

Wise Practices in Crime Prevention Programs:

Implemented for and by Aboriginal Communities in BC



Prepared by:

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About this Toolkit

This Toolkit is intended for use within First Nations and Aboriginal communities to help with planning for crime prevention.

The purpose of this toolkit is to highlight and share the successes and lessons learned from the three communities who developed their own culturally based crime prevention activities.

This toolkit is for Aboriginal communities who wish to begin a crime prevention initiative in their community. Wise practices from the literature and wisdom from the three communities will be highlighted throughout this toolkit to provide guidance and suggestions.

Each area includes a *Tip Sheet* and a *Things to Think About* section to help you anticipate issues that may come up in your community.

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About the Culturally Responsive Crime Prevention Program

The impetus for this Toolkit was a three-year program started in 2011 by the Victim Services and Crime Prevention Division of the BC Ministry of Justice with funding support from Public Safety Canada. The program was called the “Culturally Responsive Crime Prevention Program”.

The goal of the program was to reduce and prevent offending, crime and violence in British Columbia Aboriginal communities by delivering culturally responsive programs based on traditional teachings and practices. Two of the main foci of the program were on capacity building and the sharing of tools, resources and best practices.

Three different Aboriginal communities in British Columbia participated in the program.

Historical factors impacting crime prevention

The history of colonization has affected how traditional crime prevention strategies have worked in Aboriginal communities.¹ Traditionally, Aboriginal nations created laws to oversee important parts of their lives such as marriage, hunting, and the treatment of wrongdoers long before Europeans arrived in North America. Overall, Aboriginal laws are flexible, cooperative, and non-punishing, while also promoting restoration, respect, and compromise. These laws are tied to the community, the land, and the Creator.²

Contact with Europeans changed these traditional laws through several different structures, including religion, residential schools, and formal policy like the Indian Act, which imposed a European system of governance and law. At this point, traditional Aboriginal laws were ignored, ceremonies became illegal, and Aboriginal children were removed from their homes and sent to residential schools. It is the recognition of community resilience and increased cultural competence,³ and need for cultural revitalization that guides this project.

What is cultural competence?

Cultural competence includes attitudes, behaviours, and policies of agencies, systems, and individuals. Cultural competence is reached by having policies that support ongoing training, having staff that are Aboriginal, by continuously looking at cultural issues and concerns, and actively developing culturally appropriate and respectful services and resources.³



Case Study: Crime Prevention in 3 Aboriginal communities

Between 2011-2014, three Aboriginal communities participated in the Culturally Responsive Crime Prevention Program to reduce and prevent offending, crime and violence by delivering culturally responsive programs based on traditional teachings and practices. The three communities took an active role in designing and implementing their individualized programs that were based on the community context and needs.

Community A focused on building a strong group to engage the community and using culture to support healthy behaviour. They put time into fundraising activities to support their crime prevention work. Some of their activities included: a Women's Council (to plan more programs for women), pancake breakfasts (to support awareness of crime prevention), Youth tribal journeys, community safety feasts, Elder's lunches, and retreats for individuals who are in crisis or who may become violent.

Community B identified crime issues in their community and then presented workshops and activities to help community members understand the root causes of their behaviour. They hosted youth wellness camps to build a sense of belonging and also had a drug and alcohol-free night for families to promote healthy family interactions. They also created an Elder's Council, developed a community patrol program with the RCMP (to reduce break and enters), and revised a healthy relationships program to have a First Nations perspective (to deal with domestic violence).

Community C's goals were to rebuild family and community connections, as well as to support individuals and community service providers through cultural education and awareness. This was done by developing cultural awareness workshops that focused on traditional culture, residential schools, and the impact of history and protocols.

Communities found a link between culturally relevant programming and crime prevention. Specifically, participants explained that having an understanding of how historical events such as residential schools and other issues from the past can affect Aboriginal people's present behavior was an important part of building a healthy community. They also found that building knowledge and self-esteem among youth was important in reducing criminal behaviour.





