Gang Action Interagency Network (GAIN) Fact Sheet

History of the Organization:

- Interagency network made up of 182 individuals from government, law enforcement and community
- Has been around for 8 years
- Has 1 full time staff
- Report Released in 2014 – Community Assessment of a Gang Exit Strategy for Winnipeg, Manitoba
- Gang Strategy Released in 2017 – Bridging the Gaps: Solutions to Winnipeg Gangs
- **Requested Operating Budget for 2018: $75,294.40**

Strategy Highlights:

- Builds on **EXISITING** programs and services
  - Through better service alignment and coordination
- All components of strategy are rooted in **Identity, Belonging, Healing and Expanded Programming**
- **Gang Exit Strategy**
- Focus on **Prevention, Intervention** and Suppression
- Target Age: **6-29**
- **3 Year Timeline**

Strategy Components:

Goal: Full Social Inclusion for all young people adults and their families having sustainable access to resources and support systems and to avoid and exit gangs. With a focus on improving their overall quality of life

Bridging the Gaps: Solutions to Winnipeg Gangs: includes the following components:
Gang Exit Strategy, 24/7 Navigators, Mentorship, Employment and Education, Mental Health and Addictions Supports, Access to Appropriate Cultural Supports, Access to Recreation Opportunities, Parent Support Groups, Connects among young people and their Communities, and Public Education.

GAIN Accomplishments with ONE year of Funding:

- GAIN Referral Process
- Launched Strategy
- ResourceConnect App
- Website and Social Media platforms launched
- Parent Support Circles
- Tattoo Removal Process

Plan for Upcoming Year with Funding:

- GAIN is seeking $75,294.40 for the next fiscal year
- With Funding GAIN will be able to:
  - Increase Mentorship Opportunities
  - Populate and Implement the Gang Exit Strategy
  - Engage in Public Education
  - Pilot street level outreach and Gang Interruption

GAIN
Gang Action Interagency Network
www.gainmb.org

The Gang Action Interagency Network is a **grassroots committee** with members from over 25 Winnipeg agencies and organizations dedicated to **ending gang violence**

Contact

If you would like to learn more about GAIN, our referral process or to **refer a youth,** contact GAIN's Coordinator, Robyn:

robyn@gainmb.org
204.795.8957
http://gainmb.org

Revised May 2017

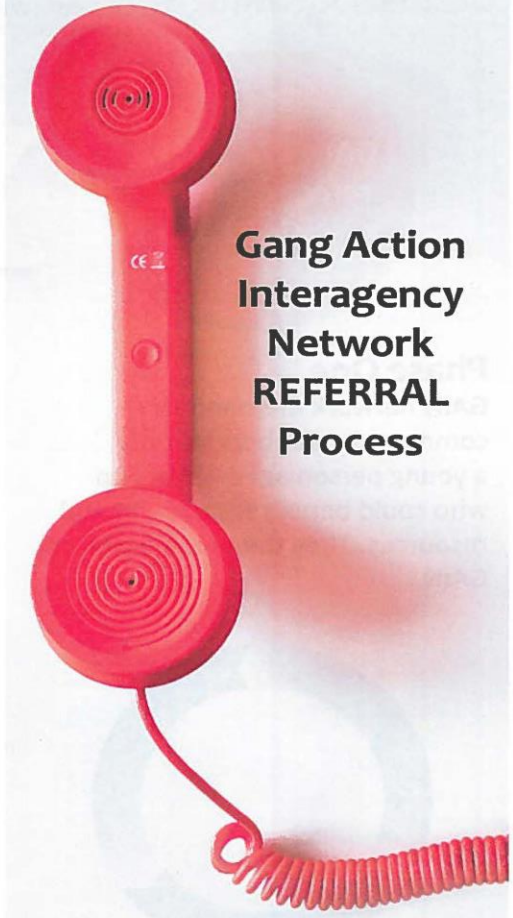
GAIN
Gang Action Interagency Network

583 Ellice Avenue
Winnipeg, MB
R3B 1Z7

204.795.8957

info@gainmb.org

http://www.gainmb.org



Gang Action Interagency Network REFERRAL Process

GAIN
Gang Action Interagency Network

The GAIN Referral Process

Desired Outcome: *To connect youth and their families with positive opportunities and activities*

GAIN PARTNER *refers youth to GAIN* → *GAIN conducts intake process with youth/family* → *GAIN follows up with youth/family*

Phase One

GAIN network members or community members identify a young person aged 12 and up who could benefit from additional resources. They then refer youth to GAIN.



