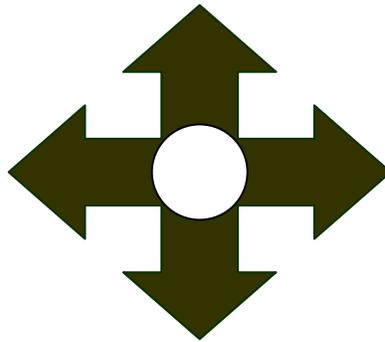


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# ACAV Youth Violence Prevention Project Evaluation – Phase II

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## FINAL REPORT



by

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## **Executive Summary<sup>1</sup>**

In the spring of 1999, the Action Committee against Violence (ACAV) received funding from the Calgary Foundation and the Community Mobilization Program to hire a Youth Violence Prevention Co-ordinator position. The role of this person is to assist both schools and prevention programs to better co-ordinate their efforts to educate students about violence. Another goal for the new position was to provide leadership for children and youth agencies. The Youth Violence Prevention Project began in July 1999.

The first year of the Youth Violence Prevention Project was turbulent with personnel changes, until the current co-ordinator, Doris Toy-Pries, was hired and resumed her responsibilities in January of 2000. The instability of the position during the first year was reflected in the initial evaluation. However, the position has been filled by Doris for nearly two years now, a condition that has led to more stability, an enhanced sense of direction for the ACAV Children and Youth Subcommittee, and an improved ability of each of the five Subcommittees to start to operationalize their goals. The Youth Violence Prevention Project is supported by the Children and Youth Subcommittee as well as the Steering Committee, which provide feedback and guidance to the project itself and to the direction of the committee.

### **Purpose/Objectives of Research**

The primary purpose of this research was to evaluate the Youth Violence Prevention Project. The results presented here constitute the second annual evaluation of the Youth Violence Prevention Project covering the year of September 2000 – August 2001. Data collection occurred over the course of six months from May through October 2001. While the first year of the project was significantly disrupted with personnel changes, the stability within the position over the past year can be viewed as a contributing factor in much of the community stakeholders' positive feedback. Another difference between the current and the previous evaluation is the Implementation of the Community Based Strategic Plan, which had prescribed changes in the overall structure of the ACAV Child and Youth Subcommittee. In the Spring of 2000, the overall ACAV Child and Youth Subcommittee was divided into smaller, more formalized Subcommittees with the entire Child and Youth Subcommittee meeting in Quarterly Forums. Each of the subcommittees, or working groups, has focused its efforts on various tasks in the prevention of violence. Consequently, this change has been reflected in the focus of the current evaluation of the Youth Violence Prevention Project.

There were two components of the 2000 - 2001 evaluation. The first component consisted of twenty-six individual interviews and two focus groups with key stakeholders within children and youth serving agencies that have services in the area of youth violence prevention. All research participants were members of the ACAV Subcommittee on Children and Youth. The vast majority of participants contacted were eager to lend their support, provide feedback to the work of the ACAV Children and Youth Subcommittee and the Youth Violence Prevention Project over the 2000 – 2001 year. Given the structural changes in the operation of the ACAV as outlined above, it seemed important to focus the 2000 – 2001 evaluation around the awareness and

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<sup>1</sup> Parts of the historical components of this summary are drawn from the final report of the 1999-2000 evaluation of the Youth Violence Prevention Co-ordinator Project by Leslie Tutty and Kendra Nixon of RESOLVE Alberta.

efficacy of the tasks of the various Subcommittees. As in the first evaluation, the current research also sought to identify stakeholders' goals for involvement in the ACAV Children and Youth Subcommittee and to identify future focal points in the prevention of violence in the lives of children and youth. The results of the analysis of these interviews follow in the section Research Component I: Qualitative Interviews with Members of the Children and Youth Subcommittee.

The second component of the 2000 – 2001 evaluation involved two focus groups<sup>2</sup> with school-aged children. The purpose of including this second study in the research was two-fold. First, children and youth are infrequently consulted directly about their experiences with violence and violence prevention programming. This discrepancy has led to a phenomenon of minimal documentation in qualitative research and literature pertaining to children's experiences with violence. The purpose of including focus groups with school-aged children was to provide a venue for their voices to be considered in issues that impact their lives. Second, this phase was the first step in the process in conducting more groups with children and youth in future evaluations. The hope is to further advance the understanding of children and youth experiences with violence and violence prevention programming. The results of the analysis of these focus groups can be found in Research Component II: Focus Groups with School-Aged Children.

The Turn Off the Violence Campaign and the Peace Heroes Program are initiatives of the ACAV Children and Youth Subcommittee. These initiatives play fundamental roles in the Subcommittee's plight to increase awareness of violence related issues as well as support the Subcommittee's integral focus on the prevention of violence in the lives of children and youth. The Turn Off the Violence Campaign reportedly reached 3,000 children and youth in the city of Calgary in the 2000 – 2001 school year. It was important to collect information from both the key stakeholders' and school-aged children on their perceptions and experiences with these programs. These results can be found in Research Components I and II.

### **Implications of the Results for the Youth Violence Prevention Project**

In evaluating the efficacy and effectiveness of the Youth Violence Prevention Project over the 2000 – 2001 year, it is evident that the project has received an overwhelming amount of positive feedback from key stakeholders in the youth violence prevention community. The 2000 – 2001 year saw the Implementation of the Strategic Plan, which seems to be the foundation of this year's improvements in organization, facilitation, co-ordination, and the accomplishment of goals. While the first year of the project was rather turbulent at times, the past year has had stability and dedication to the areas of focus of the project. The current evaluation suggests that there have been a positive follow-through with last year's recommendations and with the goals of the Subcommittee itself. In addition, the research results suggest that the Turn Off the Violence Campaign and the Peace Heroes Program are effective initiatives in the area of youth violence prevention.

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<sup>2</sup> Special thanks to the Renfrew Boys and Girls Club for their assistance with the focus groups.

## **Introduction and Rationale for the Research**

This section documents the history of the Youth Violence Prevention Coordinator Position and the Subcommittee on Children and Youth and the involvement of RESOLVE Alberta as background to the rationale and details with respect to conducting the current research.

### **History of the Youth Violence Prevention Project<sup>3</sup>**

The Action Committee against Violence (ACAV) was established in December 1991 on the recommendation of the Mayor's Task Force on Community and Family Violence. ACAV's mandate was to implement the 66 recommendations contained in the Task Force Report, in collaboration with existing coalitions and organizations in the community. These projects, including the Calgary Domestic Violence Committee – Protocol Development Project, Alternatives to Violence Education Program, and the Calgary Justice Working Project, have encouraged agencies and community groups to work more collaboratively.

In the last six years, a number of innovative programs have been developed to address youth violence in Calgary. While these programs were seen as an important first step, there was a growing concern in the community that a more broader and systematic approach was needed to raise awareness of the existence of these programs; to identify gaps in service; and to develop a more coordinated response to youth violence.

In the spring of 1999, the Acton Committee Against Violence received funding from the Calgary Foundation and the Community Mobilization Program to hire a Youth Violence Prevention Co-ordinator position. The role of this person is to assist both schools and prevention programs to better co-ordinate their efforts to educate students about violence. Another goal for the new position was to provide leadership for children and youth agencies. The Youth Violence Prevention Project began in July 1999.

The Youth Violence Prevention Project is assisted by a Steering committee that meets monthly and consists of representatives of the Children and Youth Subcommittee. The Steering Committee was originally composed of representatives from the Calgary Board of Education, The Calgary Catholic School Board, The Boys and Girls Club Community Services, Calgary Family Services, The Sheriff King Violence Prevention Centre and Sheriff King Home, RESOLVE Alberta and the Action Committee Against Violence. The Steering Committee was enlarged in the spring of 2000 to include representatives from the United Way, the Children's Initiative, The Canadian Red Cross, Options – PEACE program and The Calgary Women's Emergency Shelter.

The first year of the Youth Violence Prevention Project was turbulent with personnel changes, until the current co-ordinator, Doris Toy-Pries, was hired and resumed her responsibilities in January of 2000. The instability of the position during the first year was reflected in the initial evaluation. However, the position has been filled by Doris for nearly two years now, a condition that has led to more stability, an improved sense of direction for the

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<sup>3</sup> Portions of the first two sections were written by Doris Toy-Pries in the Phase I report to the project funders, the National Strategy on Community Safety and Crime Prevention, Community Mobilization Program. Most of the historical background was written by Leslie Tutty and Kendra Nixon in the Phase I Final Report.

ACAV Children and Youth Subcommittee, and the ability of each of the five Subcommittees to start to operationalize their goals.

#### The ACAV Children and Youth Subcommittee

The ACAV Children and Youth Subcommittee comprises a network of representatives from services intended to meet the needs of all young people in the Calgary community. It was established to create linkages and to strengthen relationships between service providers. Another goal has been to raise awareness of the needs of children and youth amongst the different stakeholders and the community.

