

# GANGS AND GUNS 2020

## PREVENTION GUIDE FOR STUDENTS

Experiential Learning  
From Former and Current  
Gang-Associated Individuals



SAFER  
SCHOOLS  
TOGETHER



Ministry of  
Education and  
Child Care

Copyright © 2020 Safer Schools Together

Reproduction of this material is strictly prohibited without written permission of the copyright owners. All rights reserved.

Copyright © 2020, Province of British Columbia

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We want to thank all who participated for their contributions to the production of the Gangs and Guns 2020 video and for the development of this Guide.

### ORGANIZATIONS

- Odd Squad Productions
- Safer Schools Together

### RESEARCH

- Dr. Garth Davies
- Dr. Alanaise Goodwill

### VIDEO INTERVIEWS

Dr. Alanaise Goodwill  
Dr. Keiron McConnell  
Cst. Raj Jaswal  
Cst. Doug Spencer (Retired)  
Cst. Linda Stewart (Retired)  
Det. Sandy Avelar  
Det. Anisha Parhar  
Sgt. Michelle Horcuk  
S/Sgt. Lindsay Houghton  
Mr. Joe Calendino  
Mr. Rob Rai  
Mr. Will Loftus  
Mr. Sean Loney  
Mr. Sean Wicker  
Mr. Straten Bachand  
Mr. Jordan Buna  
Nicole

### YOUTH

Allie, Loyd, Yusef

## ABOUT SAFER SCHOOLS TOGETHER

Safer Schools Together (SST) has a proven record of helping schools throughout North America minimize and manage their risks of student violence with reliable, professional training. Using best practice from the field of Student Threat Assessment, SST helps schools and their communities learn how to collect data and “connect the dots,” providing the tools necessary to prevent needless tragedy, violence and trauma. Also offered are comprehensive prevention and intervention strategies to assist schools and professionals with the identification, tracking and intervention of negative influences.

In British Columbia, SST provides extensive safety-related training and resource materials for educators, students, parents, law enforcement and other community stakeholders through the Provincial ERASE Strategy and Expanded ERASE Gang & Gun Violence Prevention Initiative. SST’s team of dedicated professionals provide ongoing consultative services and support to ensure the safety and well-being of children and youth in our province.

## INTRODUCTION



Gangs have a negative impact on communities throughout British Columbia. The presence of gangs that often involve youth threatens the safety and well-being of citizens. It is important to raise awareness with children, youth, educators, families and community members to prevent young people from becoming involved in a gang lifestyle. Typically, young people gravitate towards gang involvement either to fulfill their needs or their wants.

The “**Experiential Learning From Former and Current Gang-Associated Individuals**” **Prevention Student Guide** aims to educate young people in Grades Five to Twelve about BC gangs, the dangers of gang-associated behaviour, and the destructive impact it can have on their lives and the lives of their family members.



The Guide highlights the compelling and thought-provoking comments made by the former and current gang-associated individuals in the **“Gangs and Guns 2020”** video. Children and youth involved in successful prevention programs share how these programs are helping them develop resiliency and make healthier life choices. Additional information is provided to help students in Grades Five to Twelve keep themselves safe from gang recruiters and from becoming involved in the gang lifestyle.

## **OVERVIEW OF THE GANGS AND GUNS 2020 VIDEO**

**The “Gangs and Guns 2020 video” is comprised of four chapters that contain a number of sequences and commentary from:**

- Experts in the field of research, gang prevention, intervention and enforcement
- Current and former gang-associated individuals
- Individuals operating successful prevention initiatives
- Youth participating in programs that are helping them develop resiliency and make healthier life choices

## CHAPTER ONE: THE PROBLEM



### The Landscape

BC has a gang problem. There are approximately 3,000 individuals engaged in the gang lifestyle and 120 groups in operation throughout BC. The gang problem is not confined to the lower mainland. Children as young as ten are engaging in gang-associated behaviour. In BC, many young people are choosing to become involved in gangs not to fulfill a basic physiological need but rather for money, respect, power, identity and a sense of belonging.

### The Allure

Young people are inundated by the images shown on social media that, in some cases, have resulted in them wanting immediate gratification without having to work for it.

Straten tells us, “Everyone is in it for the money. You might think you have friends, but money is more important than anything to them. And once you realize that you mean less than money, it’s a scary thought.”

