Zine & CARD

Amplifying Voices of Youth From Care

ISSUE #19 August 2024

PHOTO BY JOSEREYPHOTO COM We respectfully acknowledge that we reside on Treaty 6 Territory; traditional lands of many First Nations & Metis people & we are committed to learning the true history of Canada & the true meaning of truth & reconciliation.

WHO

Youth from care speaking out & making a difference.

WHAT

A zine to amplify our voices & raise awareness.

WHEN

We publish around the 15th of every month.

WHERE

We are based in Edmonton but are for youth from care everywhere.

WHY

Because we can. Our voices have been silent for too long.



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COVER STORY
CRYSTAL RHODES

WHAT'S INSIDE

CREATING HOPE SOCIETY
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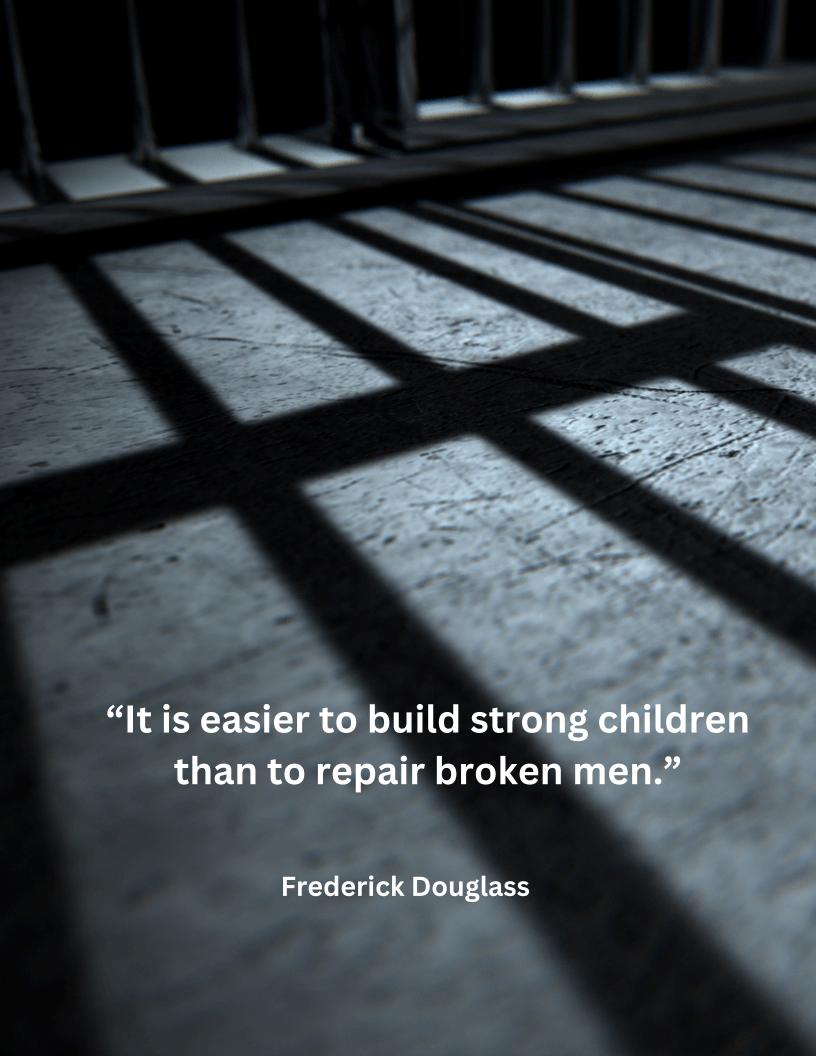
RELLIK

STARLINGS

TJ SHEEHAN

WEIGHT INCLUSIVE AB

YOUTH IN CARE CHRONICLES



SOMETIMES YOU WIN. SOMETIMES YOU SNOOZE.

Just want to take a little bit of space to once again thank everyone for their support of the zine as we continue to grow. Zine & HEARD remains a passion project that continues to be produced on a volunteer basis and I don't always get it right. I sometimes get it wrong and in the past couple of months I have learned some valuable lessons. The good news is that people still get to tell their stories on a platform that is fully independent. We are still a place where you can tell it like it is or was or want it to be. The zine is still a publication that amplifies the voices of youth from care and otherwise marginalized groups and individuals whose stories are important.

In this issue we are raising awareness around why youth get into gangs and what can deter them from that life. Youth from care are highly vulnerable to being recruited. It is written through a lens of hope and we want to thank all who shared. The reason people have the courage to contribute to the zine is because they

hope it will help someone. That I never get wrong.

So, thanks again for believing in these small but mighty pages. It means a lot. Keep the stories and the hope rolling in.

Penny Frazier, Editor

P.S. We still get to always put at least one baby on this page, too.



OLD SCHOOL. NEW SCHOOL. NO SCHOOL. YOUR STORIES ARE WELCOME HERE



NORTHSIDE SMILEZ



WORDS ARE SPELLS

.....THOUGHTS DEEPER AS I GET OLDER JUST TO KEEP A LITTLE PEACE IN MIND STRONG SURVIVOR I'M ALWAYS A SOLDIER I PRAY FOR MY SINS TO BE FORGIVEN IN THIS TROUBLING LIFE WE'VE BEEN GIVEN I HOPE TO WAKE WITH A DIFFERENT STATE WRITING TO PLAN MY ESCAPE POINT ILIST THE WEIGHT WITH THE WEIGHT ON MY SHOULDERS DIFFUSE MIUSE I GREW WITH CHILD ABUSE I PAID MY DUES I GOT AHEAD WITH MISSING SCREWS I WALK ALONE I DO WHAT IT TAKES

......FADED, OUTDATED

I PUT MY MY PAIN ON THE MIC

AT TIMES I KNOW THINGS AIN'T NEVER RIGHT

MANY WORDS SPELLED WITH SPELLS......

I was around 16 when I started getting into being a musician. Music is in my blood. My dad was a country rock singer. His name is Brian Potter Sr. and I'm Brian Potter Jr. His band was called Fourth Generation out of Alexander First Nations. I used to go to his performances and sit there on stage while he performed, you know. I travelled with him to shows all over. I didn't think I was going to sing at all. I just thought I was going to get into electric guitar at first. I played for a while. I was a big fan of The Tragically Hip at the time.

I've been doing spoken word for a while now. I think it was always there without me knowing. I just didn't experience it yet but then the world kept moving a lot and I was losing a lot. I first heard Tupac Shakur when I was 9 years old. It was his song - Life Goes On. He's like one of my icons - my idol. I liked his cause and his message. I'm going to say stuff that the world hasn't even heard. What they're supposed to hear. And I'm going to be about it. I shall not fear anyone and fear should not fear me. I will express what I feel and what I see. You could spend a million dollars on a church on the inside and you got homeless people sitting on the outside. Or you know, you got money for war but can't feed the poor.

Mostly, I'm just riding free-styling with the fam. It's just what I see and what I feel. The words I have - I see sometimes, you know. Like if you're on Social Media and subconsciously you keep seeing something and you say, OK, I keep seeing this -

this is insane - it must be a sign. Then I use that word and I express it like crazy. I'm expressing every day. I live a life of pain more than love and I think pain means more than love.

We are trying to get our label, ZeventhGen Records off the ground but we don't have the financial means yet and everybody's got stuff going on. It's hard because If someone else doesn't want to do it, because they're going through mental health, I'm like yo, you say you're going through mental health? Yo, I am the definition of mental health. And look at me. I'm still doing my thing. I'm still being a parent. I'm still taking care of things the best I can. Everybody's got stuff going on. I will not quit. I am hungry for this. It's going to happen. In the meantime, we keep working with perception and deliverance. We just we doing our own thing. We are from the north side here and we are making sure everybody knows that. I just changed my brand to Northside Smilez because I'm actually about it and I'm here living it every day.