Guiding Principles

Guiding principles are intended to help with planning crime prevention strategies in your community. You may want to consider what your key guiding principles are before undertaking a crime prevention initiative or strategy within your community. Some examples of guiding principles include:

- ☀ **Collaboration** means having community agencies work together with families, individuals, youth, and communities to prevent crime.
- ☀ **Community engagement** includes having meaningful connections with all members of your community when developing programs to prevent crime.
- ☀ **Community development** is a way to empower communities by giving them skills and tools to help them reduce crime in their communities.
- ☀ **Strengths-based approaches** focus on and value the knowledge and skills that individuals and communities hold while also acknowledging challenges.
- ☀ **Evidence-based practice** means that we use the best information out there to guide our planning. This best information can come from research or from individuals in the community.
- ☀ **Holistic worldview** means that we recognize culture, traditions, and language as the foundations to healthy families and communities.

Risk and Protective Factors

All communities and populations can experience risk and protective factors for criminal behaviour. These factors may be different or more complex in First Nations and Aboriginal communities because of the historical and cultural context they have experienced.

Before undertaking a crime prevention project, it is important to consider what risk factors your community is experiencing, and how your initiative will address some of those risk factors.

It is also important to consider what protective factors are most needed in your community, and how your initiative would support those protective factors.

Risk factors

Risk factors can increase the chance that an individual will engage in criminal behaviour. Some examples of risk factors for offending crimes include difficulty in school, drug and alcohol use, negative peer pressure, abuse and violence, unemployment and poverty.

Individual

- ✿ Experiencing mental health challenges
- ✿ Experiencing low self-esteem, aggression or impulsivity

School

- ✿ Learning difficulties
- ✿ Little or no cultural in school curriculum
- ✿ Victimizing or being a victim of others (bullying)

Family

- ✿ Access to weapons in the home
- ✿ Intergenerational family challenges
- ✿ Neglectful parenting and/or poor parental monitoring

Community

- ✿ Colonization's (including Residential schools and assimilation) continued impact
- ✿ Socioeconomic factors like poverty and unemployment

It should be noted that a risk factor that is significant for one individual may be unimportant for another. Some risk factors can be lessened through prevention or interventions.





Protective factors

Protective factors work to lessen criminal behaviour by helping people and communities to be more emotionally healthy and safe. When protective factors are enhanced, Aboriginal youth are more likely to live a healthier and more positive lifestyle.

Individual

- ☀ Succeeding in school
- ☀ Skilled at problem-solving and conflict resolution

School

- ☀ School engagement, connectedness and feelings of safety
- ☀ Policies around bullying in place

Family

- ☀ Consistent parental monitoring
- ☀ Extended family and Elders support and involvement

Community

- ☀ Social determinants of health supported and developed



Overall, successful crime prevention programs included risk and protective factors. These programs deal with problems but also build individual skills and knowledge, help develop parenting skills, help improve the school environment, and deal with negative peer groups.⁴

Community Engagement

What we learned from the literature

There are many wise practices for working together to deliver a crime prevention program. First, it is important to engage your community. This process can start with building trusting relationships with each person that you will be working with. It is also important to be able to share information among all of the key people in your program (e.g. community members and leaders, police departments, victim services, Ministry of Child and Family Services, etc.). Community members can be engaged through planning and organizing, volunteering, mentoring, sharing information, or attending the program. A communication strategy can also help to coordinate responses from all the people involved in the program. Here are some strategies for engaging Stakeholders.⁵

"We really believe we have all the answers and the Elders are the ones that give us direction in the community."

(Participant, Culturally Responsive Crime Prevention Program)

1. Build **trusting relationships** with stakeholders.
2. Make a **safe space** for stakeholder engagement activities.
3. Tailor **culturally appropriate, accessible activities** that meet stakeholder needs, interests and abilities.
4. Spend **appropriate time and resources** to engage stakeholders on an early and ongoing basis.
5. **Leverage partnership opportunities** to enhance agency capacity for stakeholder engagement.