### Dial-A- Doping

Running a dial-a dope operation in BC is like a pizza delivery service for drugs.

Straten says, “Basically I had someone approach me about easy money, gave me a phone, gave me a car and told me what I needed to do. If I didn’t have enough money or if something happened to the drugs, it was on me.”

You can’t separate the sale of drugs and the use of drugs from real gangs or organized criminal activity. The young people who get involved in the entry-level are most at risk of getting murdered or going to jail.

## CHAPTER TWO: IMPACT



### Pathways

The experts tell us there is no one definition of at-risk, as there are different risk factors for different individuals.

Nicole shares that alcohol is her downfall. “You start drinking in the bars and then you meet people and it goes from there. You are doing a line, they are giving you a line, you try a line, then you’re hooked.”

### The Allure

Straten tells us, “All I really saw was the big stacks of money, the brand new vehicles, nice houses, nice clothes, the jewelry, the women. It looked like a pretty good lifestyle without having to work a nine to five or seven to three job.”

Jordan goes on to say, “The people that recruited me showed me a lifestyle that I thought that I wanted. They basically showed me the things that they had in their life – things like money, things like power, things like the fact that they seemed to be respected by people. As a young person, that was something that I thought I wanted for myself.”



The Gang Member tells us, “You recruit them by showing them success. You show them that you have the cars, you have everything, then you let them walk up to you.”

Jordan goes on to say, “These guys modelled a lot of that. They basically said, hey if you come along for the ride, we can provide the lifestyle for you, we will protect you, we will provide you with a living, we will give you a sense of power. It was ultimately a sense of belonging that I was looking for and a sense of purpose.”

The Gang Member shares, “Growing up, you know everyone wanted to be cool. Right? Then once you get into it, test the waters a little bit, then you realize there is more power within it; there is more seduction, almost. That’s usually what clings to you more than the fact that you wanted to look cool in front of your friends.”

### **Trapped**

Young people on the front lines are the most pressured, victimized, indebted, and tortured. Lots of violence and deaths of kids have occurred. Often, they don’t have any idea for who they are dealing with or who they are aligning themselves with.



Jordan tells us, “It was actually quite early on where I started to notice that these guys were kind of using me more to their end as opposed to having my best interest at heart.”

Straten goes on to say, “Once I started selling drugs; basically, all the responsibility and everything was put onto me, whether I was robbed, the police seized it, or I came up short. It was up to me to make up that money, and if I didn’t, violent consequences were to happen.”

### **The Female Perspective**

Young females find themselves in situations where they owe the gang. Nicole tells us, “It’s very easy to get manipulated, especially when you are as young as I was.” Girlfriends and wives are no longer off-limits for gang retaliation.

### **Consequences**

Jordan tells us, “A lot of negative things happened to me because of my involvement in gangs. I spent some time in jail; I received a criminal record. It has taken me a very long time to come back and put my life back together.”

Straten goes on to say, “If I could go back, I would never have even put one foot into that lifestyle.”

The Gang Member shares, “I wanted to get out, I always did even when young. I let peer pressure do what it does. I made choices based on the fact that I was just hanging around the wrong crowd because I almost felt like that was the crowd that I deserved. Right? If I had someone around that could have told me that I deserved better friends, that would have made a difference.”

## CHAPTER THREE: PREVENTION AND EDUCATION



Chapter Three introduces us to the importance of prevention, featuring some successful initiatives that are helping children and youth develop resilience and make healthier life choices. Young people need to belong, have healthy relationships and know they matter.

### **YoBro Program**

Joe Calendino, a former gang member who operates a prevention program called YoBro/Yo-Girl, says, “What we found through the evidence, prevention is the key. We got heavily invested within the elementary schools.”

Joe goes on to say, “We are a prevention, early intervention and intervention program for at-risk kids to make sure they never went through the trials and tribulations and the poor choices that I made. Sure, I can tell them my story of being a former full-patch member, recovering addict. But it is patience, understanding, and it’s processing, being there for the child. It’s consistency, being aware, and eventually, a majority of the time, they will open up and then you can have a critical conversation.”