BUT I PUT MY HEAD INTO MY
MUSIC INSTEAD OF MY HANDS.



I've been through a lot in my life. Growing up in poverty and around violence. So much trauma from such a young age. I still can't handle doors being slammed. I was in the gang life for many years. I have done jail time. I have Complex Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. I wrote a song called CPTSD. It's hard to live with that day in and day out.

I lost my dad in 2016. And then I lost my 2 brothers and my uncle. That was very hard times and still is. I'm the youngest of my generation and probably the last one of my generation. I remember my brother said: Never go to jail, Brian. Use me as an example. Never go to jail.

I remember that. I'm like, I'm just a product of my environment, you know.

I have tried to end my life three times and it just never worked. It wasn't supposed to I guess. I'm still here. I'm a soldier. I need an outlet. That has always been there.

I found that in my music.

I really like helping people and I want to get the message out to them through my lyrics - especially the young ones.

I really like helping people and I want to get the message out to them through my lyrics especially the young ones.



I AIN'T CRAZY I'M JUST TRAUMATIZED MY HEART'S SKIPPING AND BE TRIPPING I'MJUST TRAUMATIZED IN ALL MY PAST AND MEMORY **GROWING UP IN POVERTY** I'M JUST TRAUMATIZED AND LOSING WHAT I'M LOVING AND TAKING WHAT IS GIVING OUT TRAUMATIZED IS SYSTEMS BREAKING FAMILIES YOU CAUGHT UP IN THAT HISTORY I'M JUST TRAUMATIZED YOU LOCKED UPTWICE A DAY YOU'RE TRYING TO THROW AWAY THE KEY I'MJUST TRAUMATIZED AND I'M JUST TRAUMATIZED SO MUCH ROLLING THROUGH MY MIND IT GOT MY PLATE FULL IN THE END WE GOTTA BE GRATEFUL GOING IN THE GUTTER WAS NEVER FAITHFUL BEING UNSTABLE HARD TO HANDLE GOLD WIRES GOLD CABLES GROWING UP WAS TOUGH MYTIME IF YOU WERE SHEEP OR WOLF STRAIGHTS DON'T SLEEP AT TIMES THEY COLD TOO FAST TO THINK SHOTS FIRED BEFORE YOU BLINK HATER CAUGHT UP IN THE SINK ALL DONE FOR A GOLD LINK TAKE WHAT IS GIVEN IT NEVER REALLY WENT IN THE WORLD KEEP ON GOING AROUND IT GOT MY HEAD SPINNING AND LIVING THROUGH SENDING MANY WORDS MISSING JUST SO LONELY GANGS OF SINGING I SEE NO END WAS NEVER NO BEGINNING HATE GETTING STUCK IN THOUGHTS LOST MY MIND SCREWS LOOSE YOU GOTTA AND MEMORY GROWING UP IN POVERTY I'M JUST TRAUMATIZED AND LOSING WHAT I'M LOVING AND TAKING WHAT IT'S KEEPING THIS TRAUMATIZED IS SYSTEMS BREAKING FAMILIES YOU CAUGHT UP IN THAT HISTORY I AIN'T CRAZY

Lyrics excerpt from Traumatized by Brian <u>@northsidesmilez</u>

I'M JUST TRAUMATIZED......

A lot of days I feel like I'm falling apart. No one cares for a native man. Seriously. I feel that is something that is really missing. I have to stay alive and

I have to be who I am because I have to have my own back. I'm going to stand my ground. Doesn't matter. Be a soldier. Life is telling me to just chill Keep

the focus on me and do something else. I find if I distract myself with helping others, it helps me. I was a housing worker here in Edmonton. I'm eager and

I'm ambitious so I'm like, let's get it going here. Hoping to get hired

again soon because I'd rather be doing something productive. You know I'm going to take care of whoever needs to be taken care of. I love the community. I'm always out there. I love the hoods. I live between both sides. I am a gatekeeper and it means different things to other people but to me, it means I'm stuck in between. I see people die. I see people go up and I see people go down. And I'm stuck.



GOTTA GETTHE OUT OF MY HEAD LET'S EAT ME ALIVE

WHO AM I SUPPOSED TO BE WHO AM I SUPPOSED TO SEE

.....FIZZLED LOOKING IN THE MIRROR NEVER PERFECT

.....I CAME FOR THE LONG HAUL I BE FOR EVER TILL I FALL

MOST SEE METRIP I FEEL NO EVIL SEE NO EVIL CALL SO MANY NAMES

WHO AM I SUPPOSED TO BE WHO AM I SUPPOSED TO BE WHO AM I SUPPOSED TO SEE....

.....NEVER BEEN TO THE GATE BUILT ON PAIN AND HATE BEHIND BARS MINE FULL OF SCARS

I KEPT SHOCKED KEPT FROM THE DARK REALITY CONTROL BRUTALITY BUT WHOLE SOULS BE SOLD

* LIFE UNFOLDS TO SEE YOUR HEART GET COLD

NOTHING'S EVER STAYED THE SAME I'V SEEN SO MANYTHINGS CHANGE
ITHINK ABOUT MY LIFE BADLY HOLDING ON LIFE HARD TO MAKE A PERSON DO IT WRONG
LOVES HATE IT BRINGS TO RACE SOMETIMES LIFE'S GATED HOW MANY MISTAKES BE A CRIME
I GO AGAINST THE GRAIN YOU WALKTHAT LINE SO MUCH PAIN WE BELONG TO THE RAIN......
.....WHO AM I SUPPOSED TO BE WHO AM I SUPPOSED TO SEE
WHO AM I SUPPOSED TO BE......

I have had my son with me since he was a baby. He is 11 now and he's a good kid. Me, my kids and their mother were together starting out but it didn't work out. They were taken from her a few years back and I have been working to get them back but it's been a real struggle. I did everything they asked me to and took all the programs they asked me to take and I was having them for lots of visits and weekends. Then some things went wrong. Not with my kids but with some other people who were causing trouble. Because I'm an Indigenous male and I have a criminal past it's like I have to start all over again and it's really discouraging. It really gets me down. I have fallen in a hole but I'm being honest about what I'm going through with the people that I care about and I'm working to get them back. I love them so much. My kids are my life.

Oh man - it's all cats!
They love that kid. He's taught this one to turn on the faucet and open those cupboards over there.
It follows him everywhere.



Brian with his 11-year-old son, The Cat Whisperer

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ON ALL PLATFORMS





GROWING UP

I am not sure where to begin about my childhood. I grew up in a very abusive household. My mom was 16 when she had me and was very broken and abused herself, so we often ended up staying with our Grandma, or whoever would take us in. My mom dated and married a lot of abusive men and it was a really bad situation for us as kids. I was molested and raped by family members from the ages of 3-7, as well as endured constant physical, mental, emotional, and financial abuse, so needless to say, I left and have been on my own for the most part since I was 14. My experiences in care were with grandma, and some temporary placements. I went to 15 different schools by the time I graduated high school, so there was a lot of moving around. I didn't get to see my dad much but he really made a huge impact on me when we were together. I turned out so much like him because of the things he loved: Music, Dirtbikes, and being in Nature.

When I had just turned 16, i was living in Winnipeg in a one-bedroom basement suite with my friend, and her brother, sister and Dad. We got evicted, so I ended up homeless and I was sleeping on couches and staying at a shelter which was very dangerous, as there were a lot of men with mental health issues and addictions. At that time, my Grandma was the one stable person in my life, so she and my great-uncle ended up calling the local MLA to try to get me some support and I was connected with an Independent Living Youth Worker out of CFS who was a real game changer for me.

IF I COULD TALK TO MY 5-YEAR-OLD SELF

If I could go back in time and talk to my 5-year-old self, I would tell her: It's not your fault.