What we learned from communities

The 3 communities in the Culturally Responsive Crime Prevention program learned many things around community engagement, and talked about:

- The importance of **building respectful, meaningful relationships** that start with trust and that include diversity and humility
- Recommending an approach that **included partnerships** between justice, child and family services and traditional teachings and values to create strong communities
- **Building relationships, both from inside and outside community** — outside resources can add to and support what is happening in the community
- Providing **Elders' Lunches** are a best practice that promote volunteerism, sharing traditional knowledge, sharing laughter, and encouraging socializing, sharing, and warmth



Top tips for community engagement

Aboriginal communities that participated in crime prevention programming learned many things around community engagement, including:

Who to involve

- ✓ **Identify community members** (e.g., Elder, RCMP/police, youth probation, leadership, child and youth services)⁶
- ✓ **Include Elders** in as they can provide culturally relevant knowledge and skills
- ✓ **Identify people or agencies** in the community that have an interest in or specialize in crime prevention⁶
- ✓ **Work with community champions**⁵ who can provide leadership and be a positive role model

“One of the things is that we’ve engaged our local community, but we’ve created partnerships with the local bands and organizations. We recognized we’ve had similar goals. It’s been really neat taking a look at innovative approaches, short and long-term goals, and how we make them sustainable.”

(Participant, Culturally Responsive Crime Prevention Program)

How to involve

- ✓ **Build trust** and relationships⁵
- ✓ **Create a safe space** for the work⁵
- ✓ **Be clear** on why the person is being asked to be involved and what the commitment will mean (time required, activities required)⁵



- ✓ **Use culturally sensitive strategies** that are flexible, responsive and easy to use
- ✓ **Focus on peoples’ strengths** and how to use these strengths
- ✓ **Build in cultural knowledge** by having Elders involved

Sharing

- ✓ **Communicate** with the community⁶ at all stages of program development
- ✓ **Increase community members’ awareness and capacity** by involving them on advisory committees and email listservs to increase support for the program
- ✓ **Celebrate successes**⁵



Some things to keep in mind

Some of the challenges that participants in the Culturally Responsive Crime Prevention Program talked about included the following:

☀️ Community support:

- Projects are more likely to be accepted and supported when the proposals are developed directly from the communities and include the community's knowledge and needs

☀️ Partnerships and stakeholders:

- When you are involving different stakeholders in your project, you need to be prepared that they may have feedback that is different from your vision
- If your project changes focus based on community feedback, you will need to communicate this to your funders
- Relationships inside and outside the community are constantly changing

☀️ Human resources:

- Leadership and staff turnover (local leadership, project staff, and government)
- Competition can exist in the community for funding and human resources

☀️ Historical factors:

- Post-colonial (western) structures can be hard to work in
- It may be hard to trust the justice system because of historical issues

☀️ Logistical factors:

- Learning needs are different in every community
- Isolated communities (some communities do not have victim services or RCMP and don't have budgets to travel)

Needs Assessments

What we learned from the literature

One of the first steps in developing a crime prevention program is asking what your community needs. A needs assessment gathers information on the situation you want to address, identifies service and program gaps, and identifies the community's needs and preferences.^{7,8} A needs assessment will help you define and describe the crime issues in the context of your community by talking with community members to get their input. The needs assessment helps you to focus and concentrate your program efforts where they are most needed.

Is a full scale needs assessment necessary?

Sometimes a full-scale needs assessment is not needed, as you might already be aware of the issues in your community. If this is the case, it can be helpful to ask the following questions:

- ☒ When was the last time a needs assessment was done?
- ☒ Who did it? Was it done by community members, or from outside the community? Did this affect community buy-in?
- ☒ What was the focus?
- ☒ How was it conducted? (By phone? Survey? Focus groups?)
- ☒ What were the findings? (Were any of the findings addressed after the assessment was done?)
- ☒ Did the needs assessment include different community members? (e.g., youth, mothers, Elders, Individuals who don't often use services)?
- ☒ If there are previous records of needs assessments, are they still relevant now?