Loyd tells us, “I’m excited to finally say that I was a good role model for my six siblings. Thanks to the YoBro Program, it’s just another thing that I can add to my repertoire of stuff, cooking, martial arts and just everything that helps to be a good role model.”

Joe Calendino shares, “We have programs during school, after school, at spring break, during Christmas break, on the weekends. We try to fill the void of kids. We make sure we get all protective factors to the child and help support them.”

### **Game Ready Fitness**

Game Ready Fitness is a tiered program that offers programs to children as young as five. The program provides encouragement and support to help children and youth gain confidence in achieving goals and developing resiliency and healthy lifestyle choices.

Allie says, “ I have to get to the hoop and score. And I like to score a lot. It just makes me happy.”

Yusef goes on to say, “We exercise a lot. We play basketball; we lift weights. It’s a lot of fun for me. When I come back to class, I’m ready to do my work. Last week when I came back to class, I was very good. I was doing all my work. I wasn’t like being silly, you know, chatting with my friends, I was being good.”

## **Relationships**

The Gang Member tells us, “I think YoBro and Loftus; they are engaging kids in activities such as martial arts, for example. And that’s not only good physically but mentally letting them know that they have good people to go to in tough times so that when maybe a kid is ready to talk about his problems, he will more likely go to the right people.”

The Gang Member goes on to say, “I think if I was thirteen and I had an organization like that, it would definitely change the probability of me doing certain things in my life.”

## **Change**

Jordan tells us, “Real progress, real change real accomplishment in your life doesn’t happen in one night. And you look back at the last six years, and you don’t recognize your life anymore because it is so good.”

Loyd goes on to say, “I’m very grateful that my band is able to give my people, my family a lot of options to the community members and the sports I love.”

## CHAPTER FOUR: BROTHERS IN ARMS



We learn about the life story of Gurmit Dhak from his early years through his high school years when he became involved in gang-associated behaviour that led to increased criminality, jail time and running a drug empire. His younger brother Suk also embraced the gang lifestyle. The inevitable outcome for both of them was their early deaths.

### **The Early Years**

Gurmit tells us, “My family started noticing when I got into gangs probably a year after when I got involved not coming home, just getting arrested, phone calls from the cops. My parents probably didn’t do nothing.”

Gurmit goes on to say, “ You have to have some interaction with your kid. You can’t just go to work all day long, then see your kid at ten o’clock at night and not have anything to do with him, or don’t even ask him how his day is going or anything like that. Or maybe on the weekend spend the time with him or something and do some activities, do anything to keep the kid occupied.”



Gurmit tells us, “I got involved with the gangs for money, girls, cars, status; just wanted to be cool. The guys that came up to me told me that if I joined them, I could make money, not have to worry about anybody, and nobody would touch me, and I’ll have all the respect.”

### **Crime**

Gurmit remarks, “The guys that I worked with asked me to do some stuff and then we ended up doing it, committing some crimes that I guess a lot of people wouldn’t do.”

### **Guns**

Gurmit comments, “If you’re a gang member you pretty much have a gun. Ninety-nine percent of gang members have a gun. Most of your gang member friends will sell you a gun or give you a gun.”

### **Jail**

Gurmit tells us. “When you’re in jail, you are on a schedule. You wake up when they tell you to wake up. You go to sleep when they tell you to go to sleep. It’s not like being on the street when you can like go to work, play your sports, go to school, do your things. In jail, you’ve got

to worry about missing your family. You can't touch them. You don't get to hold them. It's a totally different ball game. You are on somebody else's schedule. Somebody is telling you what to do. A lot of guys get into fights in there because most people don't have respect. It's not like on the street. You can go to sleep when you want, eat what you want, hang out with who you want, call whoever you want."

Gurmit also says, "I know so many guys that went to jail and all the guys that you thought hey these guys are my guys, these guys are my friends, part of my gang, part of my crew. They forget about you. They don't come to see you. They don't put money in your account. Like they don't pay your legal fees. Your mom and your dad or relative or even your girlfriend or wife or someone close to you are coming to visit you all the time, making sure you are okay, putting money in your account, and paying your legal fees. Once you go in, everybody forgets about you until you come out, and that's when they use you again."

Gurmit goes on to say, "Your friend's enemies become your enemies, and your enemies' friends become their enemies. It just goes back and forth. It's not one specific group that's after you. It could be every group after you. It depends on all your actions and what your gang's actions are."