Phase Two

Once a referral has been made, GAIN will make initial contact with the family and or youth. The purpose of this conversation will be to determine youth's interest in participation in GAIN's referral process.

Once interest is established the focus will shift to the interests/ hobbies/needs of the youth. Either during this conversation or after, GAIN will create a list of organizations/options that fit the youth's interests.

Phase Three

After a few weeks GAIN will follow up with the youth/family to see how they are enjoying the referral. If the youth/family desires new referrals GAIN will assist them with that.

If GAIN is unable to get in touch with the family/youth, GAIN will contact the referred organization if possible to check up on the situation.

GAIN will track successful / nonsuccessful outcomes to determine best practices and assist in future referrals.

GAIN
Gang Action Interagency Network

To View the full strategy please visit
WWW.GAINMB.ORG

Or contact GAIN coordinator Robyn Dryden
at gain@spenceneighbourhood.org

302 – 583 Ellice Avenue
Winnipeg, MB R3B 1Z7



GAIN
Gang Action Interagency Network

BRIDGING THE GAPS:

SOLUTIONS TO WINNIPEG GANGS

AT A GLANCE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this document is to layout the framework for a Winnipeg based gang strategy. An estimated 1400-1500 of Winnipeg's youth are active street gang members. Manitoba also has one of the highest youth incarceration rates in the country. Clearly youth street gangs continue to be a problem that incarceration is failing to resolve. Gang Action Interagency Network (GAIN), through extensive community consultation, was tasked with becoming the coordinating body to create and implement a plan that would address gangs and the harm they cause. GAIN has worked to ensure the necessary collaboration between all stakeholders to create an overarching approach to the complex issue of gangs in Winnipeg and then all of Manitoba.

In 2014, GAIN completed the study *Community Assessment of a Gang Exit Strategy*. Funded federally by the Youth Justice Fund – Guns, Gangs and Drugs, the research focused on three specific areas: Stakeholder Consultation, Youth Consultation and Existing Evidence (literature review etc… from both here and other jurisdictions). The three key action areas of potential focus identified were:

- Identity and belonging: The need for more mentorship, cultural reclamation and community efficacy
- Healing: Greater access to addictions and mental health care, and
- Expanded Programming: Addressing waitlists, inaccessible locations due to safety concerns, and lack of late night to early morning programing that currently act as barriers.

Bridging the Gaps: Solutions to Winnipeg Gangs is based on this research and further consultation to ensure we are relying on the best evidenced based approaches and building on what has proven successful in Winnipeg already. The result is a holistic framework with these guiding principles:

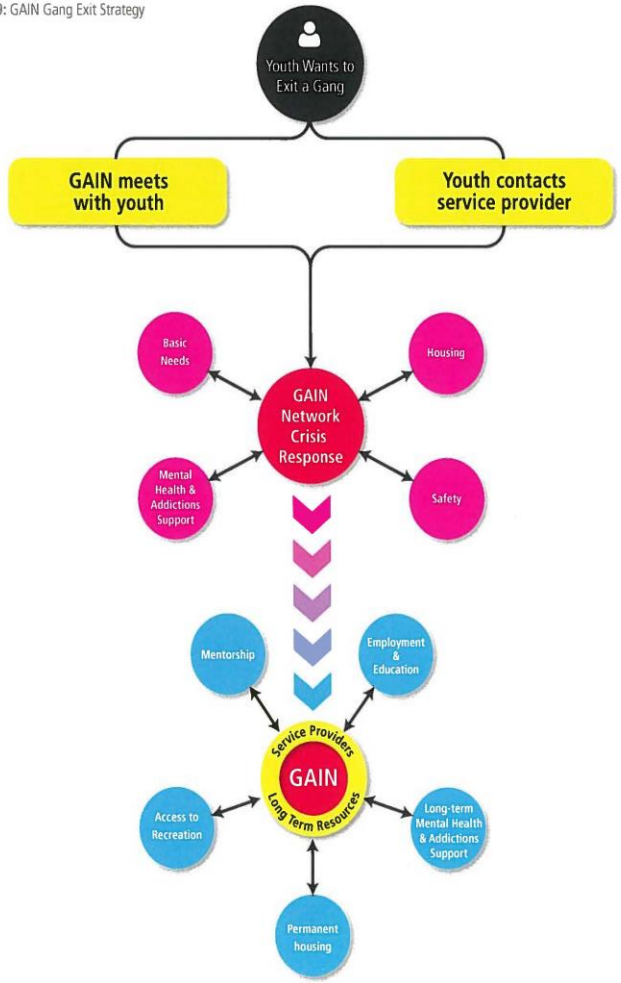
- Anti-colonization,
- Anti-oppression, and
- Harm reduction.