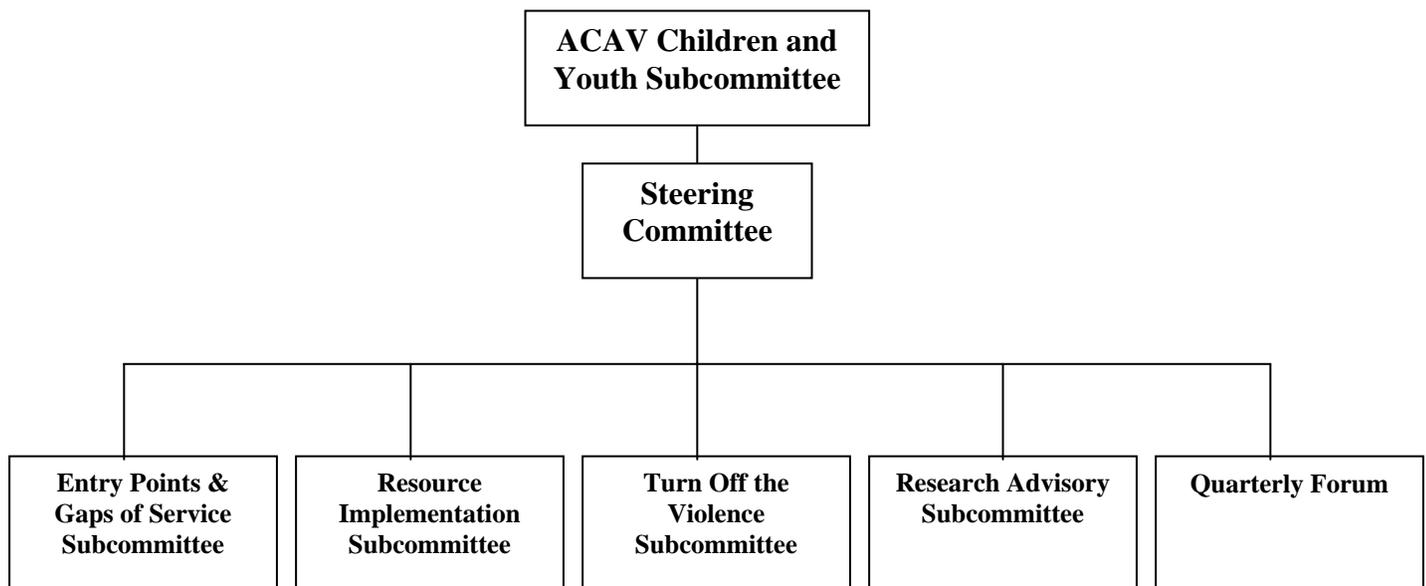
The ACAV Children and Youth Subcommittee has been meeting since 1997, when it supported the proposal to fund the Youth Violence Prevention Co-ordinator position. Since the position was funded and filled, the Subcommittee has continued as an advisory group to the Youth Violence Prevention Project.

In September 1999, with the leadership of the Violence Youth Prevention Project, the Children and Youth Subcommittee met to explore strategic directions, which resulted in the identification of a vision statement, values, belief and goal statements. The participants identified seven core areas as important work for the future.

In January 2000, the Steering Committee met to fine-tune the planning framework, building on the work previously completed by the larger ACAV Children and Youth Subcommittee. The tasks included rewriting some of the foundational statements from the previous strategic planning session into results-focused statements in accordance with the “Accountability Planning Model” used by all ACAV Subcommittees. In March 2000, the entire Children and Youth Subcommittee met to ensure the steering committee’s planning framework was consistent with the direction provided in September 2000. In May 2000, the Terms of Reference draft document was brought to the Steering Committee for review. The Terms of Reference were finalized and approved by the community stakeholders in June 2000. This process helped identify existing services, priorities, current gaps and emerging trends in service in order to establish short and long-term goals for the ACAV Children and Youth Subcommittee. The priorities and areas of focus established by the committee are as follows:

- To build awareness and education on issues of violence to assist the prevention of violence.
- To challenge the community and media to take responsibility to provide the necessary supports to ensure that children and youth are healthy, caring and contributing citizens.
- To provide leadership in the community (i.e. stakeholders) in program planning, development and assistance in accessing appropriate resources for the prevention and intervention of youth violence.
- To facilitate participation and contribution of community members (i.e. stakeholders and leaders) who are committed to working collaboratively toward the prevention and intervention of youth violence.

The process endorsed the Children and Youth Subcommittee’s mission of playing a leadership role in the community by providing support and resources to communities and schools in preventing violence in the lives of children and youth. In the 2000-2001 year, the Children and Youth Subcommittee worked towards implementing these goals. The Youth Violence Prevention Project facilitated this process by structuring Subcommittee meetings to focus on more specific goals and continued in the role as a resource to the overall Subcommittee. During the 2000 – 2001 year, the ACAV Children and Youth Subcommittee operated according to the structure below<sup>4</sup>.



***Entry Points and Gaps of Service Subcommittee:*** A collaborative, innovative, dynamic representative coalition that provides leadership, support and resources to communities and schools in the development of an enviro-scan of current youth violence prevention services in the city of Calgary. Also identifies gaps of service in the current system of care and seeks to address them.

***Resource Implementation Subcommittee:*** A collaborative, innovative, dynamic representative coalition that provides leadership, support and resources to communities and schools in the development of a best practices framework for youth violence prevention services in the city of Calgary. Also seeks to market and generate community awareness and commitment to these standards.

***Turn Off the Violence Subcommittee:*** Works together to implement the Turn Off the Violence public campaign which raises awareness about violence in the community, and to encourage a proactive response with a focus on violence prevention.

***Research Advisory Subcommittee:*** Works to evaluate the effectiveness of the children and youth initiative, in order to be accountable for the work of the youth violence prevention initiative.

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<sup>4</sup> Thanks to Doris Toy-Pries for providing background information on the three year plan for the ACAV Children and Youth Subcommittee and the Youth Violence Prevention Project.

**Quarterly Forum:** A collaborative group of community agencies brought together by a common goal of preventing violence in the lives of children and youth.

## **RESOLVE Alberta**

The research presented here was conducted by RESOLVE Alberta, a family violence research institute based at the University of Calgary. RESOLVE Alberta is part of a tri-provincial research institute with additional offices in Manitoba (at the University of Manitoba) and Saskatoon (the University of Saskatchewan). Funding for the evaluation component was from the National Strategy on Community Safety and Crime Prevention Mobilization Fund. The functioning of RESOLVE Alberta has been greatly assisted by receiving external funding from the Partnership Program of the National Crime Prevention Program of Justice Canada and the *Prairieaction* Foundation.

## **Purpose/Objectives of Research**

The primary purpose of this research was to evaluate the Youth Violence Prevention Project. The results presented here constitute the second annual evaluation of the Youth Violence Prevention Project covering the year of September 2000 – August 2001. Data collection occurred over the course of six months from May through October 2001. The stability within the Coordinator position and the Subcommittee itself can be viewed as a contributing factor in much of the community stakeholders' positive feedback and the change in focus of the current evaluation of the project.

Another fundamental difference between the current and the previous evaluation was the implementation of changes in the overall structure of the ACAV Child and Youth Subcommittee. Some stakeholders were interviewed in both Phase I and Phase II in order to acquire a sense of the continuity of the feedback regarding the extent and the nature of the initiatives developed by the Youth Violence Prevention Project. Seeing as the Turn Off the Violence Campaign and the Peace Heroes Program are major initiatives of the ACAV Children and Youth Subcommittee, it was important to collect information about the responses to these programs<sup>5</sup>. The results of these interviews can be found in Research Component I: Qualitative Interviews with Members of the ACAV Children and Youth Subcommittee.

The second component of the 2000 – 2001 evaluation involved two focus groups<sup>6</sup> with school-aged children. The purpose of including this second study in the research was two-fold. First, children and youth are infrequently consulted directly about their experiences with violence and violence prevention programming. This discrepancy has led to a phenomenon of minimal documentation in qualitative research and literature pertaining to children's experiences with violence. The purpose of including focus groups with school-aged children was to provide a venue for their voices to be considered in issues that impact their lives. Second, this phase was the first step in the process in conducting more groups with children and youth in future evaluations. The hope is to further advance the understanding of children and youth experiences with violence and violence prevention programming. The results of the analysis of these focus groups can be found in Research Component II: Focus Groups with School-Aged Children.

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<sup>5</sup> Portions of this section were written by Leslie Tutty in the Phase II Evaluation Proposal.

<sup>6</sup> Special thanks to the Renfrew Boys and Girls Club for their assistance with the focus groups.

## **Research Component I: Interviews with the ACAV Children and Youth Subcommittee**

Twenty-six individual telephone interviews and two focus groups were held with members of the Children and Youth Subcommittee. Unfortunately, the focus groups were plagued with technical difficulties and consequently, the information from one entire focus group was lost. In order to ensure that the information provided by those stakeholders was not completely lost, efforts were made to re-interview the focus group participants. It should also be noted that some of the research participants were involved in both the individual interviews and the focus groups, so this should be considered when reviewing the numbers of people in relation to the responses derived from the questions. The choice to be involved in the research or not was entirely confidential. Those who chose not to participate were notified that this would not affect their involvement with the ACAV Children and Youth Subcommittee or the Youth Violence Prevention Project.

This research component employed qualitative methodology to assess the awareness and opinions of the respondents with respect to the activities of the co-ordinator position and the five Subcommittees over the 2000 – 2001 year. The interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed.<sup>7</sup> The analysis followed accepted practices of content analysis including identifying prominent themes and sub-themes.

### **Results**

All twenty-six interview respondents and the twelve participants in the two focus groups were members of the ACAV Subcommittee on Children and Youth. Again, the results of only one focus group with six participants will be reported here. Out of the thirty-one potential stakeholders that were contacted for individual interviews, twenty-six agreed to participate in the research. Those stakeholders who did not participate were either no longer involved, they had been replaced on the committee by another staff member, or schedule conflicts did not allow the interview to proceed. The vast majority of participants contacted were eager to lend their support, and to provide feedback to the work of the ACAV Children and Youth Subcommittee and the Youth Violence Prevention Project over the 2000 – 2001 year.