## **Risky Business**

Gurmit shares, "A lot of gang members have been shot, killed, hurt. Innocent people that have just been friends with gang members and girlfriends hanging out with gang members get killed. I know a few guys that are paraplegics."

Gurmit tells us, "My parents, my relatives, they're scared to be around me even when we are in restaurants. You can look at them in the eye, and you know that they don't want to be here. They are looking over their shoulder to see if that guy that's walking in the door is going to shoot my son today. Or are we going to get hurt? Should I even go shopping with him in the same car? People get scared. You know you might not be scared because you act all tough and stuff like that, but at the end of the day, deep down inside you're scared because you've got to think every day you wake up in the morning is this going to be my last day living."

Gurmit goes on to say, "I want to get out, but it's too late now. I have too many enemies. I think joining a gang is the stupidest thing anybody can ever do. You joining a gang doesn't make you cool. It makes you cool just for that time, but once you are in then, there is no getting out. You're going to land up dead or end up being in jail. You're going to keep getting used and used and used."

Your real friends and your family and relatives aren't going to respect you. They're not wanting to be there for you or go with you. And finding someone, all these girls that you think are



in love with you; they are only there because you have status, or you have money to buy them a bunch of stuff. Real love ain't going to come from them. It's going to come from someone who respects you and wants to be with you."

Gurmit says, "It's all about education, that's all it is. Most schools will turn a blind eye to the gang members unless they do something in the school. But you have to tell the younger guys that these are the guys that end up dead."

### **The Inevitable**

When asked what he thought his future was, he states, "Oh, I'll probably end up dead. My future in gangs is. If I could turn back time, I wouldn't do it again. I've got to look over my shoulder, worry about my family. If I jump out of my car, will I get shot? Or I could be walking in the mall and walking out and land up getting shot. I don't know."

### **Gang Legacy**

Gurmit shares, "If you think all the money, all the cars and the drugs and women are cool, it's not. It's going to end sooner or later, anyways. Why would you not rather enjoy your life."

## GENERAL KNOWLEDGE AND AWARENESS OF GANG INVOLVEMENT



### BC Gang Landscape

- Unique and evolving gang landscape
- Diverse socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds
- Opportunistic, constant change in allegiances and aggressive pursuit of profits
- Exhibit criminal and anti-social behaviours as early as age 10
- Girls are not immune – often girlfriends of gang members, and increasingly as active participants in drug trafficking, recruiting, and violence

## MYTHS AND REALITIES OF GANGS (CFSEU)

MYTH	REALITY
<p>You'll make lots of money, have expensive cars, cool gadgets and be powerful.</p>	<p>Most gang members don't "own" anything. You'll either be arrested, injured, or killed. Your cars, property, drugs, and money will be taken by other gang members or seized by the police.</p>
<p>Someone will always have your back and you'll be protected.</p>	<p>Gang members are driven by greed. Members within groups often kill each other over trivial things. Gang leaders always take the biggest cut, with junior members left to fight for the scraps.</p>
<p>You'll be able to protect your family from a gang.</p>	<p>Other gangsters don't care where you are or who you are with when they decide to shoot you. It could be in a public place, while you're with your friends or at home when you're with your family. Gang violence puts everyone at risk.</p>
<p>You'll be free to do whatever you want.</p>	<p>You'll have no freedom at all, and you have to do whatever your gang leader wants.</p>
<p>Once kids join a gang there's no hope for them.</p>	<p>With early family, school, and police intervention, a youth can leave the gang without serious consequences. The key is coordinated and collaborative intervention as soon as warning signs appear.</p>



## Recruitment

- Youth are generally introduced to gang activity through Dial-a-Doping: A dial-a-doper (dialer) is an individual who delivers drugs to specific locations day or night. A dialer is typically a teenager or young adult who has access to a vehicle or are willing to ride along with a nominee driver.
- In B.C., criminal gangs are known to recruit youth around the age of 16 who have their driver's licence. Youth are open to adventure and are sometimes willing to try out new and dangerous ways of living.
- Recruiting may be done through friends, family members, social media or occasionally by force.