I dealt with a lot of addictions growing up and have come to believe that doing drugs is what you do when you can't cope with the problems that you're having. So for me, it was growing up getting raped and molested, beaten, and not having any stable home or even knowing myself outside of a state of fight or flight. My innocence was robbed from me at such a young age that

I couldn't easily separate who I was as myself from who I was as a groomed slave. Getting involved with gangs really messed with who I was, even though I had felt it was a necessary evil for survival at that time. Coming to terms with all of the things that I had been hiding from was what got me out of addiction.

For me, it was really an inner child thing. My inner child needed to know that it wasn't her fault. I spent a lot of years thinking that all the bad things that happened to me were my fault. Addictions helped me escape from dealing with that guilt, shame, and not-enough-ness. When I finally got through the deeper layers of trauma and reached her, I found that I no longer had the desire to escape. Of course, stress and triggers still happen, but the underlying pressure from all the abuse I survived isn't so heavy now. My resilience to cope by using healthy emotional regulation techniques in conjunction with inner child healing work has significantly improved with practice and patience.

GAME CHANGERS

I had three significant game changers in my life over the years, the people who supported me and allowed me to keep going. My Grandma always wanted me to do well so she supported me the best she could and advocated for me to come into care and to stay in school. She was always there for me as much as she could be. I really love that woman, and I swear that all the good parts of me came from her.

I had an Independent Living Youth Worker through CFS who helped me when I was homeless by getting me into another temporary placement for 6 months, and supported me to get on Independent Living, and my own apartment across from my high school. He worked with the school guidance councillor to act as my guardian at that time, as my mom had given up her parental rights of me. The Youth Worker believed in me and never let me down. He helped me pivot in my life because I was ready to give up. I just didn't care and thought I was just going to be a homeless waste of a Youth, so he helped me to see that I could be better and do more. My friend, Susan, and I were the only two Youth on his roster who were actually in school, so he really supported us. Her and I both ended up doing well in life and giving back by supporting At-Risk Youth in our careers.

She saw that I was a victim in this situation and was falling through cracks in the system. She didn't see me as a street kid or a criminal. She believed me and believed IN me. The PO was also the only person who I could actually talk to about the domestic violence I'd been going through and she helped me to find necessary resources and to manage my life while leaving that relationship and dealing with my charges. All three of these people advocating for me made all the difference.

I wouldn't be where I am today without them.

The other game changer was my Probation Officer. I was in a very violent and abusive relationship with a drug dealer who had gang affiliations. I had just turned 18 when he got busted for selling drugs and I took the rap for it. I had no choice as I would have been killed for ratting him out. The judge wanted to make an example of me and put me away for five years, so I was federally charged with trafficking methamphetamines. I had just started University and was stripping at night to support myself. I was the only client on my probation officer's caseload who was in school and she advocated for me to get probation conditions that would allow me to continue going to school and find other work. She seen that I was a victim in this situation and was falling through cracks in the system. She didn't see me as a street kid or a criminal. She believed me and believed IN me. The PO was also the only person who I could actually talk to about the domestic violence I'd been going through and she helped me to find necessary resources and to manage my life while leaving that relationship and dealing with my charges. All three of these people advocating for me made all the difference. I wouldn't be where I am today without them.

TURNING POINTS

When I was 14, I went to my first Rave. It completely changed my life. I was sober for that first party and I couldn't believe the sense of community. We were all dancing and I was so compelled to understand what the DJ was doing. I just stood there watching him - trying to understand the dials, the records, the microphone. I was already so sensitive to energy and I wanted to understand what was happening and how i could do it myself. So I started dabbling on my DJ career path by the time I was 16. I had a fake ID and was participating in throwing shows then, and by age 20 I was doing it professionally. After over 22 years in the industry as a DJ, I have accomplished some major bucket list items, including DJing in 15+ countries, ran stages at Int'l Festivals, started my own Int'l Festival, organized and ran tours in many countries, and now I'm about to leave for the Shambhala Music Festival in British Columbia. I'm a team lead for the Village Stage, running a Wellness Hub and a Stage Cleaning crew. I also book female talent for my own 3-hr showcase. It's voted the best stage in North America, so I couldn't be prouder of having accomplished these goals. These are dreams I did not believe I could achieve when I was young and in the depths of depression and addiction, so it feels incredibly fulfilling to know that I have accomplished it now. Great work inner child! High Five!

After I graduated from high school, I went to University to become a journalist, but took a different path as my first day of classes was 9/11 and my first class was Political Science. So I ended up changing my course load to learn about the world in the way that I wanted to, and completed three degrees in seven years:

BA (Hons) Sociology, BA Conflict Resolution Studies, and BA Criminal Justice. I'd already been studying hermetics/metaphysics and loved Shamanic culture by that time, as I was learning how to manage my own mental health through holistic healing. I was already touring the world as a DJ by the time I graduated University, so I just took all that knowledge with me and kept DJ touring and doing humanitarian work in the countries I visited.



WHY MENTORSHIP?

Our program is built on the foundation of understanding that we become the average of the five people we spend the most amount of time with. So if you're hanging out with people who are gang-banging and doing drugs, then just like a room full of metronomes, they will eventually all swing together in the same rhythm. In Dao, its called the Grandfather Clock Principal. You will always attune to the energy in your environment. So, that means that when Youth are coming out of prison and into the community, the first thing we want to do is surround them with lived experience mentors who are doing good things in their lives- with healthy life skills, goals, and confidence. When I went first went to that Rave, there were adults that I was looking up to - those DJs were all adults and I was just a kid, so they became mentors for me teaching me how to act, how to have etiquette, what to do/what not to do, how to advocate for myself, how to make a proper contract, and how to make sure I got paid. I moved to Calgary in 2016 and began working for Legacy Children's Foundation as a DJ Instructor/Youth Mentor. The founder of this charity is who helped me get my charity off the ground. He was on the phone/email with me for hundreds of hours over the last couple years, helping me complete the whole process, and now provides funding for one of our programs. Him and his wife are such lovely people. They really helped me believe that I could revolutionize the way we work with youth in the justice system. I had the knowledge and the skills, but without his direction and guidance, I wouldn't have known how to apply it. Mentorship is so powerful and the effects of it stick with you for life.

WHY GANG PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION?

Like me when I was younger, these youth are all looking for a sense of belonging. They also need a safe place to sleep at night and food to eat. If they're not getting that from an agency or from their parents or someone in their environment, of course, they're going to turn to gangs of people who are master manipulators, sociopaths, narcissists and professional criminals. Traumatized youth don't have any understanding of how to recognize what the red flags are when becoming involved in gangs. And the further entrenched one becomes, the harder it is to get out. It usually means going to prison or death. I'm glad I got out and I'm grateful to the people who helped me. The work I do now truly heals my wounds from the past, and it is a big way of giving back so that our Youth have a better chance than we did.

What I do is more gang prevention while my co-worker, TJ, specializes in gang intervention. He has lived experience and has worked through his own trauma enough that he is really effective in supporting these Youth. I have a deep appreciation for him and for the support and knowledge that his agencies bring to ours. We are helping boys become real men- stable, healthy, and emotionally regulated. And we are helping them deal with the trauma that has been generationally and epigenetically imprinted within them.

WHY WRAP AROUND?

The biggest thing I want to share is that our specialty is in providing Mentee-Driven Wraparound Holistic Programming for Youth who are transitioning back into the community from open and closed custody facilities. They may have a probation order that says they have to attend our program while they are waiting to attend treatment, etc, or perhaps its a request from the Youth to continue after their release, or it could be recommended by their councellor or case worker for them to attend. We work with them up to the age of 24 (or for as long as they continue to participate) via 1:1 sessions and workshops in custody facilities, an Outreach School, and in other community locations. We support them through their transitions via consistent programming and working in conjunction with their wraparound team members. This also includes assisting in identifying career options and training, accessing scholarship funding, apprenticeships and internships with industry professionals, branding/marketing, and more. We work with the Youth's whole wraparound team to create a platform for success. It's important that they have someone to step in immediately upon their release and provide structure. For example - DJ lessons, MC lessons, art and dance lessons, Recovery Coaching, Fitness Programs, Life Skills and the "Gloves Not Guns Boxing Program" with TJ. So we provide programming for them that has a stability and is fun. It's pretty cool because we actually customize the programs based on what Youth want to learn. In the youth prison right now, we're teaching DJ lessons and MC lessons that are intertwined with Wellness and goal-setting activities. We want to start bringing street dance and graffiti workshops in as well. We are always wide open to other ideas they might have because we get to learn and explore along with the Youth!