What we learned from communities

- The importance of **focusing on people's needs**, rather than just the policy needs
- The importance of **meeting both the community and individuals** where they are in their healing journey
- **Capitalize on the expertise** that is available in the community
- **Communicate and listen** to what others are saying
- **Involve Elders and youth**
- **Manage community expectations** — just because the community wants something, remember that it is not always possible to do it



Top tips for needs assessments

- ✓ **Identify community risk factors** associated with criminal behaviour⁶
- ✓ **Identify resources** in the community to help people who may be at risk for criminal behaviour⁶
- ✓ **Identify protective resources and programs** that will help the community develop resiliency⁶
- ✓ Try to ensure that there are many **different individuals** from your community to **give input**⁹
- ✓ **Ask other communities and organizations** how they have done needs assessments⁹

The three steps of needs assessments

- ✓ **Identify resources** in the community
- ✓ **Identify gaps** in community resources or programs
- ✓ Work with the community to **set priorities**

Some things to think about

- ☼ Community priorities may be constantly changing
- ☼ It can be challenging to be strategic and remain on course during community crises
- ☼ If the approach is not community-based, and an individual comes in with their own agendas, there may be pushback in the community
- ☼ Every community has different needs and plans
- ☼ If a need is identified, it may create a division as some people may feel it is not important
- ☼ Some community members may deny that issues exist

Action Plans

Once the community needs are known, then an action plan can be made.

What we learned from the literature

An action plan describes the steps you can do to carry out the strategies developed through the needs assessment. Action plans show the community and the funders that you are well organized and focused, and help ensure that you do not overlook any details.



It is important to make sure that your action plan includes how to **reduce risk factors** (e.g. having a hard time in school, gang involvement, drug or alcohol misuse, negative peer pressure, unemployment, and poverty) and **promote protective factors**. This approach is holistic and strengths based.^{4,11,12,13}

It is a *wise practice* for your program to deal with risk factors that could happen for the individual, or within the family, school, or the community. Your action plan should also work on strengths like building skills and competence. Social development models for crime prevention programs increase strengths and protective factors

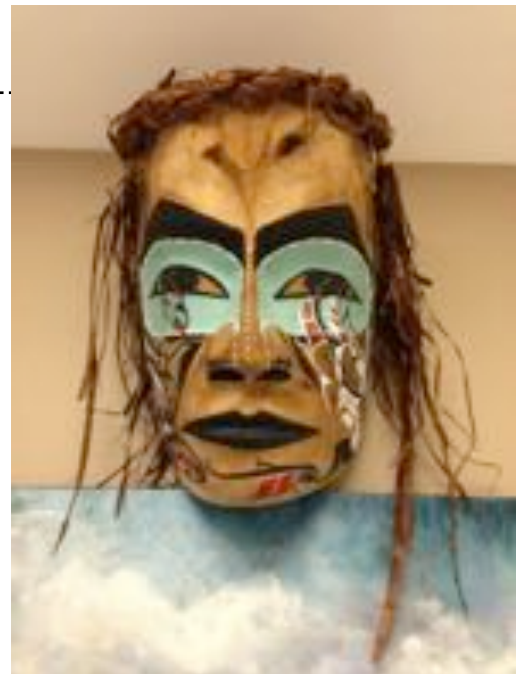
in all areas of life, and is considered a wise practice.^{4,14}

For best results, the program should fit with the local practices, traditions, beliefs and values.^{4,11,15}

What we learned from communities

The communities in the Culturally Responsive Crime Prevention Program learned many things about Action Plans, and spoke about:

- The importance of choosing someone with **strong writing skills** because this area has a lot of content
- Trying to **include youth**
- **Including cultural aspects** may motivate people to feel comfortable seeking help
- **Being holistic and motivating positive changes** can make your program more successful
- **Talk to other communities** about strategies that worked for them, but also consider that all communities are different