The evidence insists we employ a youth centered complex trauma lens that engages family and extended community as we address gaps in services and build bridges between existing supports to both avoid gang involvement and allow for exiting should a young person get caught up in that lifestyle.

Access to core services such as recreation and cultural programs along with education and sustainable employment are well proven methods in reducing the chances of a young person becoming involved with gangs. However systemic barriers, both actual and perceived, exist. In order to address these, our plan will see the creation and/or better coordination of:

- 24/7 System Navigators
- Mentorship programing
- Mental health and addiction services geared better for youth
- Parent/Family support groups
- Better public awareness and understanding of the root causes of gang involvement along with the solutions.

Figure 9: GAIN Gang Exit Strategy



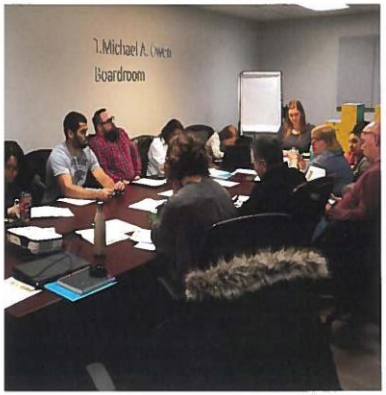


Figure 3 demonstrates how the strategy will create the future depicted in Figure 2. GAIN will actively work with existing structures to collaborate on the development of 24/7 navigators and mentors to help young people navigate systems, break down barriers, and seek out funding to enhance the capacity of existing resources. Through this work we will be able to connect at-risk or gang-involved young people to mentorship, employment opportunities, mental health and addictions support, and easier access to programs and services. By doing all this, accessibility barriers will be eliminated, which will help young people to heal and develop a strong sense of identity and belonging. This will all result in youth thriving in our community and not a part of gangs.

GANG EXIT STRATEGY FLOW CHART:

While Winnipeg offers a variety of excellent prevention programming and resources, gang-intervention opportunities are sorely lacking. As a result, *Bridging the Gaps: Solutions to Winnipeg Gangs* includes a gang exit flow chart in response to the need for immediate action when a young person decides to leave a gang. Currently there are individuals doing great work on an ad hoc basis throughout the city, however there is no formalized process.

GAIN recognizes that life does not exist in a linear fashion, however, for the purpose of the graphic (see Figure 9), the exiting process is depicted in that way. When a young person decides they want or need to leave a gang they can either contact GAIN directly or a network member/community member. Whoever the youth contacts will bring forth the issue to GAIN, there they will wrap around the young person to deal with immediate crisis responses needs (Safety, Basic Needs, Immediate Housing, Mental Health/Addictions issues). Once those crisis needs are met and dealt with we would then move forward, using existing resources, services, and programs to deal with long-term needs (mentorship, employment/education, access to recreation, permanent housing options, long-term mental health/addictions issues, and so forth).

There will be GAIN members who can assist with the various crisis and long-term needs when a young person decides to leave gang life. The importance of this exit process is that it takes the onus off the young person to have to pull various supports from various systems around them. Instead the supports already exist and are waiting to help young people transition out of gangs.

Expected outcomes should the plan be funded and implemented are:

- Significant reduction in the number of youth incarcerations in Manitoba,
- Eliminate the over representation of Indigenous and newcomer youth in the criminal justice system, and
- An established gang response mechanism and system that can take both a coordinated crisis and long-term approach to Winnipeg's youth gang problem.

This coordinated plan **includes prevention, intervention and suppression** all working in tandem to create positive pro-social opportunities for young people and a safer community for all. This should include a shift from short term responses, for example youth incarceration, to long term responses that understand the root causes of youth gang involvement. This shift should be represented by spending more money on prevention and intervention strategies and less on incarceration. It will ensure 'we get out in front' of the social conditions that lead to gang involvement through a very individualized and wrap-around evidenced based approach. We will also continue to identify and address larger systemic barriers to full social inclusion. By working towards healing, identity and belonging through better coordinated and expanded resources, we will create alternate paths to gang involvement for our young people and safer communities for us all.

GOALS AND PRIORITIES OF THE STRATEGY:

GOAL 1: Full social inclusion for all young people, adults, and their families having sustainable access to resources and support systems and to avoid and exit gangs, with a focus on improving their overall quality of life.