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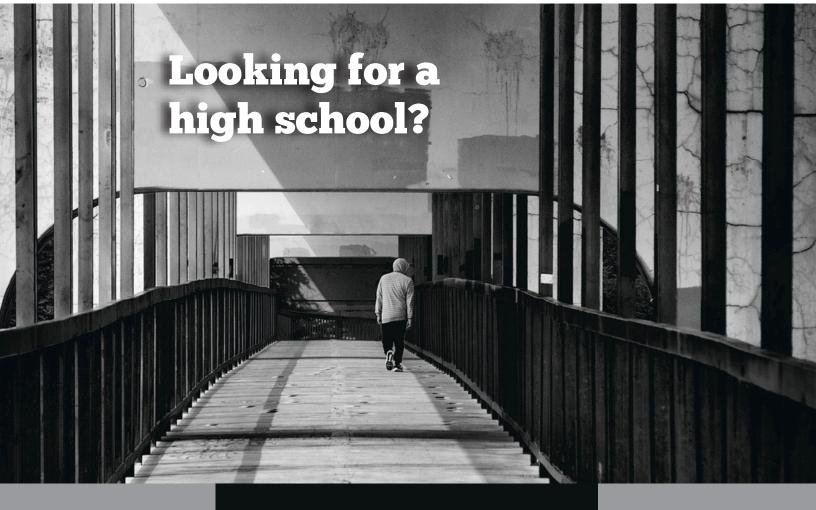
I'm glad I got out and I'm grateful to the people who helped me. The work I do now truly heals my wounds from the past, and it is a big way of giving back so that our Youth have a better chance than we did.

Where we start to get to know the youth and find out what they are interested in is through the 1:1 sessions and workshops we offer. We also do workshops once every six weeks where we have groups of about 9 - 11 participants and we bring in guest instructors who have lived experience, so there are real life talks about what it's like to get out of a gang, what it's like dealing with mental health issues, and what life could look like on a better path. We practice Wellness and goal-setting exercises and then the group will split up- half DJ and half MC lessons. At the end we do a group jam so the youth can show off their new skills. It's amazing to be a part of!

When the youth come out into the community, it might mean that we're seeing them up to seven days a week if that's what the PO orders to keep them busy until they go into treatment, or maybe just once or twice a week if it's something they want to continue on into the community. That's where we start to build a road map. What are your goals for three months, six months, one year? Let's choose all the activities we are going to do to get you there. Then we start looking at what they want to do for post-secondary education or if there an apprenticeship they want to try. We help them build their resume, then we help them get a job. I was a part of developing a 10-week Entrepreneurial Training program with Legacy Children's Foundation pre-covid, and the Youth who graduated had a 100% success rate for completing their 6-12 month internship with an industry professional, and branching out from there. We would like to bring this type of programming into the forefront of our community mentorships programs, along with the support of our partnering agencies.

All of our programs are very customizable based on what the Youth needs. We have a whole roster of guest instructors who are highly qualified in their specialty. Some of them were gang entrenched, or were street kids, or went through major mental health issues and addiction but came out on the other side successful and want to give back. Its an intrinsic part of our individual healing journeys to give back. After all, we are meant to THRIVE, not just to be ALIVE!





Over 3,000 youth, just like you, have attended Inner City High School. We offer arts, academics, sports - and supports. Ask around.

It's different here.



Inner City High School Youth Engagement Program

Sign up for registration reminders on our website.

Register in-person for fall classes starting August 27.

Call: 780-424-9425 | Visit: www.innercity.ca

11205 101 Street, Edmonton, AB T5G 2A4

Registration Starts August 27!



Flexible Classes + Supports

Have you heard of Inner City High School? It is an independent accredited school in central Edmonton. For over 30 years, they've offered academic and arts based classes for students aged 15 to 19. The school provides opportunities for Edmonton's marginalized Indigenous and other urban youth, to earn a high school diploma.

At Inner City, youth can develop skills that can lead to full-time employment and prevent a return to a life on the street. The school offers a flexible, structured environment with small class sizes. Students receive individual and small group supports to address their unique needs and bridge the gaps in their education. Inner City's graduates are equipped to attend Alberta's colleges and universities. The school provides opportunities for students to reach their potential and pursue their dreams.

All students have in-school access to Youth Engagement staff who can help solve legal, medical and housing issues. There's also free breakfasts, free hot lunches and snacks provided all school year.

Register for fall classes **in-person** starting August 27. They are at 11205 101 St., Edmonton. More info, call (780) 424-9425 or innercity.ca

This is cliché, but it was a sense of family. Perspectives On Gangs From Gang-Associated Youth

Chalas and Grekul (2017)

"Just tell [kids] like... I know the experience. It's not the experience you want to have." — Beverly, 20 yrs

After years working in the community with young people involved with the criminal justice system, many of whom were associated with gangs, we decided to conduct research with gang-involved young people and share their experiences and perspectives. After speaking with twelve young adults, we put together some of the broader points that came out of our conversations.

The young people we spoke with had often faced some difficult childhood experiences that shaped the way they saw themselves and others. Many had parents who exposed them to dangerous situations or were battling addictions. There were many instances of abuse and bullying into adolescent years, during which time they began "getting into trouble" and seeking power by associating with gang members. While gang members often offered a place to stay, clean clothes, companionship, and a way to make some money, it never came free. Participants described working long hours and being forced to commit acts of violence they felt uncomfortable with. Many described high rates of drug use and witnessing people they loved dying from drug poisoning or violence. Several participants had been robbed and beaten up by members of their own gangs, exposing that the loyalty they once believed in was just superficial.

"The reason how come is... most kids that are in gangs? Don't have that family love. So they respect that shit. You know? They want to go somewhere where they feel loved. . . It's like the closest thing that protects them, and... they hold their ground for. You know? Makes them turn into a man, but... they don't understand, in the long run... those guys will do somethin' to you. (pause) Any gang is like that." - Ethan, 23

yrs

When we asked participants if they would want their own children involved in gangs, all overwhelmingly stated they would not want anyone they care about near them.

Those who successfully left their gangs did so with determination and hopes for what they wanted instead for their lives.

"I got out and I threw away my phonebook. I deactivated my Facebook and I focused on my treatment. Right? I heard what they had to say. And once I started talking to my addiction counsellor and I started being honest... things started happening. I started to heal. It was weird. I started to become aware of like the traumas that I had from the past, I started to... I started to cry a lot more, and I started to feel things. And then from there it just kind of went up, I started putting in a lot of work, a lot of action. Uh... a huge part of it is gratitude. . . I definitely live my life with a lot more gratitude now. And it took a lot of work. And it took a lot of crying, a lot of healing, a lot of talking to people, a lot of being vulnerable, a lot of honesty, and a lot of... a lot of what I'm talking about right now."

The stories shared with us showed insight and empathy for gang members and a recognition that, even if someone can get out of the gang, they often face the stigma of this choice for the rest of their life. However, those who associate with gangs are not defined by that decision, and they need to remember this to leave for good, and community members need to remember this to support those that have left gangs to build new lives away from them.