The stakeholders were representatives from various agencies and organizations that work either peripherally or directly within the violence prevention community. Included in the study were representatives from child and youth serving agencies (10), the Calgary Regional Health Authority (3), school-based violence prevention programs (5), the public and separate school boards (2), children's Mental Health (1), funding body (1), sexual assault centre (1), Canadian Red Cross (1), counselling agency (1), Family Violence Prevention Centre (1), and the ACAV Co-ordinator and the ACAV Youth Violence Prevention Co-ordinator.

### **Responses to the Interviews**

The following is a summary of the interview questions asked in both the individual interviews and the focus groups. Note that some stakeholders participated in the focus group and the individual interviews, therefore this should be considered when interpreting the numbers applied to responses to the questions.

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<sup>7</sup> Thanks to Elsie Johnson for her assistance in transcribing the interviews.

## Involvement with the ACAV Youth Violence Prevention Project

As mentioned previously, all twenty-six respondents and focus group participants are/were members of the ACAV Child and Youth Subcommittee. Over half of the respondents answered this question in part by indicating the length of time they had been involved with the Child and Youth Subcommittee. Three of the respondents had been involved in the original conception and development of the co-ordinator position, six had been involved for two to three years, four had become members over the last year, three indicated that they were no longer actively involved but would continue to maintain contact on an informal basis, and two were no longer involved but were being replaced with a new staff member. Three of the six focus group members indicated that they had become involved with the Child and Youth Subcommittee over the past year.

The extent of members' involvement ranged from very actively involved to minimally involved. Those who were actively involved participated in one or more of the Subcommittees while those members with minimal involvement tended to attend only the Quarterly Forums. Three interview respondents and one focus group participant noted here that they had consulted the co-ordinator for referrals and two members of the focus group had been involved through receiving information. Note that many people answered this question by listing the Subcommittees they attend, which actually answered the second interview question.

## Involvement with the ACAV Child and Youth Subcommittee

Participants in both the individual interviews and in the focus groups often had difficulty discriminating between the four Subcommittees, the quarterly forum, and the specific projects that the Subcommittees had worked on over the past year. In addition, the numbers represented here often reflect the same individual sitting on multiple Subcommittees. Aside from the Quarterly Forum (which generally all Children and Youth Subcommittee members attend), it appears that there is a fairly balanced participation in each of the Subcommittees. Nine interview participants and one focus group participant highlighted their involvement with the Steering Committee. Eight respondents in the stakeholder interviews and two focus group participants had attended the Quarterly Forums. Eight of the interview respondents and one participant in the focus group indicated their involvement with the Turn Off the Violence Campaign. Eight interview respondents and one focus group participant sat on the Entry Points and Gaps of Service Subcommittee. Another eight interview respondents and one focus group participant took part in the Resources Implementation Subcommittee. Two interviewees and one focus group participant stated they had been involved with the Research Advisory Team.

## Goals of the ACAV Child and Youth Subcommittee Members

Participants were asked “*What did you hope to accomplish by your involvement in these Subcommittees?*” Stakeholders in both the individual interviews and in the focus group discussed goals that ranged from a general focus to more specific focuses on the goals of their particular agency or the tasks of the ACAV Children and Youth Subcommittee. Table 1 (page 13) summarizes the prominent themes identified in stakeholders' goals for involvement in the Subcommittee(s). Two prominent themes of a general focus were those of *communication* and *relationship building*. Three specifically focused prominent themes were *specific to the goals of*

*their own agency/organization, specific to the tasks of the Subcommittees, and specific to the overall ACAV Children and Youth Subcommittee.*

The *communication* theme involved hopes of sharing information about violence prevention initiatives/programs; providing information about stakeholders' own agency; and receiving information about programs of other agencies in the violence prevention community. Thirteen interview respondents and four focus group participants had hoped to receive information about the programs of other their colleagues in the violence prevention community. Seven interviewees and one participant from the focus group indicated that providing information about their own agencies to the other members of the Subcommittee was important. Six individual interview respondents mentioned the goal of sharing information about violence prevention initiatives/programs. Another interviewee simply hoped that her involvement would help to increase awareness of violence related issues. Given that over half of the focus group members and half of the interviewees identified that they wanted to receive information from other agencies, it appears that this particular goal was an important factor in stakeholders' involvement in the overall Subcommittee.

*We joined ACAV in order to find out what other anti-violence programs are going on in the city.*

The second general theme of *relationship building* involved networking with other agencies, and being part of a co-ordinated and collaborative approach to violence prevention in the lives of children and youth. Nearly half of the individual interviews and exactly half of the focus group participants identified this theme of co-ordination and collaboration as a goal in their involvement with the Subcommittee. Seven out of the twenty-six stakeholder interviews mentioned networking as part of their goals. The goal of being part of a co-ordinated and collaborative approach to violence prevention in the city of Calgary yielded high responses from both sets of participants.

*The most important thinking for me was to get connected with the violence prevention community as a whole... [and to] partner with people to learn what other people are doing, how can we work together, how can we make the violence prevention message concise and clear and that we're all working towards the same goal.*

Other themes of participants' hopes for their involvement were *specific to the goals of their own agency/organization, specific to the tasks of the Subcommittees, and specific to the overall ACAV Children and Youth Subcommittee.* Under the theme of *specific to the goals of their own agency/organization*, eight respondents in the individual interviews stated that they hoped to represent their agency perspective and/or to represent the unique needs of a particular population of children and youth impacted by violence.

*My hope when we did attend was to be able to speak for the youth with mental health issues.*

*Anyone who's involved in something has their own interests at heart. One of my strong interests is forwarding the cause of providing mentors for youth at risk or young people who don't have a caring adult in their lives. I saw the connection between the theme of*

*violence and young people not having caring adults in their lives on that spectrum of ways to minimize that, so that was my initial interest.*

One member of the focus group and one respondent of the individual interviews hoped to receive support and/or guidance from the Subcommittee and/or co-ordinator.

*[My agency] is involved to stay in touch with the grassroots community and to ask for support.*

Several interview participants highlighted goals that were *specific to the tasks of the Subcommittees*. Included in area were goals of establishing guidelines for best practices for violence prevention programs (5); assisting in identifying gaps in services (3); and increasing awareness and participation in the Turn Off the Violence Campaign (1).

Nine participants identified goals of involvement that were *specific to the overall ACAV Children and Youth Subcommittee*. Four interviewees stated that they hoped to help improve the co-ordination of the overall Subcommittee. Three interview respondents and one participant in the focus group hoped to provide feedback and/or support to the Subcommittee and the Co-ordinator. One stakeholder wanted to see more influential community members recruited to the Steering Committee.

*I've been involved evaluating violence prevention programs for about the last twelve years, different sexual abuse prevention programs. I've had a chance to look at a lot of the different programs. I think that this project is intriguing because I haven't seen anybody else using a similar model of co-ordination, at least I haven't heard about it. So my involvement has been to facilitate, to offer what help I can in terms of evaluations because I think it's really unique.*

To assist in evaluating the efficacy of the Youth Violence Prevention Project, stakeholders were asked if they had accomplished their goals through their involvement with the committee meetings over the past year. Under the *communication* theme ten stakeholders felt that the goal of sharing information about violence prevention initiatives/programs had been met, while one interviewee stated that it was a goal that was still in progress. Eight interview respondents and four focus group members stated that they had accomplished the goal of receiving information about the programs of their colleagues in the violence prevention community. Two interview respondents and one focus group participant had met their goal of sharing information about their own agency.

*Once e-mail became more available, that information sharing has been better for me.*

*It's a fairly packed agenda. I don't think I've had an opportunity to meet and talk to other people in the same way I had anticipated I would.*

The second general theme of *relationship building* was also highly endorsed by stakeholders. Nine individual stakeholders and two focus group participants commented that they had accomplished the goal of being part of a co-ordinated and collaborative approach to violence prevention in the city of Calgary.

[Services needed] *greater co-ordination and connection. That's something that has been achieved, it's allowing people the opportunity to get to know one another, to be able to share resources, collaborate together, and hopefully not have a lot of people working at odds and competing for the same sort of scarce funding.*

Five stakeholder interviewees and one member of the focus group stated that they had achieved the goal of networking with other agencies.

*It's been a great networking opportunity because there's such a wide variety of people represented on the committee and at the Quarterly Forums.*

Within the theme of stakeholders' hopes for their involvement that were *specific to the goals of their own agency/organization* one individual interviewee felt that the goal of representing their agency perspective and/or represent the unique needs of a particular population goal had been met, while two others commented that this goal was still in progress. The stakeholders who had hoped to receive support and/or guidance from the Subcommittee and/or the Co-ordinator stated that this goal had been achieved.

[The Co-ordinator's] *willingness to embrace the mentoring piece as a strategy for addressing violence, her openness and flexibility, her wisdom in having gone through a process with ACAV that is similar to what the coalition is looking at – just that sort of guidance there – has helped us move along in our strategic planning.*

Under the theme of goals that were *specific to the tasks of the Subcommittees* two interview respondents stated that their hope of increasing awareness and participation in the Turn Off the Violence Campaign had been accomplished. Two stakeholders stated that they felt they had accomplished the goal of establishing best practices, and two felt that this goal was still in progress. One interviewee felt that they had achieved the goal of identifying gaps in services, and another felt that this goal was still in progress.