GOAL 2: To build on existing resources to ensure that all youth at risk of joining gangs and all youth looking to exit gangs have the opportunity to do so.

GOAL 3: To provide at-risk youth with better connections to and opportunities for healing.

NAVIGATORS:

GOAL 4: To ensure that any youth at-risk can pick up a phone, connect with a 24/7 navigator, and be connected to all the resources necessary to support that youth.

MENTORSHIP:

GOAL 5: A fully functioning gang mentorship program (either a stand-alone program or building capacity within exiting mentorship programs – to be determined by working group and research).

ACCESS TO RECREATION:

GOAL 6: Eliminate barriers so that all youth in gangs, affiliated with gangs, or at risk of gang involvement have access to recreation opportunities.

ACCESS TO APPROPRIATE CULTURAL PROGRAMMING:

GOAL 7: All gang-involved, affiliated, or at-risk youth have access to appropriate cultural programing if they so desire.

EMPLOYMENT AND EDUCATION:

GOAL 8: Gang-involved and at-risk youth have access to meaningful employment opportunities.

PARENT SUPPORT CIRCLES:

GOAL 9: Parents/guardians of youth in gangs or youth at risk of gang involvement have access to support through parent support circles.

CONNECTIONS AMONG YOUTH AND THEIR COMMUNITIES

GOAL 10: Gang-involved, affiliated, or at-risk youth feel connected to their community.

MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTIONS SUPPORT

GOAL 11: Existing appropriate mental health and or addictions services are made accessible to gang involved, affiliated, or at-risk youth. Challenges of cognitive impairment are recognized and programs adapt as necessary to be inclusive.

PUBLIC EDUCATION

GOAL 12: To disseminate accurate information regarding gangs among youth and the public at large, as well as raising awareness of the various prevention and intervention programs and services within Winnipeg.

THEORY OF CHANGE:

All the goals that are listed throughout the strategy are short-term solutions to a long-term problem. By achieving these goals in the interim we will be able to move forward on changing systems that create gang involvement as an option for young people in our city.

By using the Theory of Change model, we are able to show how these interim or crisis-based goals and action items will help to create larger social change in the long term. Figure 1 is representative of what young people currently experience. While some young people are able to overcome various barriers to accessing recreation, mentorship, employment, and other resources and services, many youth are not. Those youth who are unable break through barriers are much more likely to join gangs.

In Figure 2, youth who were before unable to access services have now, with the help of the gang strategy, developed the ability to break down the barriers that previously kept them from accessing necessary and desired services. GAIN has also become the barrier to youth gang involvement.

Figure 1: What Is Currently Happening

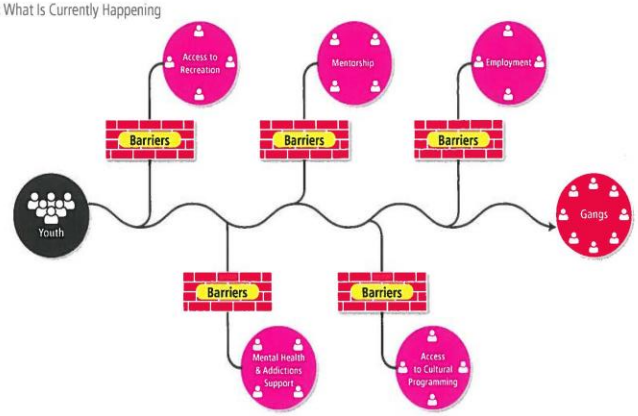


Figure 2: Envisioned future with implementation of gang strategy

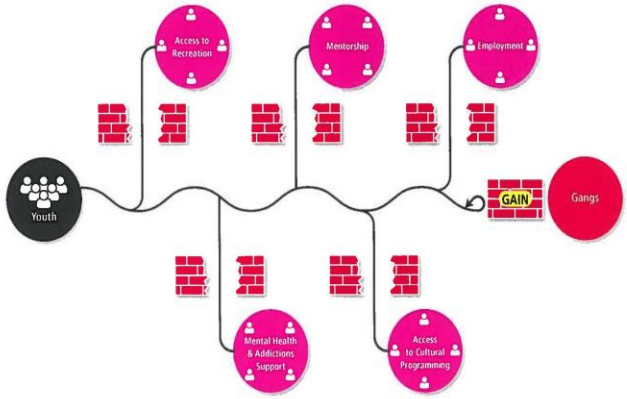


Figure 3: Bridging the Gaps – Theory of Change

