

COMMUNITY RESPONSE TO SOUTH ASIAN YOUTH VIOLENCE

INTEGRATED ACTION PLAN

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PREFACE

The objective of the Group of Ten was “to develop, adopt, and promote an integrated action plan to reduce the incidence of South Asian youth violence”. This imperative, one that we believe is shared by all in our community and society, did not imply that we (i.e., the Group of 10) could stop the violence that is occurring on a regular basis within the South Asian community. The emergence and continuation of youth violence in our community and society as a whole is too multi-faceted to arrive at simple, short-term solutions.

Yet, we have lost too many of our young people over the past two decades. We believe it is time to initiate a comprehensive approach to achieve this important objective. The integrated plan that we have developed is transformative in nature. The plan focuses on addressing the number of preconditions and conditions within our community that push our youth toward violence and sometimes a criminal lifestyle. Much of our recommended strategy is preventative in nature. The programs and initiatives are intended to provide our youth with the awareness, skills and self-esteem needed to develop positively in our community. We also believe we have an opportunity to support youth who are at risk for, or involved in violence, and outline three programs aimed at providing immediate help and guidance to those in need.

We are confident that if we work together as a community, with the support of government and others, we can successfully achieve our goal of greatly reducing the loss of our youth to violence in the future.

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Background to Group of 10 Project

Over the recent years, community and government leaders began to take notice of the growing level of violence and crime occurring within the South Asian community. Over the past two decades nearly 100 South Asian youth have been killed as a result of criminal violence over the past two decades, and the numbers continue to mount. In June 2002, several police forces organized a Forum on Indo Canadian Violence to initiate a dialogue among community, religious and political leaders, and parents and youth from the South Asian community about the emerging levels of violence and crime. In 2003, The Department of Canadian Heritage commissioned a focus group study jointly with Strategic Research and Analysis to research the problem of violence and serve as a baseline for the design, development and delivery of intervention programs and services to the impacted communities.

The resulting report, **South Asian-based Group Crime in British Columbia (1993 - 2003)**, provided a detailed examination of the incidence and nature of violence in the South Asian community. The report concluded that the violence was linked with the formation of small groups of South Asian young men who were engaged in some level of criminal activity. The report suggested that a growing number of South Asian youth were at risk for embracing a criminal lifestyle, and that this lifestyle involved the use of violence. The report's first recommendation was that an "Integrated Regional Plan" be developed with specific recommendations to address youth violence and group crime in the South Asian community in the Greater Vancouver Area.

Concurrent with the completion and release of this report, several community efforts were already being initiated to help contend with the escalating violence among South Asian youth. In addition, a Lower Mainland Indo-Canadian Gang Police Task Force was reconstituted to focus on the enforcement aspect of this problem.

Notwithstanding the valuable efforts undertaken by numerous community leaders, agencies and volunteers, the Department of Canadian Heritage, in consultation with community leaders, determined that a more integrated approach, as recommended in the research report, was vital to addressing the problem. In May, 2005, the decision was made to sponsor the formation of a community task group, referred to as the Group of 10, and ask them to formulate and adopt a unified response to the problem of escalating youth violence within the South Asian community.

B. Purpose of the Project

Thus, the goal of this project, as established by Canadian Heritage, was to enable a committee of individuals from within the South Asian community to review all available information regarding the problem of violence and group crime within their community and identify a more integrated approach to address this growing concern. This 'Integrated Action Plan' would serve as a guide for the implementation of initiatives and allocation of funding aimed at reducing the numbers of South Asian youth who are participating in a criminal lifestyle and engaging in acts of violence in the Greater Vancouver area.

C. Formation of the Group of 10

The process to form the Group of 10 began with the appointment of a Facilitator to help coordinate the nomination and selection process and to facilitate the deliberations of the Group. Dr. Larry Axelrod, Senior Consultant with The Neutral Zone Coaching and Consulting Services, was contracted to provide these facilitation services.

