and holistic educational training model. She is a keen animator and facilitator of the quantum energy approach to whole person development.