Within the theme of goals that were *specific to the overall ACAV Children and Youth Subcommittee*, the stakeholder who wanted to recruit more influential members to the Steering Committee felt that this goal had not yet been accomplished.

*I still don't think we have the right people on the Steering Committee – we let anyone who says want to be on it, be there. I thought we should have sat down and said 'okay what are the major agencies, what level staff do we need out of those agencies?' [i.e. people in decision-making positions, as the high turnover of front-line staff gets confusing].*

**Table 1: Summary of Stakeholders' Accomplishment of Goals.**

<b>Goals</b>	<b># Stakeholders</b>	<b>Goal Met</b>	<b>Goal in Progress</b>
<b>Communication</b>			
Info. Sharing General	6	10	1
Info. Sharing Agency	8	3	
Info. Sharing Other	17	12	
<b>Relationship Building</b>			
Networking	7	6	

Part of Co-ordinated and Collaborative Effort	15	11	
<b>Specific to Agency</b>			
Agency/Population Representation	8	1	2
Receive Support	2	2	
<b>Specific to Subcommittees</b>			
Turn Off the Violence	1	2	
Identify Gaps	3	1	
Best Practices	5	2	2
<b>Specific to Child and Youth Subcommittee</b>			
Recruitment	1		1
Improve Co-ordination	4	3	2
Provide Feedback	4	2	2

Of those stakeholders who had hoped to assist in improving the overall co-ordination of the ACAV Children and Youth Subcommittee, three participants stated that this goal had been achieved and two others stated this was still in progress. Two individual stakeholders stated that they had accomplished the goal of providing feedback and/or support to the Subcommittee and the Co-ordinator, while two others commented that this was still in progress.

*Now there seems to be more focus on moving ahead.*

*[The Co-ordinator] has tremendous skills and has been able to engage a pretty diverse range of agencies and helped them see how they fit into the larger picture.*

Three interviewees and one member of the focus group commented that they did not meet the goals they had initially established for their involvement because they were simply unable to attend many meetings over the past year and/or not able to be actively involved, due to work commitments and scheduling conflicts.

Note that participants may have discussed a goal, but then may not have identified whether it had been accomplished. Also, some participants mentioned additional goals when asked if they had achieved their goals. Consequently, the numbers listed in the table above are not intended to show a precise continuity between the number of goals that were identified, accomplished, and/or in progress.

#### The Activities of the Youth Violence Prevention Project

This area of the research focused the actual work of the Youth Violence Prevention Project that is integral to the facilitation of the overall Youth Violence Prevention Project. When recalling the activities of the project, participants in both the individual interviews and the focus group tended to center their responses on three facets of the work. These three areas included *role-related tasks of the project*, *the work on the various Subcommittees*, and *relationship building in the community*.

Under the area of *role-related tasks of the project*, four interview respondents and one focus group participant discussed the planning and overall co-ordination involved for the ACAV Child and Youth Subcommittee. Two interviewees mentioned the Youth Violence Prevention Co-ordinator's presentations at PLENA and the Safe and Caring Schools conferences. One respondent commented on the role of being available to address issues with the media. One respondent who was aware of most of the activities of the project stated that her opinion was that there were simply too many meetings.

Fundraising for the position was perhaps one of the Co-ordinator's most time-consuming tasks and an area of concern for stakeholders. Three individual interviewees and one member of the focus group commented that this was a concern.

*I'm just thinking of her need to fund half of her last year. That can be a disadvantage for her. But I think that one of the things that as a group we are going to have to struggle with over the next year or so, is what to do even at the end of the three years of this project and that she gets funded for the last half of the year.*

Another concern expressed by an individual interview respondent was in regards to the lack of clerical support to assist the Co-ordinator in fulfilling her roles and tasks.

*It seems to me to be very busy, a lot of paper work, a lot of meeting. The position right now has become more of a promoter and solicitor rather than a hands-on type of person working at the ground level. I think it's become large and just the actual day-to-day logistical running of the ACAV [Children and Youth Subcommittee] group and all the Subcommittees has become so enormous that I think even a secretary or clerk typist or assistant of sorts would be able to take away the mundane activities, like typing minutes and e-mailing of all the people, and making those contacts. When you have a co-ordinator of a program, that person is ultimately the co-ordinator of the program; it's not the clerk typist; it's not someone who answers the phone or does the typing; it isn't someone who keeps the directories going and keeps people updated and takes care of the communication – [it's] just someone strictly for the running of the program and how the program is implemented and how it's going to grow and develop further.*

A last aspect of the project's activities that received considerable recognition from the participants was the role of a reference and referral point in the violence prevention community. Nine interviewees and half of the focus group brought this area to light.

*[E-mailing information] is just wonderful, it's a really nice way [for the Co-ordinator] to keep people in touch with what's going on. She must be doing some kind of research to be able to find out about these things. I have quite enjoyed her enthusiasm, she's brilliant.*

*I'm aware of [the Co-ordinator] being somewhat of a central point where she can gather information and keep abreast of what's happening within the community and be a resource. As well as contribute to setting direction and strategic planning within this sector.*

Two focus group participants shared similar experiences of when they started at their agencies, the Youth Violence Prevention Co-ordinator helped them become acquainted with the ACAV Child and Youth Subcommittee and the violence prevention community.

*[The Co-ordinator] met with me personally and explained [the Subcommittee]. If she hadn't, I think I would have glossed right over from the beginning because it's such a complex organization. [The Co-ordinator is] really good at keeping you up-to-date by e-mail or phone or meeting on what she's doing.*

Another focus group participant commented that keeping stakeholders informed was a very meaningful part project.

*If you're not at a meeting you don't wonder will she stop sending [messages] to you. You feel that commitment to Doris the person, not just to the position. Which is really important.*

Stakeholders in the individual interviews commented on the theme of *the work on the various Subcommittees*, but this trend did not arise in the focus group. Under this theme, research participants made note of the Co-ordinator's work on the Turn Off the Violence Campaign (9); the Resource Inventory as part of the Entry Points and Gaps of Service Subcommittee (7); the development of the Best Practices Checklist as part of the Resources Implementation Subcommittee (6); co-ordination of the Quarterly Forums (5); the Steering Committee (3); the new partnership between Turn Off the Violence and the Peace Heroes Program (2); assistance with the Mentoring Inventory (2); and the Research Advisory Committee (1).

*[The Best Practices Checklist] has been very useful to us, we really use that, and we're using it as a guideline for our grant applications.*

The theme of *relationship building in the community* included seven interview participants who discussed the networking and building relationships across the violence prevention community. In addition, two interviewees commented on the Co-ordinator's work in developing relationships with both the public and separate school boards and two respondents highlighted the Co-ordinator's efforts in developing relationships with businesses and the corporate sector.

*[The Co-ordinator has been] networking with different agencies, keeping those agencies updated on upcoming conferences, employment opportunities, the latest research and available resources.*

*I've seen her advocate a lot for services. I know she'll call about a service that's in the city and get some feedback, creating opportunities where people can get together. That's my biggest sense of her role – the glue that keeps people meeting and staying focused and having purpose.*

#### Entry Points and Gaps of Services Subcommittee

The participants were asked to provide feedback on the work of Entry Points and Gaps of Services Subcommittee. Stakeholder responses included those who were aware of pieces of the work to those who were members of this Subcommittee. Eight interview respondents and two

focus group participants were aware that this committee had mapped out services and identified gaps. Five interviewees mentioned they were aware of the Resource Inventory.

The respondents who expressed positive feedback based their responses on either the work Entry Points and Gaps of Service Subcommittee generally; the development of the Resource Inventory; or to the identification of gaps in services. Seven interviewees expressed positive feedback to the development of the Resource Inventory. Four interview respondents and one focus group participant provided general positive feedback about the work of this Subcommittee.

*Great, because there's so many great initiatives or projects going on around the city, but it's difficult to know exactly where to contact them. Initiatives aren't even always in the phone book, so it's great to have the contact list. I think [when] you do a contact list like that, then you can see where the gaps are, or where the duplications are, which I think is just as important as gaps.*

[The Resource Inventory has] *been quite valuable to us as an agency, to have that information all compiled.*

Seven interview respondents offered positive feedback to the identification of gaps in services.

*Identifying gaps is really difficult unless you have quite a few people from different agencies and areas working together. We all know there are gaps, but it's hard to draw attention to that as sole practitioners.*

*There really isn't anything around parents and raising awareness of parents: helping them understand that they are part of the solution to the prevention in their kids' lives; to be that role model; to be working with them; to be listening to their kids and hear what's happening in their lives. Several agencies in the city are interested in coming up with a community plan to address that and working with the community to come up with solutions from the community.*

Six interview respondents expressed concerns with some aspects of the Entry Points and Gaps of Services Subcommittee. Three respondents made reference to concerns about the Resource Inventory, one of whom felt that their agency had not been properly represented on the inventory.

*It's good work [the Resource Inventory] but one concern that I had [is that] it presented as if there are more services than there are. [The Resource Inventory] was quite generic, but I have seen that they were doing a fair amount of work to refine that document.*

*The problems with those resources is that they're all short-term funding, all of them. They could be obsolete within a month or two. They're helpful but they have a very short shelf-life and will have to be monitored to ensure that it is kept up-to-date.*

Another respondent identified a concern of the challenges involved in filling the gaps of service.