In a collaborative effort involving Dr. Axelrod and the Department of Heritage, a Call for Nominations was released the week of June 12th, 2005, which called for members of the South Asian Community who reside in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia to participate as volunteers in a committee being organized to develop, adopt and promote an integrated action plan to reduce the incidence of South Asian youth violence. All interested persons were invited to submit nominations for themselves or others, and were advised that members of the Group would be selected based on a nominee's availability to participate in the project as well as the goal of ensuring that the Group represented the "diversity of the South Asian community in the Lower Mainland."

A total of twenty-seven nominations were received by the closing date of July 8, 2005. The final Group of 10 was selected based on a nominee's availability to participate and the stated goal of ensuring committee diversity in terms of gender, age, city of residence, religious affiliation, and marital and family status. The final Group consists of an equal number of women and men, with ages ranging from 24 to 70, all of whom reside in cities with substantial South Asian populations in the Lower Mainland. The Group members brought experience in education, policing, criminal justice, community activism, academics and participation in various aspects of South Asian community life.

All members of the Group agreed to participate under the following commitments:

- Length of Commitment: July 2005 - November 2005 for committee work; follow-up time to support the presentation, distribution and implementation of the plan.
- Confidentiality: All information, perspectives and ideas offered by Group Members during its deliberations will not be shared with anyone outside of the Group without express permission of the Group.
- Community-Focus: The Group's objective is focused on developing a community-based response to South Asian youth violence, and not the task of enforcement.
- Conflict of Interest: Individuals have been selected to the group as community members and not as representatives of agencies or organizations to which they may belong. All members agree to solely consider the interests of the community at large in their deliberations and not the interests or goals of any current or prospective agency, organization or community group.
- Consensus: The Group will function under a consensus style framework in considering and adopting components of the integrated plan.
- Commitment: Members will be required to participate in all Group meetings in an open and constructive manner, and to support the Group's work by reading all background materials and engaging in research or other activities needed to support the Group's deliberations.

D. Review of Group of 10 Process

We began our deliberations by reviewing a variety of research studies and reports that examined the experiences of South Asian youth in the Lower Mainland and the rise of youth participating in a criminal lifestyle and violence within this community. Consistent with the project's objective (i.e., to develop and adopt a community-based plan to reduce South Asian group crime and violence), we focused our efforts on trying to understand the preconditions and conditions that lead to the choice of these youth to engage in a criminal lifestyle and in violence, and not issues related to enforcement.

We recognized from the outset that the great majority of residents of the Lower Mainland of South Asian ancestry are law-abiding, productive members of the British Columbian and Canadian community. However, we know that the number of South Asian youth choosing a criminal lifestyle and engaging in violence has increased over the past 20 years. Furthermore, we believe that the loss of any members of our community to violence and crime is inconsistent with the values and desires of the various cultures embraced by the South Asian peoples.

The studies we reviewed included the report commissioned by Canadian Heritage in 2004 that examined the nature of violence and crime in the South Asian community (Tyakoff) and a study that explored the needs and views of young South Asian Women regarding their experiences growing up in the Fraser Valley. In addition to these research-based studies, we reviewed other academic articles, numerous media reports regarding these issues as well as information received from several community agencies and groups that had been developing and offering programs aimed at reducing youth criminality and violence. We also gathered input from informal discussions with members of the South Asian community and from individuals who have been directly impacted by or involved in criminal activity and violence.

Based on this information and our own experiences as members of the South Asian community living in the Lower Mainland, we first assessed the roots of South Asian Youth violence. This assessment resulted in developing several key 'Statements of Opportunity' as a means of specifying the issues to be addressed by an integrated action plan. We then considered the programs that are currently in place as well as initiatives that have been proposed in terms of their likelihood of being effective in addressing these roots of criminality and violence.

We next developed a set of criteria that would serve as a basis to select the initiatives that would become part of the recommended action plan. These criteria enabled us to assess each initiative, and the overall plan, based on a shared set of principles and goals. We developed the final recommendations after considering a broad range of initiatives and activities that met all the inclusion criteria and were viewed as most likely to foster a reduction in the level of violence within the South Asian youth community.