1. Gang members are people like everyone else.

"It's so complicated, 'cause... we just always see [gang members] as murderers and killers and all these bad people, but... like... you just make relationships with them on a personal level, and you kind of see past like a lot of the façades that they put up. And you kind of get to know them for who they are, and you just... grow to care and love them.—maybe if they came from a... different home situation. Or if they had someone who showed they cared rather than these type of um bad role models, than maybe-you know? So you kind of just always hold on to that hope." — Elise, 19 yrs

2. Young people need stable, caring adults, and without that, they look for that care in the wrong places.

"The reason how come is... most kids that are in gangs?

Don't have that family love. So they respect that shit. You know? They want to go somewhere where they feel loved. . .

It's like the closest thing that protects them, and... they hold their ground for. You know? Makes them turn into a man, but... they don't understand, in the long run... those guys will do somethin' to you. (pause) Any gang is like that."

3. There is a strong relationship between difficult childhood experiences and gang involvement

"But... a lot of things that they've experienced and have been traumatized from affects how they act today, and they don't really know how to deal with... their stuff." – Elise, 19 yrs

"This might be cliché, but it was a sense of family. To be honest. That's... I have deep attachment issues, and here's a group of people that think like me, that have been through similar traumas as me, that have been through similar experiences as me? That are willing to take me under their wings, that want to rebel and act out in the same way I do.

Right?...I was attracted to the people, and like-minded people like me. And unfortunately ... we all had bad habits and behaviours." - Josh, 23 yrs

4. Gang membership is often deadly, whether by violence or addiction.

"I never met one gang member that ever lived to be the gang member all the way. Either their own crew does them in? Or someone else does them in." – Ethan, 23 yrs

"I'm definitely grateful that [I left my gang]. Because... it doesn't happen often. There is- it's not a misconception that once you're in, you're in. Because a lot of people, they get in with... they go with, uh, the intention of thinking that they're gonna become like some kind of mob boss or like Scarface... and a lot of them don't make it. Right? Some of them become extreme drug addicts, and... in all honesty a lot of them... die along the way. That's just... most people don't make it out.

I'll say that." – Josh, 23 yrs

"You could be doing so much different stuff. You know? He could be rapping like me, making money, doing something else, and just... walking around with people you don't even know, you call them brothers and... they just turn around and steal from you.

Like... they just steal from each other all the time,

they just... that's just how it is."

- Samuel

5. None of the young people we spoke to would want someone they care about to join a gang.

"I don't want my kids thinking it's cool or thinking it's okay to have friends like that just because like... they provide them with drugs or alcohol or whatever and they make it feel okay. And I don't know because like when I was like in stuff like that? I never wanted to go to school, 'cause I was like "okay, whatever. I don't want to go to school." And then I just like felt like I couldn't go to school anyway because I didn't know what I was doing. . . I don't want my kids being like that, feeling like they don't have options."

— Janice, 18 yrs

Uh... a huge part of it is gratitude. . . I definitely live my life with a lot more gratitude now. And it took a lot of work. And it took a lot of crying, a lot of healing, a lot of talking to people, a lot of being vulnerable, a lot of honesty, and a lot of... a lot of what I'm talking about right now."

– Josh, 23 yrs

6. There's always hope, so don't give up.

"It's so complicated, 'cause... we-we just always see [gang members] as murderers and killers and all these bad people, but... like... you just make relationships with them on a personal... level, and you kind of see past like a lot of the facades that they put up. And you kind of get to know them... for who they are, and you just... grow to care and love them. And it's just really complicated, 'cause at the same time I'm like "hey, I know" like "hey, maybe we shouldn't be doing this, like this is not the right thing" but... we still do it anyways. And we're doing it together. So it makes me no better even though I know that's not who I am. It's just- it's really complicated to explain that... 'cause as bad as it is- the stuff you guys do and the things you know, like... like if someone were maybe takes like one kind person... and I feel like maybe... they wouldn't be like that. If it was just – maybe if they came from a... different home situation. Or if they had someone who showed they cared rather than... these type of um bad role models, then maybe- you know? So you kind of just always hold on to that hope."

- Elise, 19 yrs

A final thought we want to share with any young person reading this who is growing up in difficult circumstances:

Try not to let the struggle of getting through each day pull you farther away from your hopes and dreams for your life. The young people we talked to had hopes and dreams they were prevented from reaching because gang involvement is 24/7. Renai wants to be a barber, Ethan wants to design a comic book about Indigenous youth. Janice wants to have a house and a car, and a fridge that is always filled with food. Samuel wants to be a rapper and dance at his son's wedding some day, and Trevor wants to be a mechanic.

Dalton wants to be sober and play hockey again. Beverly dreamed of being a kindergarten teacher. All these young people shared their stories to remind others that they are not alone and there is always hope.

If you are interested in reading the full article, it is free for anyone to access at https://doi.org/10.1111/cars.12469. We want to thank all the young people who shared their stories and insights with us, and we want to thank you for taking the time to think about what we've shared with you here.

"I'll admit it to anybody, I used to be a supporter... I never actually was a real gang member.... But I got stripped. I got my shit taken away... by somebody who wasn't even a real gang member. That's how I got my nose broken. And it's just stupid, like... at this point, I don't see a point in it. 'Cause like why... yeah, I get it. If somebody is there for you and has your back all the time... then yeah. Y-you'll take a bullet for them, you'll take-you'll go down for them. But... It's fucking 2018.

Ain't nobody that real for somebody." – Trevor

HOPES & DREAMS

Beverly: To be a kindergarten teacher.

Dalton: To play hockey again and spend time with his daughters while sober.

Renai: To be a barber

Linda: To do construction or be a public speaker.

Trevor: To be a mechanic.

Samuel: To be a rapper and to see his son get married and dance at his wedding.

Ethan: To make a funny cartoon about Edmonton, be a music producer, and help others.

Tucker: To have a nice truck, a dog, a nice girlfriend, and to be a mechanic.

Janice: To finish school and have a house, a vehicle, and a fridge that always has food in it.

Elise: To finish school and find a job where they're happy working there (even if it's working at McDonalds).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank the young adults who bravely took the time to share their lives with us; they all expressed hope that sharing their experiences would lead to positive change. We would especially like to thank Beverly, whose short life tragically ended soon after our interview with her. We would also like to thank Sandra Bucerius, Peter Smyth and Jason Fleury for their careful review of earlier drafts of this manuscript and their insightful and helpful comments, as well as the anonymous reviewers who provided invaluable feedback on earlier drafts. This work was supported by the University of Alberta's Support for the Advancement of Scholarship (SAS) grant.

Chalas & Grekul (2017)

https://doi.org/10.1111/cars.12469.

TJ SHEEHAN



FOUNDER OF PIVOT SOCIETY FOUNDER OF COASTAL RECOVERY COMMUNITY CERTIFIED RECOVERY COACH & INTERVENTIONIST INSPIRATIONAL SPEAKER PROGRAM CONSULTANT

I grew up in a small town called Sechelt on the Sunshine Coast in British Columbia. It was a beautiful tourist town with lots of lots of outdoor activities. Life was pretty great until I was around 5 and my parents got divorced which I took very personally. I also experienced sexual abuse from two of my neighbours around that time. That was something I didn't understand and the trauma left me very isolated and very angry. It was a catalyst for the things to come. There was also physical abuse from my father. He was very cold and I was always wrong. I stayed with my mom as much as I could. In high school, I started to get bullied and I experienced my first arrest at age 14. I started to fight back at school and by age 15 I was kicked out of school and home. So basically homeless with no education. I started getting into grow ops and I ended up living in a little cabin way out in the wilderness responsible for a 300-light grow-op at 15 years old. I started to discover the criminal lifestyle and basically burned every bridge that I had created in that town and so at 16 years old, I lied about my age, moved to Alberta, and started working on the oil rigs. So I was forced to grow from a boy to a man just like that and I landed in an industry that was riddled with angry men and big egos. That whole culture is very toxic.