Some things to think about

- ☀ Include **community strengths** in the action plan
- ☀ Identify **which changes are most important** to your objectives
- ☀ Some changes may be more difficult to put into place, and may need other things or **relationships** to be put in place first
- ☀ Doing **easier tasks first** may give your team a **sense of success**
- ☀ Getting things done may help **build credibility** in the community

Top tips for action plans

Some things to consider:

| Step: | Questions to ask: |
|------------------------|---|
| Action Step | What will happen in your project? |
| Build in Culture | How can culture be built in? |
| Person(s) Responsible | Who will do what? |
| Date to be completed | When and how long will it take? |
| Resources required | What resources and supports are needed? |
| Resources available | What resources, strengths and supports are available? |
| Barriers or resistance | What is keeping you from doing the work and how can you overcome these things? |
| Communication | Who else should know about this action? |
| Check-ins | Have action step tasks been completed? How can you help support each other to make sure things are getting done? |
| Build in evaluation | What does the funder ask for around the program evaluation? What is important for your community to evaluate? |



An Example Action Plan

This table is an example of components that could be included in an action plan - the key is including the steps and describing what you plan to do. It is also helpful to have some target timelines to work with so that you keep your goals moving forward. It also helps to identify who will do what task, and what resources they need.

| Steps | Activity | Who is responsible | Resources needed | Date to work on this | Completed |
|---------------------------------------|---|---|--|----------------------|-------------|
| Do a needs assessment | Gather data about gaps and needs in the community | John C. | Focus group Data previously gathered | March 2014 | in progress |
| Community Engagement | Review the needs assessment findings with the community and strategize on a crime prevention strategy | John C. Elders Anne B. | Time Meeting space | April 2014 | in progress |
| Develop the crime prevention strategy | Develop plans for a Youth Culture camp — have a meeting to determine dates — discuss the goals of the camp — think about who will be involved — plan a budget | John C. Anne B. Elders Youth - Jane and Paul | Meeting Space Camp Space Help from the community to identify goals | June 2014 | in progress |
| Youth culture camp | Host the event | All | Youth, Chaperones Cultural teachers | July 2014 | |

From Planning to Action

Once you have an action plan, then you can move from planning to action.

What we learned from the literature

Long-term programming with long-term participation have been shown to work better in reducing crime. There are many things that you can do to help your plan come to action, such as having realistic goals, with specific people identified to do each task. It is also very helpful to document what you do and keep records. It's also good to make sure that your program is culturally relevant, and that you continue to focus on the bigger picture.^{8,11} Four wise and holistic practices are:

1. **Early Intervention:** practices that focus on learning and problem solving in early childhood, and building positive and trusting relationship.⁴
2. **Focus on Parents:** supporting parents' needs, giving them appropriate training, providing parental support workers.^{4,14}
3. **Home Visitation:** One crime prevention program for Aboriginal communities had home visits where parents were taught about parenting techniques, child development and how to interact more positively with their children.¹²
4. **Lifestyle Education:** providing information on how harmful a criminal lifestyle is, and ways to promote a non-criminal lifestyle.⁸


What we learned from communities

The communities in the Culturally Responsive Crime Prevention Program learned many things about delivering programs:

- Have some form of a **cultural wellness camp or retreat**
- Focus on **traditional practices** and reconnecting with the land (nation based approach)
- Help to **restore traditional languages**
- **Elders' lunches** are a place where one can reach out for help and **share traditional knowledge**
- Try to provide **nutritious food**