[Collaboration between agencies and] *getting buy-in by all the partners and players in the community will be difficult because of funding, turf war that will be of a challenge.*

## The Resources Implementation Subcommittee

The participants were asked to provide feedback on the work of the Resources Implementation Subcommittee. Stakeholder responses included those who were aware of some aspects of the work to those who were members of this Subcommittee. Nearly half (12) interview respondents mentioned that they were aware of the Best Practices Checklist. Five interview respondents and one focus group participant commented that they are members of this committee and are aware of all of the work. One of the members of the focus group informed the other participants about the work of the Resources Implementation Subcommittee, but no one in that group provided any feedback to the work of this Subcommittee.

The participants who expressed positive feedback focused their answers around the development of the Best Practices Checklist and its usage in the community. Over half of the interview respondents (16) provided positive feedback to the development of the Best Practices Checklist.

*I'm impressed with the guidelines that they've suggested up to this point, so I think they've done some good work.*

*With all the new programs starting, [for] somebody to be able to say 'that's not appropriate' and to put some guidelines around that.*

*We're lucky to have Leslie Tutty to really lead this work because she can lend her expertise. The work that committee has done is evident. I think it's ahead of what most of Canada is doing and I think it really gives schools and agencies practical tools to be able to assess programs. It shows its importance in the sphere of influence that committee has.*

Two interview respondents provided positive feedback by commenting on the cost and time effectiveness for agencies and schools through using the Best Practices Checklist.

*It's also nice to know who else has used the program, for time's sake. You're not having to do all that research by yourself, it's already been done.*

One interviewee stated that he/she considered the Best Practices Checklist applicable and useful to agencies in addition to schools.

*It's going to be a really good framework for using in other areas in terms of evaluating programs that are servicing families.*

Three interview participants mentioned that the Best Practices Checklist could be useful to use with funding organizations.

*[The Best Practices Checklist is] moving beyond schools and non-profits into the business community. I think that's needed and also into funding community. We have one funder that's been willing to say 'I'm taking this to our funders'.*

*I've heard from many agencies and many of the funders, that the Best Practices framework has been extraordinarily useful. The United Way feels it's a really*

*fundamentally important piece of work that's been done, and we're getting that feedback from other funders as well.*

*This alliance with the Chamber of Commerce that is interested in doing some fundraising for this project so that the businesses can use the continuum of services – businesses can then have some idea of the programs they could fund that are worthwhile and effective in our community.*

Two interview respondents were concerned about whether the work of the Resources Implementation Subcommittee is utilized effectively.

*I would hope that out of that committee is that there is some power [in the recommendations that they make to schools and funding bodies]*

*To me, the formalized tools to begin [using the Best Practices Checklist] were created and I think it's good work. The question, and I don't think it's been evaluated, is are people going to use it?*

### The Turn Off the Violence Campaign

The stakeholders were asked to provide feedback to the initiative Turn Off the Violence Campaign. Everyone was aware of the Turn Off the Violence Campaign. Nine interviewees commented that they were members of this Subcommittee and were aware of all of the work. Those who relayed positive feedback highlighted the areas of the poster campaign; the involvement of children and youth in the campaign; the media attention awarded to the campaign; or overall positive feedback to the Turn Off the Violence Campaign. Twenty-one interviewees and half of the focus group provided overall positive feedback to the work of the Turn Off the Violence program.

*There's a wealth of possibility with the Turn Off the Violence Campaign as being a bit of a banner under which most other groups fall in, and producing a momentum of its own that might in the future spawn more groups.*

*It is the chance for us to really do prevention work, the chance to really solidify those ties with schools and all other agencies that touch the lives of kids. It goes to both ends, it's a media campaign and it's a program for kids. It's something that no one else does. No one else really has the power and influence to do that kind of a program but ACAV.*

*It's a really positive program and a great opportunity for many different practitioners to come together and pool their energies to put together a program that I think has proven quite valuable for a lot of the schools and as well as in bringing some positive attention to schools and the artwork and writings of young people.*

Nine interview respondents and three members of the focus group commented on the media attention awarded to the program. Included in this were comments from one stakeholder who discussed the publicity of the Turn Off the Violence Campaign leading to a high profile of youth violence prevention in the corporate sector which may provide assistance in acquiring more corporate support.

*There's terrific publicity around it and lots of community support. The outcomes with the poster and essays and all that I think is terrific recognition for the youth that become involved in it and the promotion of prevention of violence.*

*It's valuable to get the media attention that we've had with the Turn Off the Violence Campaign as well because so much negative media is collected around youth and it's so nice and kind of refreshing to have some positive coverage.*

*This year, we had over 3,000-4,000 kids involved. We think we've reached about 300,000 in the city with media coverage.*

Eight interviewees and one participant in the focus group offered positive feedback to the involvement of children and youth in the program. Three focus group participants gave positive feedback to the poster component of the Turn Off the Violence Campaign.

*I think it's brilliant. It's really where you tie in the students. We can sit here at agencies and talk all we want about what we think we should be doing. This is where we see what the youth think.*

*It helps [youth] become involved. While they're doing their design stuff for the competition they are learning more about violence and peace and deciding where they want to put their focus.*

*It's neat to get kids involved. There's a writing campaign now as well as the poster one, so it involves two different skills of kids. Kids that maybe aren't artistic get an opportunity to do some writing or something like that. It's a neat way to get the whole school involved in a positive message as well, even though one poster is chosen, all the kids got to be involved in doing a poster or involved with the artwork. You see the posters everywhere.*

*To put the agenda of family violence on the table and involving kids and looking at that issue and understanding the issue is important.*

Three interviewees were primarily concerned with the high level of work involved with the Turn Off the Violence Campaign. Other concerns were more general in nature.

*If there was an opportunity to get more funding to hire more people to do more education in the school, taking that education level to another level so that someone's doing these types of education presentations all the time.*

*I have a philosophical difference in opinion with the use of the words. I like it to stand for something rather than against something...it still focuses on violence rather than on peace.*

*I don't know if we've evaluated it as far as effectiveness. That's something that we need to look at because we do spend some money on it. It's a great way to engage kids.*

*That's okay that we have non-violence, but we have to replace it with something else, and I think we have to start looking at programs that are more positive-based. Turn Off the Violence – we turn it off so then what? There seems to be a vacuum or void there.*

## The Peace Heroes Program

The stakeholders were asked to provide feedback to the initiative of the Peace Heroes Program. Seventeen stakeholders in the individual interviews and three participants in the focus groups stated that they had heard of the Peace Heroes Program. Two interviewees and one focus group participant had not heard of the program. Nine respondents commented that they knew only limited information about the program. Nine interviewees and half of the focus group were aware that Peace Heroes had partnered with Turn Off the Violence. Seven stakeholders in the interviews and two focus group participants were aware that Peace Heroes recognizes peaceful alternatives to violence.

Included in the positive feedback provided by the stakeholders, twelve interview respondents stated that the program could be useful in schools. Six interview participants offered overall positive feedback to the program.

*It's got a lot of potential for establishing a culture in a school that's positive and that's non-accepting of violent behaviours.*

*Kids are exposed to continually to lots of aggression and lots of violence, and that's what they end up being taught. By focusing more on finding peaceful solutions to things and then rewarding that, we all know that kids behaviour increases when there's a reward at the end of it. Hopefully what could end up happening is it could teach kids conflict resolution skills.*

*To me, they create language. We come from a place of values and beliefs that support violence, and they're both programs that challenge values and beliefs that support violence, and get kids and communities to create an environment that doesn't support violence. So that's a positive.*

Two interviewees commented that the program could be useful in other agencies in addition to schools.

*A lot of kids are involved in organized sports, whether it's at a community level, and Peace Heroes could be brought into that. Sports are a great opportunity for that. Probably other clubs like Brownies and Guides and the Boys and Girls' Club could institute that kind of a program.*

Six phone interview participants and two members of the focus group highlighted the significance of celebrating positive solutions to violence.

*It's a nice reinforcement and that's really important because no one program can do it all. I do like the flip of going in - a lot of violence prevention programs go and talk about the problems, and this goes in and celebrates the good things that are happening. It's proactive.*

*It's really important to reward children and youth in the activities that they undertake. The celebration piece, that's really important. We don't spend enough time celebrating young people and what they've done.*

*There was a good fit between Peace Heroes and Turn Off the Violence. It's not just about turning off the violence, but really about celebrating those young people who are making a difference in our community. Encouraging and empowering young people to do those things and giving them recognition. It's not only giving them the tools, but also recognizing those tools.*

Five interview respondents and two members of the focus group discussed their concerns for the work of the Peace Heroes Program. Included in this was one stakeholder who mentioned that there should be some evaluation of the use of the program. There were also several concerns about problems in implementing the Peace Heroes program.