I worked on oil rigs for about 10 years and had a relationship, a house, and vehicles. I worked my way up to driller but then my addiction started to come in and I started hanging out with some motorcycle guys and had the balance of working the rigs and hanging out with these guys and all the things related to that lifestyle. When the recession hit in 2008, I went from making \$150,000 a year to \$20,000 and I had to figure out what I was going to do. So I started selling drugs and small amounts became bigger amounts that became bricks. I got involved with these guys and and my criminal activity went from 0 to 100 really fast. I had ALERT (Alberta Law Enforcement Response Teams) come and raid my house for an incident that happened. I was looking at 10 years in jail. A couple months later, my house was shot up in a drive-by. I kept spiraling and started using a lot of the drugs that I was selling. It got to the point where I didn't want to live anymore. I didn't know how to get out. I didn't know what I was going to do. I put a gun in my mouth and pulled the trigger and for whatever reason that gun jammed and that was kind of my moment. Am I going to try to kill myself again or am I going to clean up my act and and get help? I had to choose with my heart.

Every situation for people to get out is unique and sometimes it doesn't end in a good way.

Was it hard to exit the gang life? The short answer is yes. The long answer is no because I didn't ever work with law enforcement, I didn't owe money and I wasn't a rat. I was pretty respected in the community because of the things that I did (no questions asked) and if I got caught, I didn't say anything or make any statements. I don't want to say it was easy for me, but it wasn't a *Blood In Blood Out* situation. I talked to some of my mentors at that time and I met with the group that was above our group, handed everything in and said I was out and willing to face any repercussions that would come whether they were going to kill me or whatever. I was still respected and I still kind of did my thing for a bit but it doesn't mean every situation is like that. Every situation for people to get out is unique and sometimes it doesn't end in a good way. I do tell kids that want to get out as long as you're not working with law enforcement, as long as you don't owe money, there's often a safe way.

I was always very interested in how business worked and I started a fitness business which eventually became something that was pretty successful and I was able to get away. At that time, I was in a really toxic relationship and I eventually left my house that I owned and all my stuff. I packed my vehicle and drove back to Sechelt and I was horrified. Close to 40 of my friends were dead from overdose, murder and suicide or they were in jail. I came back to find the people I went to high school with addicted and living on the street. I knew that I had to do something so I moved my fitness business back to the Sunshine Coast but I decided I was going to build a treatment center for men and that's what I invested everything into. It was challenging and I was up against the city and the police. I didn't know what was going to happen but I didn't give up.

I spent what money I had left and attended the Recovery Capital Conference in Alberta. I ended up driving home with my first two clients. From there I just started helping men recover through spirituality and fitness. We would take these guys on canoe journeys, sweats, hiking in the middle of nowhere to conquer mountains, work out at the gym. We would do boxing, art therapy, meditation. I had no manual. I just used what worked for me to get sober and it worked really well. It was an amazing, enriching experience to help these guys get their lives back together. But I was living in the center, doing the marketing and the accounting. I was working with the guys 24/7. I had no relief staff and it basically just got to a point that I was at a burnout and I had to make a decision when my lease was up and they wanted an extra \$3000 a month. I gave away all the stuff that was in the treatment center and moved back to Alberta in 2023. I had no idea what I was going to do, where I was going to live but I have a connection with a higher power and I trust the process. Eventually, it works out.

I spent what money I had left and attended the Recovery Capital Conference in Alberta. I ended up driving home with my first two clients. From there I just started helping men recover through spirituality and fitness. We would take these guys on canoe journeys, sweats, hiking in the middle of nowhere to conquer mountains, work out at the gym. We would do boxing, art therapy, meditation. I had no manual. I just used what worked for me to get sober and it worked really well. It was an amazing, enriching experience to help these guys get their lives back together.

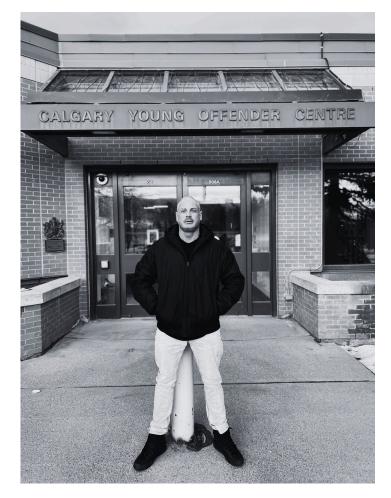
I started to get into gang intervention and prevention work in BC with an organization called Kids Play Foundation which is a non-profit organization that helps keep kids away from the lifestyle of drugs, gangs, and violence. It was founded by a police officer named Kal Dosanjh.

I told my story to him and he just took me in and got me speaking in front of kids at schools and summer camps and in isolated communities. I really have to thank him for taking a chance on me because I found I have a real passion for working with kids. I got connected with other organizations and now I am a certified recovery coach and interventionist. I have my own consulting business, Coastal Recovery Community, and I do contract work for a variety of organizations.

I've had the opportunity to be part of some great programs and forums like Youth on the Edge where we took 10 kids who were entrenched in gangs, had addictions, had been sexually abused, and we told their stories through music and dance which was very powerful. When I came to Calgary, I got connected with an organization called On a Dime Transformations who offer a "Work Life Transformation" program as kind of an after care for people in treatment. We go into the treatment centers and run a six-week program for them that helps them find their purpose and work options through three things called hope, vision and action. The work that I do with Jessica Hutton at Natawihowin Consulting in Edmonton is on the gang prevention side and is really where my passion lies because there's really nothing in Alberta that is ex-gang members helping people through a strength-based lens. We connect with caregivers, parents, teachers and communities through the eyes and experience of someone who's lived it and we provide a sense of hope.

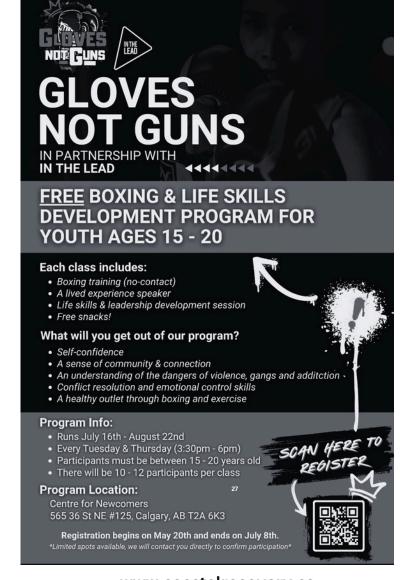
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My collaboration with Crystal Rhodes at Fresh for Life Foundation in Calgary is really cool because she comes in with the arts and music piece and I focus on recovery as a positive male role model. So it's a good balance and we work really well together. I also have a program called Gloves Not Guns which is a non-contact boxing program. We have a speaker with lived experience that comes and shares their story of hope and inspiration and how they turned their life around followed by an hour of no contact boxing. It gives these kids the opportunity for confidence-building self-discipline and also conflict resolution. So once they have the confidence that they know how to defend themselves, they're more likely to walk away from a fight or to break up a fight and know they have nothing to prove in the street. So we get them into a classroom for about 45 minutes after they're tired from boxing and we teach them conflict resolution, nutrition, life skills and gang prevention. We work in the community and in jails and are continuing to get a lot of traction. Martial arts and boxing for me really saved my life and a lot of the top boxers that compete all have a story of resilience and overcoming some of those challenges through the discipline of boxing. My life wasn't easy. It was hard. It was obviously life threatening at times. But again each one of those instances has given me the resilience and experience to be the person that I am today.