Top tips for planning to action

- 
- ✓ **Make realistic goals** based on the needs assessments and the priorities identified⁶
 - ✓ **Use community strengths** when starting your activities⁶
 - ✓ Prepare an **outline of activities** (e.g. timeline, budget, communication plan, who does what, etc.)⁶
 - ✓ Make sure all group members know what their task is, when it is done, and keep track of what has been done¹⁷
 - ✓ Make a chart with these columns:¹⁷
 - Tasks
 - Timeline
 - Person who is in charge of the task
 - Date that the task is finished
 - ✓ Build in steps for gathering information and data for each of your activities
 - ✓ Keep data collected, records, notes, receipts etc. and file them in a safe place¹⁷

Some things to think about

- ☼ Lack of empowerment in the communities because of historical issues
- ☼ The importance of focusing on the values of the program rather than the systemic barriers
- ☼ Crises in the community can delay planned activities
- ☼ Not having administrative structure and capacity can make it hard to carry out activities
- ☼ There may be denial that change is needed in the community
- ☼ The community knows the right approach but is not always supported by policies and programs
- ☼ Unrealistic expectations from community members when looking at healing timelines (i.e. want things to be better very quickly)
- ☼ Keeping trust with community members to make sure that good work continues
- ☼ Make efforts to reach the diverse members of the community
- ☼ Try to include ways to build sustainability into programs



Evaluation

Evaluation is a very important step in a crime prevention program. When you evaluate your program, you have the chance to see if:

- ☀ If your program is reaching the people it is meant to reach
- ☀ People are satisfied with their experience
- ☀ Your program was delivered as you planned
- ☀ You are getting the outcomes you hoped to get

Evaluating your program is also an opportunity to learn how you can make your program be the best that it can be, and share your successes.

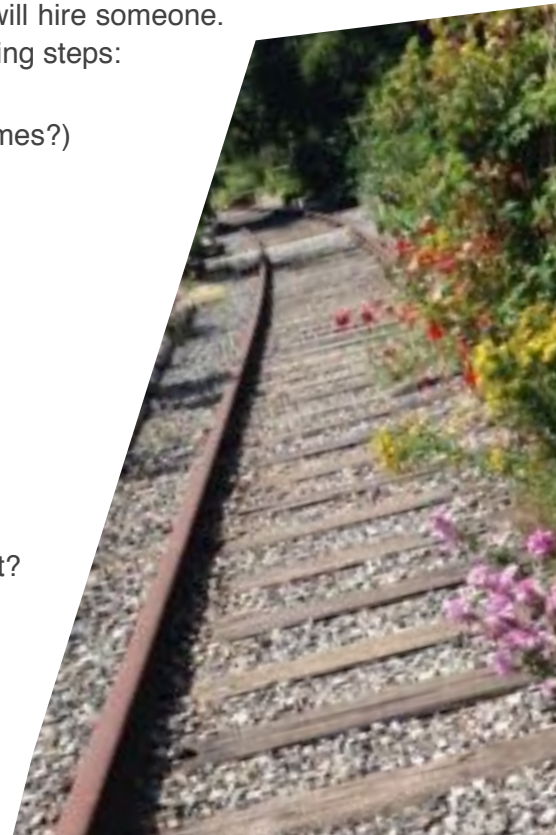
Top tips for program evaluation

- ☑ Build evaluation strategies into your action plan
- ☑ Document what you are doing (all of the phone calls, activities, work, etc.)
- ☑ Make folders to sort paperwork (invoices, charts, etc.)
- ☑ Make forms for all the activities to more easily collect the data you need

Steps for doing a Program Evaluation

First, you will need to decide if you will do the evaluation yourself or if you will hire someone. If you would like to do the evaluation yourself, you can think about the following steps:

- ☑ Determine the evaluation **focus** (Delivery of the program? Outcomes?)
- ☑ Identify the **people who will use the evaluation**
- ☑ **Identify your project goals** and objectives
- ☑ Figure out where the **data (information)** will come from
- ☑ Decide what **tools you will use** to collect data
- ☑ **Collect the data** then organize and **analyze this information**
- ☑ Decide how you would like to **share the findings** (Technical report? Newsletter? Video?)
- ☑ Share the results and identify what your **next steps** will be



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