## Gangs Promise

- Fun and excitement
- Identity and belonging to a Crew
- Easy Money
- Expensive Cars
- Glamorous Lifestyle

## **The Reality Is**

- Always having to look over your shoulder
- Gang members don't have bank accounts
- Everything is rented or leased
- Everything is taken away upon arrest or seizure
- Everyone is coming after whatever you have; you can't call the police if you are robbed or extorted
- Once your career as a gang member is over, and if you are lucky enough to be alive, it is very difficult to get another job or start another career
- Gang members have difficulty getting over the border and travelling
- Gang members have difficulty getting a higher education
- Gang members have difficulty keeping relationships with non-gang member friends and family

## **Dangers of Becoming Involved in Dial-a-Doping**

- Dial-A-Dope Lines are fiercely guarded
- Line Bosses are very territorial
- Line Bosses are not easily identified
- Dial-A-Doping is the most dangerous position in the hierarchy of a gang
- Line Bosses will have other gang members offer you a ride home
- Line Bosses know where you and your family live
- Line Bosses know where you go to school and who your friends are
- You own the job and if you can't or won't make your shift, you are responsible for finding a replacement
- You are responsible for any lost product, whether it was taken by police or by a rival gang

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR ELEMENTARY STUDENTS



### Recruitment

- Gangs often try to find something that someone needs and then give it to them (e.g. money, respect, sense of belonging etc.) What they do not tell you is that you now have to do things for them to pay them back.
- Gangs are manipulative and it is easy to fall into their traps. It is imperative that you know of recruitment tactics and how to stay away from gang involvement.
- Someone older who is connected to a friend or acquaintance may be involved in gang activity.
- Recruitment often occurs through social media platforms such as Snapchat, VSCO and Instagram.
- Be aware of content posted that glorifies the gang lifestyle.
- Be aware of who is following you (e.g. older youth involved in negative peer groups can add you via SnapMap.)
- Keep your accounts private.
- It is important to report inappropriate direct messages and pictures posted to a trusted adult (e.g. parent, teacher, counsellor, principal etc).

- You can also make a report using the erase|Report It tool that lets you send a secure, anonymous and confidential message to your school or school district's safe school coordinator who will follow up on it right away. You do not have to provide your name unless you want to.

## **TRANSITIONING INTO SECONDARY SCHOOL**

### **Substance Use**

- You will likely see older youth vaping, smoking cigarettes, smoking marijuana and possibly drinking.
- Drugs are a large part of the gang lifestyle.
- When someone begins to hang around or associate with gang-involved youth, their use of drugs increases.
- Drugs are often used to lure prospective members.

### **Importance of Healthy Relationships**

- Social relationships are an important part of your life.
- Transitioning into a larger student population leads to creating different peer group dynamics, which can be either positive or negative.
- Choose your friends wisely and recognize the misuse of power and inappropriate behaviours as this will help you to develop and maintain positive social relationships and avoid gang-associated activity.
- Believe in your self-worth.
- Maximize your strengths and abilities in pursuit of your interests and passions; find positive commonalities among your peer group members.
- Seek out activities and programs in your school and community that provide you with something constructive to do in your free time, and that provides opportunities for positive pro-social interactions.

### **Be Aware of the Dangers of Dial-A-Dope Operations**

You will be asked to be a 'drive passenger' with a 'nominee' driver who is typically a user. Drugs will be distributed, and users will be injecting drugs in the backseat of the car that you are working in.

Your exposure to violence will increase, whether clients are getting abused physically or yourself by your own 'line boss.'

Drug traffickers will eventually lose product to opposing dial-a-dope operations (rival gang members) or to the police. Sometimes your own product.