When you first get involved in gang life, it's exciting and it's pretty cool. But when the SWAT team is raiding your house or when people are trying to kill you and your family when you screw up or you're sitting in a jail cell looking at a lot of time, the flash wears off pretty quick. I know a lot of guys that are still in that life and they're at the next step and it's not as easy to just get out. I can tell you they wish they weren't there but they don't know how to get out. In the beginning probably around 5% of people want out but as as time goes on it's more like 90% but most are are never given that opportunity. For the most part, go to jail or they die. So, I always leave with the message for youth to find that inspires them. Find something that gets you out of bed before your alarm. That was something that was really prevalent in my healing journey. You have to replace the negative habits with positive habits. And for some it's boxing, for some it's school, for some it's helping others. We really have to shine the light on what these individuals are good at, what their transferable skills are and then they need support. You can't just run people through the program and then let them go. They have to have that support because the triggers or the invitation to get back into that gang lifestyle is always right there and if they don't have someone to call or to talk to they're going to go where the money is. So finding their purpose is so important. It's the driving force for change.



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TJ SHEEHAN

"Youth in care should not be considered as disposable by the systems who are responsible for their care (...) but rather they must be recognized as worthy of the social and financial investments that will help them grow into thriving adults."

National Council of Youth In Care Advocates & Youth In Care Canada Board Member

Even with the softest and gentlest of kids...

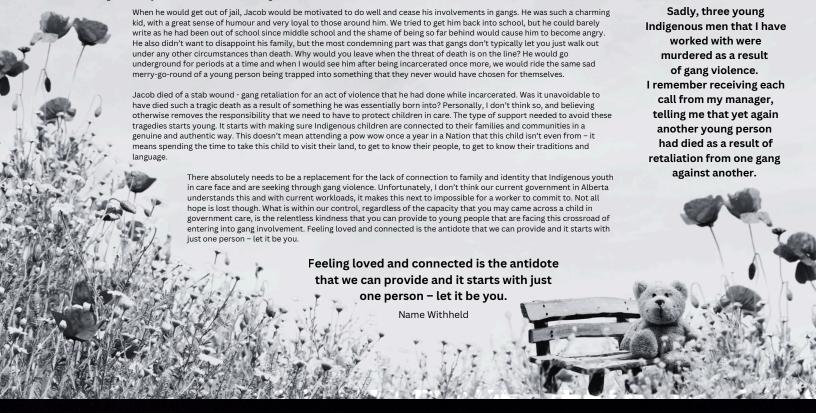
When we talk about the child intervention system, being a youth in care, and the easy potential for gang involvement, it all goes hand in hand. To put it bluntly, the system is a pipeline for gang involvement and anyone who has worked in this system has almost certainly watched it happen, even with the softest and gentlest of kids. Having worked in the child intervention system for over a decade, I have seen many youth be funnelled straight into a life of crime and hardship by their peers and even family members.

The research supports what I know anecdotally as it identifies that young people in government care, particularly Indigenous youth, are exponentially more likely to have gang involvement. Researchers, politicians, and the public can ask why that is, but we in the system know the answer: We have effectively taken away the one thing that a child crave - their family, and subsequent to this, their identity and community. When Indigenous children aren't connected to their culture and community, this is what happens - they seek connection with something, anything that will give a sense of belonging.

The hardest part of seeing this connection to gangs unfold for young people is seeing the widespread lateral violence that occurs within Indigenous communities. Sexual violence occurs at a high rate and I have worked with many young women and men that have been survivors of such attacks. For these young people, retaliation is often a must to ensure that there are no signs of weakness and it leads to dire consequences, including criminal repercussions and death.

Sadly, three young Indigenous men that I have worked with were murdered as a result of gang violence. I remember receiving each call from my manager, telling me that yet another young person had died as a result of a retaliation from one gang against another. I continued wondering how I could have prevented this from happening again, what I could have said or done differently in working with them. I continued sobbing, thinking of their siblings and parents that I also worked with and how I could best support them all through the worst thing that could possibly happen. I continued watching the criminal justice system fail as the focus punitive rather than focussed on intergenerational rehabilitation for the individuals involved and their communities.

For one of the young men that I worked with, Jacob (not his real name), his mother and grandparents were also prominent leaders in the gang world. For him, it was a sign of love and commitment to his family to be running drugs, stealing cars, and sometimes hurting people. All he ever wanted was to be loved by them. When I would talk to him in jail, he would be sober and it was finally a chance for us to talk more seriously about his current situation. He would say that he didn't know what else to do, that he was destined to be "gang banging and that the money didn't hurt either". It also gave him easy access to methamphetamines, which unfortunately, is something that gangs supply young people with to keep their hooks in deep. This trinity of connection between substances and money was a very hard thing to pass up on and it's very hard to blame a child for being seduced by this without alternatives being available.







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I don't like taking orders from anyone.

I was probably around 14 when I first got introduced to gang life. The first time I ever got approached I was 14 years old. A couple guys in my neighbourhood around my age asked me if I wanted to hang out. I said yeah because I was always kind of a loner and I did it fit in and I was new to the city at the time. They were getting into some pretty troublng stuff for that age and I didn't really feel comfortable but I was there so I participated because I didn't want to look like a loser but I soon stopped hanging out with them. I knew it was a mistake to continue. Since then I have been approached numerous times. I remember when I was about 19, I was on the Southgate LRT and a guy a little older than me wearing colors asked me for a smoke. Then he asked me if I was going to school and I said yeah because I knew what he was gonna ask me next and he was like: OK, good. Stay in school man. And then he walked away.

I never wanted to join a gang because I grew up amongst it from an early age.

My dad was affiliated here and there. My cousins, my brothers were in that life.

I lived in a gang infested neighbourhood in Toronto for a while. What made me avoid it was I didn't like to put myself at risk. I also don't like taking orders from anyone. I didn't want to feel like my life was being controlled by someone else.

Youth in care are susceptible to being recruited by gangs because they crave a sense of belonging. A lot of us don't have family or if we do they aren't healthy. We want to fit in somewhere. There's other places you can do that. Youth groups, recreation centres, sports teams, the music scene, the arts community. There are resources out there.

My advice for kids from seeing what's happened to my family and friends, just do your own thing, man. Do what you want to do. Go to school, work, be a musician, be a rapper or whatever. A gang is not the way to go. You're gonna end up in jail. You're gonna end up homeless. You're gonna end up dead.

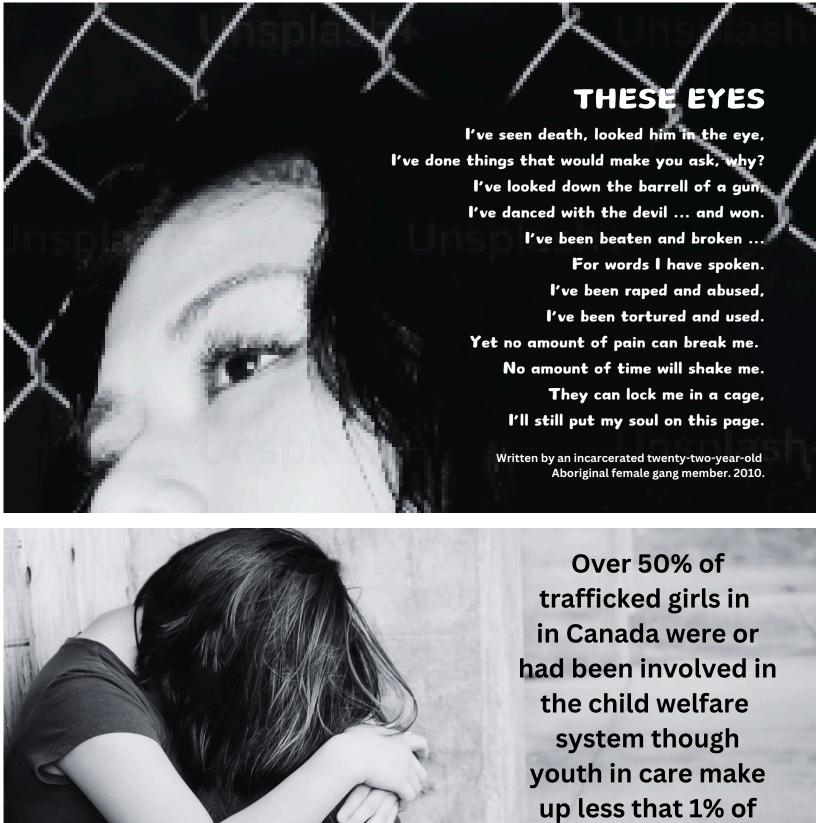
J.K.