*I've heard from other people that it's been very impactful, but it takes a lot of effort to organize and keep it moving. I'm aware of it and have heard people say that it's positive and others say it's a lot of work and hard to motivate people, kids, to take it on.*

*The problem is getting it to the teachers, the front line workers, the ones that are sweating it out in the trenches doing this kind of stuff. If they know, then they're more apt to call and so some of these schools, it doesn't get by the principals and that's where it's stopped. I go into the school and they have no clue what anything [is].*

*I'm afraid with the Peace Heroes Program that it's seen as wishy-washy in that anyone can become a Peace Heroes school. You just phone and say, 'Hey, let's be a Peace Heroes school and they'll come and throw a big party, so to speak, and now we're a Peace Heroes school.' I think it needs to be tightened. There needs to be criteria that's sent to each school where teachers, principals, parents, could look at the criteria and decide from the activities that they've done in the previous year or the activities they're planning this year, whether these would qualify them as a Peace Heroes school.*

*I see [Peace Heroes] being useful depending on how the kids are rewarded and if it's timely. [The reward] needs to be timely, bring highlight to it so that the other kids can pick up on it.*

*They still probably needed a bit more work on creating that visibility.*

## The Future of the Youth Violence Prevention Project

The stakeholders were asked what would be different in the city of Calgary if the Youth Violence Prevention Project were to continue to be successful. Participants in both the individual telephone interviews and in the focus group answered this question by discussing more of the *general goals for the ACAV Children and Youth Subcommittee* and less focus on the actual *Youth Violence Prevention Project itself*. There were some responses that were focused on *youth-related issues* in the future success of the project. Other answers were related to improvements in a *comprehensive approach to violence prevention in the lives of children and youth*.

Of the *general goals for the ACAV Children and Youth Subcommittee*, eleven stakeholders identified that there would be improved co-ordination and communication between violence prevention programs. Thirteen individual interview respondents and one member of the focus group hoped for increased awareness and media attention for violence prevention initiatives. Seven interviewees and one focus group participant hoped for more collaboration between agencies/organizations.

*The police department has adopted a school program, and this is a great first step in making resource people in our community readily available to young children in that they would feel more comfortable approaching that person. They get to know them on a one-on-one basis, and it's part of their regular school life; it isn't seen as a guest speaker or visitor today, but it's part of the regular school life so it becomes very familiar to the students and they're more apt to talk to that person if they found themselves in a particular situation where they needed help.*

Five interview respondents would like to see the gaps in services filled. Three stakeholders hoped for less competition for funding sources. One interview participant hoped for continued evaluation of programs. Similarly, one stakeholder hoped that agencies and organizations would be using the Best Practices Checklist. Three interviewees stated they would simply like to see a reduction in violence in the lives of children and youth.

*Developing that community culture of non-acceptance of violence in general would be the biggest positive outcome.*

*I'd hope we'd see less need for youth-prevention programs [and] actual intervention programs.*

Of the stakeholders who commented on the future success of the actual *Youth Violence Prevention Co-ordinator position itself*, one stakeholder from the focus group stated that there would be more awareness of the Co-ordinator position; and four interview respondents stated that the Co-ordinator position would be permanently and securely funded.

*[The Co-ordinator] wouldn't be looking for funding every year for her position because it would be recognized for how important it is.*

The responses that focused on *youth-related issues* in the future success of the project included one interviewee who commented on the importance of violence prevention programs reaching children and youth who are not considered “mainstream”. Included in this population are the youth who may not be attending school regularly and “street kids”. One focus group member commented that there would be more positive media attention given to youth. Another stakeholder hoped for increased youth involvement in violence prevention initiatives.

*Celebrating the good things that youth and children are doing. The media is so much about the bad things that are happening and what teenager has done to that teenager.*

*Get youth involved at the organizing level as well so that they're involved in the prevention.*

In discussing the future success of the Youth Violence Prevention Project, those who hoped to see *a comprehensive approach to violence prevention in the lives of children and youth* tended to focus on an early intervention and a community approach to the prevention of violence. Three members of the focus group discussed the need for early intervention and one focused on increased availability of parent training.

*Even starting at as early as maternity wards in the hospital and prenatal classes. Crime prevention beings in the high chair not the electric chair. Like why not in your prenatal classes, go over this kind of thing. There's a sector right now in child abuse that is planning to have integrated into prenatal classes start before school.*

Another focus group participant agreed with the idea of early intervention and stated:

*I can go in and do a bullying program now; I've done this for five years. I can go into kids' classrooms and point the bullies out, just by going in there and talking to them for one period. So we've gotta go before that.*

*There are very few places that will actually go into a person's home and I've started doing that. You go to any inpatient sort of setting - Hull, Woods' – what do [they] offer for parent training? Some of these parents can't even secure treatment – parents don't even go in there. They learn nothing about how to really deal[with parenting issues]. [They] do a lot of family therapy. That is great, but it's not in and all of itself, you need to have some more of that [in home parent training]. I would really hope to see everybody start looking more at those approaches.*

Seven interview respondents discussed a community focus within a more comprehensive approach to violence prevention. One stakeholder who commented that there should be more multi-disciplinary approaches to violence prevention, including early intervention, age-specific programs, and a stronger dedication to work with families.

*There would be more agencies and schools focusing on kids who really need targeted programs, more broad-based prevention in schools and agencies for all kids around awareness for violence prevention and if they're not at risk themselves, how they can help other kids. The issue [of violence prevention] would have a high profile in the community and among service agencies.*

*Kids in the community, children and youth, would have [equal] access to the programs. There would be a co-ordinated estimate of who gets the type of programming out there, who doesn't, and a plan made to address those sorts of resource needs as well.*

*Making more people aware that these kids may have had violence in their past and may still be engaging in activities, but putting it back on the community and getting people more involved. Something that has been lacking is we talk a lot about linking it to the community, using a multi-system approach where the communities and schools [are working together].*

## Further Suggestions

The stakeholders were asked: “*What else needs to be accomplished to better protect children and youth from violence?*” Respondents in the individual interviews answered this question by discussing future directions that fell within three themes: *specific to the ACAV Children and Youth Subcommittee/Youth Violence Prevention Project*; *specific to violence prevention programs/education*; and a focus on *changing broader systemic issues* that perpetuate violence. Because the focus group ran out of time, participants did not have the opportunity to answer this question due to time restraints.

Included in the theme of future directions in the prevention of violence that were *specific to the ACAV Children and Youth Subcommittee/Youth Violence Prevention Project*, five respondents would like to see improved collaboration between agencies, organizations, and institutions. Three stakeholders would like to see the gaps of service filled. One stakeholder would have continued evaluation of programs for best practices. One stakeholder commented that the Youth Violence Prevention Project continues.

*There really needs to be collaborations amongst both boards, city police, and Rockyview School District, where they come together and work on projects together, so that the same projects are being utilized through the schools, so that when kids that do get bounced around, the same language, the same programs are being run so that you get the same message. When you have all the big players coming together, kids pick up on that. If they know both boards and the police and the other school districts are working together, it's that consistency.*

*Having that cohesive, united front – that all the agencies and services not competing with one another, but working toward the same goals. Often we get the view that they're competing.*

Responses to this question that were *specific to violence prevention programs/education* included: increased parent and adult education on the effects of violence (7); increased availability and accessibility of violence prevention programs for children (5); increased media attention on violence prevention (4); increased community involvement and education in violence prevention (3); and violence prevention programs from birth to age 18 (3).

*I'd really like to see not only kids educated around violence, but also parents because they're the ones who are really being the role-models for their kids. Helping adults recognize that they're partially responsible for teaching kids how to resolve conflict and to decrease violence.*

*This is a long-term issue and it's really preventative, meaning we have to deal with this generation. We offer a program that's helping work with aggressive kids when they're young so that they don't grow up to be abusive adults. That's what we're focusing on, long-term strategies to help decrease aggression in kids so that they'll become non-abusive adults.*

*There has to be much more awareness of the impact of violence on children, and I think much more co-ordinated early intervention that supports families who are in need or at*

*risk. In many ways, experiences cause such a great level of trauma and impact on kids as they develop emotionally, behaviourally – however you look at it. What gets missed a lot is the lens of domestic violence and the impact of it. We are trying to support kids and adolescents and I think it gets minimized – that it's not as impactful as it is.*

Two stakeholders wanted to see an improved sense of youth empowerment and including this in violence prevention programs.

*It would be really nice if youth could feel empowered, if youth could feel that they have a role to play in keeping our community safe. That goes to this new term 'social imaging', about how this community sees youth and how youth sees themselves. They do have a voice. If they feel that they've got control over something, then they may not feel so helpless when it comes to being either victims or perpetrators.*

Also under the theme of *specific to violence prevention programs/education* were comments from two stakeholders who recognized the need for consistent and sustained funding for violence prevention programs.

*Youth needs to be more than just a trend in funding. There needs to be some consistency in stabilization for youth programs. Corporations pick a trendy issue and fund it for one year or two years. But if a program is relying on that funding and it's taken away (they're not in the news at that moment) that creates instability. Especially when you're working with youth, you really need that consistency.*

Within the third theme of responses to the question of what else needs to be accomplished in violence prevention, the focus on *changing broader systemic issues* that perpetuate violence included one stakeholder who would like the legal system re-examined, one respondent who believed that there needs to be an improvement in the social determinants of health, and one participant who stated that there must be shift in the societal beliefs about women.

*The whole societal attitudes towards women... There's work happening on that in other areas in ACAV. Those factors still influence what happens for kids. As long as violence against women is acceptable, women and children tend to fall in the same category. How we educate men about sex roles and relationships still needs work.*

Four stakeholders also commented that we need to create an entire culture of safety and non-acceptance of violence.