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR SECONDARY STUDENTS

### Grades 8-10

- Your circle of friends and acquaintances is going to increase, with some negative relationships, some positive.
- You will be exposed to gateway drugs or alcohol use, whether at a social gathering or via social media platforms.
- Prevalence of gateway drugs will be present. As a student, you might witness students using it or might know someone from a different school your age using.
- If you decide to experiment (usually at a party or a gathering after school or lunch hours), know the risks of becoming addicted.
- If you engage in drug use, this will lead you to purchase marijuana from dial-a-dope operations because even though marijuana is legal in Canada, you must meet the legal age requirement of 19 to buy and use.
  - Gang/dial-a-dope operation recruiters often spend time after school hours drinking, smoking marijuana on elementary school sites where recruitment for all ages takes place.
  - They will be driving fancy cars (usually rentals) and wearing expensive attire.
  - If you are unemployed and do not have the means to purchase marijuana, dial-a-dope recruiters will offer to 'smoke you up' without a cost every so often.
  - Eventually, they will ask you to operate the dial-a-dope operation for marijuana by selling the product to secondary students at your school or nearby schools.
- A Grade 8-10 dial-a-dope operation is typically marijuana packaging for distribution and distributing.
  - Line bosses will front youth with 1-2 lbs of marijuana, which will be packaged into 10 or 20 gram small bags for sale.
  - Profits will be given back to the line boss after the 1-2 lbs are sold.
  - Money issues often occur. If the youth selling either loses the money and cannot account for the money, he will be beaten or kidnapped until it is received.
  - Young dialers this age serve as 'foot soldiers' as they operate on foot in their communities.



- Typically, gang members recruit students who are socially inclined and can make marijuana sales to other students. They also like to recruit athletes, big framed youth that can handle themselves and be intimidating.
- Recruitment is often by senior students from the same school or community.
  - Their line boss will be a senior student or a low-level gang member (18 to 23-year-old.)

### **Grades 11-12**

- Students at this age may either be newly recruited or trusted from the previous years of working low-level drug operations.
- Gang/dial-a-dope recruiters in the lower mainland, like students that are bilingual as this serves a purpose when they provide drugs to adults that cannot speak English.

- Gang/dial-a-dope recruiters on the island and rural areas in the province tend to recruit students that can collect debts and be street-smart.
  - Drug users in these areas often do not have the financial stability, and drugs will be fronted to them by dialers.
  - Dialers must have the competency to make sure money is collected and given to the ‘line boss.’
- Students this age that obtain a driver’s license are a huge asset to the dial-a-dope operation.
- Recruits are taken to expensive ‘trap houses,’ aka drug operation condominiums.
  - During packaging operations, gang-recruiters glorify this lifestyle by paying high-end prostitutes to come party with them.
  - They also like to recruit youth that have been or are currently being bullied and excluded from social gatherings. They manipulate the youth to thinking that they will now be perceived as ‘cool.’ They have a better party to offer, including free alcohol, drugs, older women, money power, and the sense of family and belonging.
- Recruiters show them how to package and distribute drugs such as crack-cocaine, heroin and fentanyl.
  - Training includes packaging the drugs separately into small baggies. Dope is called ‘pieces.’ The pieces need to be weighed and cut into small separate baggies, then put into a large sandwich baggie. That baggie always needs to be knotted into a golf bag shape while in the vehicle trafficking.
  - During dial-a-dope training shifts, youth at this age are asked to ‘hoop drugs,’ which includes lubricating the golf ball-sized baggie of drugs and instilling the bag in the rectum to hide it from the police.
- The prime time to recruit and run dial-a-dope operations to maximize profits is during the school year and on long weekends.
  - Underage youth involved in dial-a-dope operations are often assaulted or killed in different parts of the province during long weekends as students get out of their hometown with their grad classes to go on grad trips.
  - These trips are often to Kelowna or Victoria for lower mainland students.
  - Clashes with other low-level dial-a-dope operations often occur in the communities visited.
  - Large amounts of drugs are also transported by students involved in dial-a-dope operations to older gangsters.

## WHERE TO SEEK HELP

### **Combined Forces Special Enforcement Unit BC (CFSEU)**

The Combined Forces Special Enforcement Unit BC (CFSEU) provides resources that address how to prevent youth gang involvement and how to get help. Additional valuable information is provided about gangs, drugs, and crime prevention for youth, families and members of the broader community. <https://www.cfseu.bc.ca/>

### **erase website**

erase is all about building safe and caring school communities . This includes empowering students, parents, educators and the community partners who support them to get help with challenges, report concerns to schools, and learn about complex issues facing students. <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/erase>

### **erase|Report It**

You can make a report about concerns for your safety and others using the erase|Report It tool that lets you send a secure, anonymous and confidential message to your school or school district's safe school coordinator who will follow up on it right away. You do not have to provide your name unless you want to. <https://erasereportit.gov.bc.ca/>