One of the Leading Pathways to Gang Involvement

Experiencing multiple out-of-home placements in child welfare and correctional facilities. These facilities are prime recruiting grounds for gang members, and a significant number of gang members report that they only became gang involved following placement in such facilities.

Public Safety Canada

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RAISE THE AGE.
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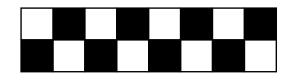
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OFFICE OF THE YOUTH & CHILD ADVOCATE

If you have questions about your rights as a young person, need legal help, or need to speak out, we're here for you.

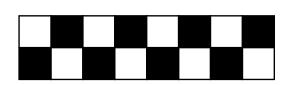
Talk to Us: Toll-free: (800) 661-3446

Monday - Friday 8:15 AM - 4:30 PM NORTHERN ALBERTA Call: (780) 422-6056 SOUTHERN ALBERTA Call: (403) 297-8435

ACCESS OPEN MINDS

ACCESS Open Minds Edmonton is a walk-in service for individuals 16-25 years old. Young people and their families can walk-in during open clinic hours and will be seen on a first come first serve basis.

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Many thanks to the **Friends of Zine & HEARD**

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CALL TO ACTION

By Rellik @rellik118 Posted on Instagram July 4, 2024

Tansi. Hello everybody. I greet you all. I'm Bill Leblanc. Sometimes known as Rellik. Sometimes known as Bill. I am an artist and a radio host but first a father, a friend, a brother, a cousin, a human being with feelings and emotions. I am on the highway right now on the way out to ceremony so I thought what better time than to message you all with something very important.

You may have seen something going around on social media this last week in regards to a fella who goes by the name of The Indigenous Tracker. He is in Edmonton right now in the Indigenous community here looking for Barry Bedard. Barry Bedard has been presumed deceased. He was not only a friend of mine but pretty much a relative of mine. His family I have considered family since I was a teenager. He's like a cousin to me. He has even been like a brother to me at certain times in my life. He went

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missing back in May of 2023 and EPS presumed him dead and now they have been looking for his body for over a year now. And it's sad that we live in a world that we have to ask the government for their help. So what we are doing is calling on the government as a call to action because this indigenous tracker goes by the name of Mukwa Bear and he has seen success in different communities across the country.

Why this man can find bodies but our own police detachments can't find bodies is beyond me. But while he is in Edmonton he has already found bodies he hasn't found Barry but he's found bodies. Whose bodies we don't know. We pray for the families of the thousands and thousands of missing and murdered Indigenous women and men - of missing and murdered Indigenous people that continue to go missing across the country. In the 96 calls to action from the Truth & Reconciliation Commission, I believe it was 44 or 45 that was one of the ones that pertained to doing proper searches for our people and we are calling on the government to change the way they are searching for these bodies. To have Indigenous people lead the investigations in every community. For every community to have their own Indigenous tracker to look for their loved ones.

A lot of people celebrated Canada Day. I used to celebrate Canada Day. I haven't celebrated Canada Day since the discovery of the 215 bodies in Kamloops - of the children in Kamloops. One day I hope to celebrate Canada Day like I used to but until the federal government shows proper accord and action when it comes to so many of the atrocities that happened to our Indigenous people every single day, I refuse to celebrate this country's colonialism and its independence from Britain or whatever they celebrate on Canada Cay - of it's union, I guess.

So please share this video far and wide as we are trying to spread the word on having our own Indigenous people lead the investigations and have the government start this. Whether that's from funding - whether that is from putting these people in our communities, we need some sort of action from our government so I please ask that you share this video and make your own call to action.

When police fail, this First Nations tracker steps in: 'I'm searching for our people'

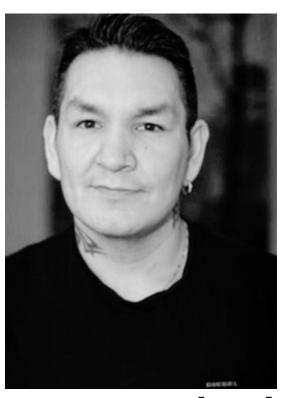
By Haley Lewis & Neetu Garcha Global News Published December 20, 2023

"I dedicated my life to searching, to finding those that are lost," said Bear. "It's what I'm good at so I just do it out of love for First Nations and because that's how I'd been brought up. I just go from search to search, and when I'm done I get a couple days rest and then I go to the next."

"It's just always gratifying to bring people home alive, to bring people home even when they passed on to the spirit world," said Bear. "That sense of loss is at least put to rest and there's closure."

"If there's anything I want out of this, it's more support. More hunters, First Nations people, chiefs to really have to come together and help," said Bear. "Its just sad how many people are going through these nightmares, its just non-stop that people keep going missing."

~ Mukwa Bear ~ Excerpts from Global News, December 20, 2023



Barry Bedard

Age:41 at time of disappearance Height:6'2" Weight:190 lbs EPS File #:CA23-401827

On May 2nd, 2023, Barry BEDARD was seen for the last time in the area of 118 Avenue and 50 Street, Edmonton, AB Barry has black hair and brown eyes and goes by the nickname Bear. He also has a number of tattoos, including:

- Tattoo of "1 W 2 3" across the fingers of his right hand
- Tattoo of "B E A R" across the fingers of his left hand
- · Chest tattoo of "Bloody Orcs" with a shield and two axes
- Tattoo of beads and a feather around his right shin
- Tribal art on his neck, right shoulder and on both wrists

If you have any information about Barry, please contact the Edmonton Police Service at 780-423-4567 or Edmonton Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-8477 or <u>submit your tip online</u>. Please reference the EPS file number when possible.

Marie Antionette Carlson-Hill



You are not forgotten

Age:31 yrs (at time of disappearance)
Height:5'2" Weight:135 lbs
EPS File #:12-122102
Marie has brown hair and blue eyes.

Marie Antoinette Carlson-Hill, who has gone by the name "Toni", was last seen in Edmonton on February 15, 2012

She was reported missing in September of 2012, and a media release was published in December 2012. The lack of contact for such a lengthy period of time is considered out of character.

If you have any information about Marie please contact the Edmonton Police Service at 780-423-4567 or Edmonton Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-8477 or <u>submit your tip online</u>. Please reference the EPS file number when possible.



Michael Thomas

Age:40

Height:5'10". Weight:160lbs EPS File #:23-779727 Michael has short brown hair, brown eyes and may wear glasses.

He was last seen on September 11th, 2023 in Edmonton and was believed to have gone to the Whyte Avenue area. His lack of contact with friends and Family is out of character.

If you have any information about Michael, please contact the Edmonton Police Service at 780-423-4567 or Edmonton Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-8477 or submit your tip online. Please reference the EPS file number when possible.



Vulnerability, abuse and harm, and attachment problems in youth create susceptibility to juvenile delinquency, disenfranchisement, and gang recruitment. Gang members themselves state that their peers who have been raised in care make good targets for recruitment because gangs promise to act as family substitutes (Grekul & LaBoucane-Benson, 2008). In the words of a former gang member: The kinds of kids that are attractive to gangs are street kids without close family. These kids want love and respect and the gang provided that for them. Kids within the family services system are really attractive to gangs. (p. 68)

First Peoples Child & Family Review An Interdisciplinary Journal Honouring the Voices, Perspectives, and Knowledges of First Peoples through Research, Critical Analyses, Stories, Standpoints and Media Reviews Aboriginal Youth Gangs in Canada: (de)constructing an epidemic - Raven Sinclair and Jana Grekul Volume 7, Number 1, 2012

RAISE THE AGE. LOWER THE STATS.