*We need to create a culture of safety, of respect. So it's culture, it's media, it's community, it's relationships, it's economics, it's education, it's a whole host of things.*

*It starts off with people's mind-sets about discipline. These are just subtle, subtle issues around violence but they're so entrenched. It's all about if it's okay to hit kids and if as a society we think that that's all right, then we're not seriously looking at violence in children. If that's the premise that we have around kids, is that it's okay to hit them, which is very violent, how are we going to stop violence in the school yard?*

## Summary of Research Component I

The 2000 – 2001 year was the year of Implementation of Community Based Strategic Plan, in the three year plan for the Youth Violence Prevention Project. The twenty-six interviews and the focus group provided essential feedback to the work of the various Subcommittees, identification of stakeholder's goals of involvement with the ACAV Children and Youth Subcommittee, and description of the stakeholders' hopes for the future direction in the area of violence prevention in the lives of children and youth.

It was most evident in both the interviews and the focus group that there had been a forward momentum over the past year that lead to positive progress in the awareness of violence prevention programs, improved communication within the violence prevention community, and the accomplishments of tasks within each Subcommittee. The stakeholders generally reported a number of areas that still require attention in the future prevention of violence in the lives of children and youth.

## **Research Component II: Focus Groups with School-Aged Children and Youth**

The reason for including the second research component is related to the magnitude of the Turn Off the Violence Campaign in the city of Calgary. The Turn Off the Violence Campaign plays a fundamental role in the ACAV Children and Youth Subcommittee's plight to increase awareness of violence related issues and its integral focus on the prevention of violence in the lives of children and youth. The Turn Off the Violence Campaign reportedly reached 3,000 children and youth in the city of Calgary in the 2000 – 2001 school year. Considerable time and energy is invested into the Turn Off the Violence Campaign.

Furthermore, this past year ACAV Children and Youth Subcommittee adopted the Peace Heroes program, which was formerly offered by Child Friendly Calgary. The Subcommittee recognized the potential of the Turn Off the Violence Campaign and the Peace Heroes Program to collaborate in providing a more comprehensive approach to child and youth centered violence prevention initiatives. As such, it seemed important to assess the awareness of and experience with the Turn Off the Violence and Peace Heroes Program.

Students from Grades Two to Twelve were invited to participate in the school-aged children's focus groups (with parental consent). The purpose of these focus groups was primarily to gain insight into their experiences with the Turn Off the Violence Campaign, the Peace Heroes Program, and any other violence prevention programs over the past year. In addition, it was anticipated that the children's responses would contribute to an understanding of what constitutes best practices for violence prevention programming.

A qualitative questionnaire for use in the focus groups with school-aged children and youth was developed with input from the Research Advisory Team. The questions centered on collecting information from children and youth's experiences with the Turn Off the Violence Campaign, Peace Heroes, and any other violence prevention programs that they had encountered over the past year.

Ethics approval to conduct the research with these children and youth was secured through the Conjoint Ethics Review Committee of the University of Calgary. First, parental consent was sought for the children's participation in the group. In addition, though, the child or youth's decision to participate in the research was entirely voluntary and the children were informed at the onset of the group of their right to leave the group at any time.

The focus groups were tape-recorded and transcribed. Accepted practices of content analysis were employed in identifying dominant themes and sub-themes.

Eighteen school-aged children participated in one of two focus groups. The children were from Grade Two to Grade Eleven, though fifty percent were in Grades Four and Five and only one youth was in high-school. In total, eight girls and ten boys participated in the groups.

### **The Turn Off the Violence Campaign**

In both focus groups, all of the children remembered the Turn Off the Violence Campaign. However, all of the children had participated in the campaign through the Boys and Girls Club,

not solely through their schools. Two children commented that they remembered the posters specifically and one girl in Grade Five had previously won the poster competition for her age group.

*I won once. I was in Grade Two. My picture is over on the wall over there. It's the one where it says 'love can change everything'. –Grade 5 girl*

The children in both groups commented on diverse facets of the campaign. Four children mentioned that they liked drawing and colouring the posters. Two children liked the participation aspect. Two children stated that they enjoyed the chance to help others.

*It's all fun. All of it! – Grade 3 boy*

*I like that it was stuff like all the mean and really rude people in the world – that it might help people to be kind to each other in the world. - Grade 5 girl*

*It's a good idea because it might teach people to stop violence and stuff. – Grade 5 girl*

Two children liked the concept of being rewarded for trying to make a difference. One of these children said he felt proud for the children who win the poster competition. One girl liked the opportunity to express her feelings about violence.

*I like that we got to express our feelings about what we don't like about violence. – Grade 5 girl*

The children were asked whether they learned anything new from participating in the Turn Off the Violence Campaign. Only three children stated that they hadn't learned anything new from Turn Off the Violence, but when further questioned, it appeared that this was because they had already been through the program in previous years and were familiar with the concepts. Four children commented on learning from the posters specifically.

*Yeah, when you look at all the posters [you learn] to turn of the violence. – Grade 4 boy*

*Sometimes, when people really bug you and the posters are usually around your school and people bug you in the school, you could maybe look at one and say that it reminds you just to leave them alone. It reminds you that two wrongs don't make a right. - Grade 4 boy*

*I like the poster. [The poster shows] different ways of being nice to people. – Grade 5 girl*

*When I look at a poster you can sort of picture 'bullies beware because good is here'. You'll never get really your way if you're mean, if you're nice you'll get good things in life, if you're bad, you won't. It's sort of like what comes, what goes around comes around. – Grade 5 girl*

*I like to see what different ideas people try to get people to stop being violent. - Grade 2 girl*

Three children in the focus groups enjoyed learning about making a difference.

*I like that everyone participated and you learn that people are all trying to make a difference, so why don't everyone just stop and let the differences develop. – Grade 5 girl*

*I like it when kids can participate and turn it off, like basically stop. Stop the bullies from bullying people and try to make a difference in the future. – Grade 6 boy*

*What is good for turning off the violence is how we could show that violence is bad and peace is good. So I try helping other people. – Grade 2 girl*

Five children discussed what they had learned about violence related issues through participating in the campaign.

*It was so-so. I learned that violence is a wrong thing that should be happening in the world. And plus this world war III thing coming along, I don't think that's very good. – Grade 6 boy*

*I learned that violence is bad. And that's pretty much it. - Grade 5 girl*

*I know that violence is a really bad thing. – Grade 3 boy*

*I learned that the world would be a better place without violence. - Grade 5 girl*

Two children commented on learning problem solving skills.

*What's good about Turn Off the Violence is when you're at school and you see two people fighting, you could tell them to stop because it's bad. It's better than them getting in lots of trouble. – Grade 4 boy*

The children were asked if there was anything they did not like about the Turn Off the Violence Campaign. The majority of the children in both groups (10) focused on aspects of the drawing and colouring of the poster contest that they hadn't liked or had become frustrated with. Six children stated that there was nothing that they didn't like about Turn Off the Violence.

*I didn't like my picture, I had another idea. I was going to draw a light with people fighting in it and then you turn off the violence. There was this little string you pull. – Grade 2 girl*

One child commented that when she was initially introduced to the Turn Off the Violence, she did not understand what it was about.

*The first time I did it I didn't understand what it was for because I was really little. I thought the world didn't really have that much violence. Now I understand it more. There is acts of violence in the world and now that I'm old enough to read books. – Grade 5 girl*

The children were asked if they would change the Turn Off the Violence Campaign in any way. Five children in one focus group stated they simply wouldn't change anything about the program.

*I think it's a great program, so no, not really. – Grade 5 girl*

*I just wouldn't change it. – Grade 3 boy*

Five children discussed adding different projects and/or activities to the Turn Off the Violence Campaign.

*I'd change what we're supposed to do. We'd still have Turn Off the Violence but I wouldn't do posters, I would just write a little bit and then draw a picture. Then you'd write your thing on a little blank piece of paper what you think should stop the violence. – Grade 2 girl.*

*If I were somebody who helped with the violence program, I would give out blank pieces paper that were long like a bookmark and you could draw little pictures or something on there, then a big piece of poster paper and then a little card, so they'd kind of have a chance for like three or five or ten-hundred things to be won. So lots of their pictures could go not in just one place, but lots of places all over the world. It could make a big difference because they see all of these people trying to help the world from being very violent. – Grade 5 girl.*

*If I could change anything, we would do pictures and then you'd also have to make a video of yourself and what you do, and then send it in. – Grade 6 boy.*

*You could go in school and see a kid that is actually doing [something]. I would have where on a picture you write 'he did a good job because he's sharing.' I think it's a good idea for the club. Because they'd go around the club and video-tape everyone. – Grade 4 girl*

In addition, two children thought that athletic activities would be a good addition to the program. One boy in Grade four wanted to be able to print pictures off the computer. Another boy in Grade Five wanted to change it so that everybody could win.

The children were also asked whether they thought other students would find the Turn Off the Violence Campaign helpful. Most of the children agreed that the Turn Off the Violence Program would be helpful to other students.

*I say yes because there is one child in our class and he has been suspended for five days right now. He has issues. – Grade 6 boy*

### **The Peace Heroes Program**

When the children were asked if they had heard of the Peace Heroes Program, none recalled ever having heard the program. Seeing as none of the children had heard of the Peace Heroes Program before, the interviewer explained that the program was about rewarding schools and centres for behaving in ways that promote peaceful solutions to conflict. After this, the interviewer asked a revised question: “*Do you think that a program like Peace Heroes would be useful in schools?*” All of the children agreed that the Peace Heroes Program would be useful in schools.

## Other Violence Prevention Programs

The children were asked if they could remember other violence prevention programs they may have experienced over the past year. Two children remembered the Bully Busters Program coming to their schools. One boy re-called a magic show called Courage and Caring. A girl in Grade Five heard about Dare to Care on the radio station Power 107. Generally, in cases where they had experienced another violence prevention program, most children did not remember the name of the program. However, some of the children were able to describe the programs they had previously encountered.

*I don't know the name but at our school a couple of kids would go in our library and they would talk about how to stop bullying. There was this box you could make comments. – Grade 5 girl*

*I don't know what it was called, but this girl came in, two ladies and they take a little group, like 4 or 5 people. Then she'd read a story about bullying. You'd say what type of bullying was in the story and did anybody do anything about it, and how many people could have helped it. – girl*

One boy in Grade Six said that he had been through the Dare to Care program three times.

*They sat us down for three hours and talked about not being violent. [but they did discuss solutions to violence]. – Grade 6 boy*

One boy in Grade Three said that he hadn't experienced any other programs, but his teacher worked with them on preventing violence and bullying.

*My teacher teaches us to not be violent and to do stuff like if someone's being mean to you, walk away, ignore them, or go to the principal. – Grade 3 boy*

The children were asked whether programs that come into schools actually help children to do things differently. There was considerable debate in both of the focus groups whether or not programs actually help children to do things differently. The main reason for this appeared to be rooted in some children's observations that many children in their schools do not pay attention to the information presented in the programs and consequently, they don't learn absorb any of the concepts.

*I don't think so because before I moved here about three or four years ago, there was these guys they were in Grade Nine or Grade Six and I was in Grade three and they picked on me a lot. But then I moved to this school and there's peer support in our school. – Grade 6 boy*

*When people come to talk about the Turn off the Violence, some people do listen but some people that don't pay attention in class, they won't hear that. They'll get in trouble, and they're just being bullies. There's a whole bunch of different ways you can be a bully. You can be bully picking on people and you can also be a bully by acting like one. – Grade 3 / 4 girl*

*They really don't care and they're just going to do it without anybody around either. They don't care anyways. They just sit there waiting to get out of there and they don't listen. – Grade 4 boy*

*They do, but they don't all work. Sometimes they do, yeah. Like they'll tell us how to deal with certain stuff. Some might work; some people it doesn't work for. – Grade 5 girl*

*No and Yes. Yes to the younger children - Grade One and Two – probably. Older kids are probably just waiting to get out so they can do whatever they are going to do. These programs, some kids don't appreciate them, me not being one. We've had five talks [at school] and there are still lots and lots of bullies. Actually, half the school population is bullies. – Grade 6 boy*

*They tried to teach us stuff but it didn't really work, 'cause people just react too fast and they turn around and start beating each other up. – Grade 5 boy*

*I know somebody who changed it for a little bit. My Grade Three teacher has this thing, it's 'respect people' and he has this huge list on the wall. It helped a little bit, but then somebody punched somebody out, and everybody had friends and then they all came in and started kicking each other, and that's pretty much where it ends. – Grade 5 boy*

When children commented that programs were not effective, the interviewer asked how the children thought the programs could be improved. A few children found some of the presentations too long.

*Are you asking my opinion, or an opinion that would be put in action? Personally, it would be better in the form of a video game (laughter). But, you could make your presentations happier and a little shorter, not completely shorter but just ten minutes shorter. You could have someone in a play to go along with it. – Grade 6 boy*

*It should be a bit shorter. If it was a short video, cause kids like watching videos. – Grade 5 girl*

*Give them a toy so every time they like walk up to somebody and they're really mad and they push them and they want to punch them or something – like a little plastic dummy that you can punch really hard and get all of your anger out, that's what I do with my pillow. – Grade 5 boy*

*They could maybe have a pillow or something where if they needed to push somebody, they could beat up the pillow. – Grade 5 girl*

Several children found some of the programs useful in helping them do things differently.

*We had a program that came to our school, a movie about bullying. If somebody is pushing you around and you have to have companions to stick up for you, then if those companions can stick up for you. 'Cause bullies don't usually like to do that; they only do that because they don't like somebody or something. If the bullies have friends that help*

*them, sometimes they don't really like to, they just do that because that's the only friend they can get to know. – girl*

*This person told us about violence and he showed us what happens if you hurt someone and you can help them. It shows you what you have to do to help someone if they're getting picked on. You can also do something to stop the bullying. – Grade 2 girl*

*I wasn't in the program, but I knew when they came to our school. They took the bullies and the victims of bullies and taught the victims how to defend themselves, what to do if the bully does bug them again. Kind of help the bully. It's why they beat up on other people.” – Grade 6 boy*

The children were asked if they knew of other ways for students to help prevent violence. The children focused their answers around preventing bullying. Three children mentioned that children could tell the teacher or principal more often. One Grade Five boy thought that there should be more fun activities for children, and then they would be having too much fun to bully. Three children thought that children should tell friends when they are being bullied.

*Bully equals trying to find friends and they can tell you what you can do. They can start helping me. – Grade 2 girl.*

*If there's a kid in class and he is bigger than you - [get help] to make him stop. – Grade 4 boy*

Two children thought that if everyone became friends then there would be no more bullying in schools. One boy suggested that bullies should think about the consequences of their behaviours.

*They could think about it if there was bullies, they could think about the future. Like if they were bullies and some kids thought they were bullies and for the rest of his years he wouldn't have any friends and all of his family would be mean to him and stuff because he's mean. – Grade 3 boy*

## **Summary of Study II**

The focus groups with school-aged children provided an opportunity to receive valuable feedback from children about the programs and issues that impact their lives. Given that the Turn Off the Violence Campaign received positive feedback from students, it appears that it is a popular initiative amongst students. The children also shared their ideas for how this and other programs could be improved to better suit the needs of school-aged children. It is possible that future changes to prevention programs and initiatives undertaken by the Youth Violence Prevention Project may be able to integrate the ideas provided by school-aged children in these focus groups.

## **Research Implications for the ACAV Youth Violence Prevention Project**

In evaluating the efficacy and effectiveness of the Youth Violence Prevention Project over the 2000 – 2001 year, it is evident that the project has received an overwhelming amount of

positive feedback from key stakeholders in the youth violence prevention community. The 2000 – 2001 year saw the Implementation of the Strategic Plan, which seems to be the foundation of this year's improvements in organization, facilitation, co-ordination, and the accomplishment of goals. While the first year of the project was rather turbulent at times, the past year has had stability and dedication to the areas of focus of the project. The results of the current evaluation suggest the positive impact of the follow through of the results and recommendations of last year's evaluation and the goals of the Subcommittee itself.

In re-examining the priorities and areas of focus for the project and the ACAV Children and Youth Subcommittee that were identified in the first year, it appears that there has been a forward momentum over the past year. Contributions have been made from the each of the Subcommittees of the larger ACAV Children and Youth Subcommittee, which seem to demonstrate the effective collaboration of members of the violence prevention community toward the prevention and intervention of youth violence. The facilitation of such collaboration was one of the initial areas of focus identified for the project. It is clear in the research results that stakeholders have remained committed to this goal over the past two years, and they hope to see this collaborative trend continue in the future.

In terms of providing a leadership role in accessing appropriate resources for the prevention and intervention of violence, the Subcommittee appears not only to be highly committed to development of the Best Practices Checklist, but also credit overwhelming support to its efficacy within the community. Furthermore, the capacity of the Youth Violence Prevention Project to act as a central point for reference and referral has been demonstrated through the research to be a needed and necessary component within the violence prevention community.

One area of focus involves challenging the community and media to take responsibility in providing the necessary supports to ensure that children and youth are healthy, caring, and contributing citizens. One theme found throughout the research was the hope that there would be more positive media attention to youth, an improved sense of youth empowerment, and an increase in youth's involvement in violence prevention initiatives. The research suggests that that the inclusion of children and youth in issues and programs that impact them is an essential aspect in the facilitation of children and youth's development into healthy adults.

Many stakeholders identified the need for a community-wide commitment to the eradication of violence in the lives of children and youth. Included in this was the need for an enhanced capacity to provide early intervention and community and parent education on the effects of violence in the multi-disciplinary provision of violence prevention programs.

The Youth Violence Prevention Project's focus on building awareness and education on issues of violence to assist in the prevention of violence seems to be an area of focus that is ongoing. The success and scope of the Turn Off the Violence Campaign appears to be an initiative that has contributed to the promotion of awareness and education in violence-related issues amongst children, youth, and within the community itself. Furthermore, adopting the Peace Heroes Program seems to be a logical and effective initiative for the Youth Violence Prevention Project to implement as part of its focus on awareness and education. The research suggests that the Peace Heroes program may provide the opportunity to focus on the positive accomplishments

of children and youth. Many respondents suggested that while there have been improvements in this particular area of focus; there is still work to be done in fine-tuning these initiatives.

The integration of Research Component II: Focus Groups with School-Aged Children and Youth provided valuable feedback to the Turn Off the Violence Campaign, the Peace Heroes Program, and other youth violence prevention programs. As mentioned previously, with the Youth Violence Prevention Project's undertaking of both the Turn Off the Violence Campaign and the Peace Heroes Program, it seemed important to gather feedback directly from children and youth who may have participated in these programs. The focus groups with school-aged children parallel the results of interviews with the stakeholders, in that the Turn Off the Violence Campaign is generally well-received and well-known. However, the Peace Heroes Program was not known to the children in this particular research project, indicating a need to improve the visibility and usage of this initiative over the next year. Unfortunately, children are not often asked to share their experiences in the issues and programs that impact their lives. The hope is that future evaluations of the Youth Violence Prevention Project will continue to include the voices of children and to have their ideas and concerns granted the consideration they deserve.