In this report, we review each step of our deliberation process and conclude by presenting our recommendation for an Integrated Action Plan.

II. ANALYSIS OF THE ROOTS OF SOUTH ASIAN YOUTH VIOLENCE

A. Background

Immigration of South Asian community to Canada and Lower Mainland

Immigrants from South Asia began arriving in Canada and the Lower Mainland of British Columbia in the early 1900s. This predominately male population, mostly Punjabi speaking Sikhs, worked mainly in the lumber and construction industries, including railroad construction. The South Asian community in Canada remained relatively small and homogenous throughout the early and middle 1900s because of restrictive immigration laws that prohibited Asian and Indian migration. During this period of small and concentrated populations there were few, if any, official records of criminality or violence within the South Asian community.

A large immigration boom in the 1970s and 1980s dramatically increased the South Asian population in BC, with many choosing to reside in the Lower Mainland. In fact, the number of South Asians in Canada more than tripled from 223,000 in 1981 to 917,000 in 2001, primarily due to immigration. Most of these immigrants emanated from India (47%), Sri Lanka (13%) and Pakistan (12%). In 2001, South Asians accounted for 8% of the Vancouver metropolitan area population, and 13% of the population residing in Abbotsford.

South Asians brought with them a large diversity of languages, customs and religious beliefs. For example, in the 2001 Census, approximately 30% of South Asians said they were Sikh, 28% Hindu, 23% Muslim, 8% Catholic, 7% another religion and 3% reported having no religion. Interestingly, the South Asian population in the Lower Mainland has a higher percentage of individuals reporting to be Sikh, (90% in Abbotsford, BC, 60% in Vancouver and Victoria) as contrasted with Toronto where approximately 60% of South Asians reported being Hindu or Muslim.

History of Discrimination and Racism Targeted Toward South Asian Residents

Early arrivals to the Lower Mainland from South Asian experienced regular incidents of overt racism and discrimination. Incidents seemed to increase during the 1970s and 1980s, when large numbers of new immigrants arrived in the Lower Mainland. Racist remarks were commonly made toward South Asian immigrants and, in particular, South Asian youth. South Asians also experienced many forms of systemic racism. Barriers were encountered that restricted the personal and professional growth of many South Asians in their newly adopted country and community. For instance, opportunities to work in the professions achieved in their home countries were blocked in many cases by barriers put in place by mainstream Canadian society. Discriminatory practices left many South Asian families struggling to maintain harmonious and financially-secure lives in Canada and the Lower Mainland of British Columbia.

Complicating our integration into Canadian society, many South Asian families tried to maintain the cultural practices and traditions they followed prior to immigrating to Canada, even though some of these practices conflicted with the norms and values practiced by the dominant culture in Canadian society (e.g., clothing, religious practices, marriage traditions, roles of males and females in the family and community).

These experiences left many South Asians, and, in particular, South Asian youth, feeling uncertain about their place in Canadian society. Although the amount of overt racism appears to have been reduced in recent years, both systemic and direct racism then and now has contributed to continued marginalization, stereotyping as well as mistrust by many South Asians of mainstream society.

History of Violence and Criminality in South Asian Community

Up until the early 1980s, there was very little evidence of members of the South Asian community in the Lower Mainland engaging in a criminal lifestyle and/or violence. The violence that was occurring in families and the community was often suppressed or denied within the community. Community awareness toward, and recognition of, the growing levels of crime and violence in the South Asian population appears to have begun in the late 1980s. In the ensuing years, nearly 100 South Asian young men (ages 18 - 30) have been the victims of deadly violence, with ten murders occurring within the past twelve months.

According to police and media reports, murders have occurred in the middle of rush hour traffic, at large wedding receptions, at nightclubs, in movie theatres, and in upper-middle class neighbourhoods. In some notable cases, perpetrators of crimes and acts of violence received so much media and community attention that they reached hero status. To some in the South Asian community, these perpetrators seem to be revered for their daring acts of violence and their defiance against mainstream Canadian society. Victims and perpetrators of these acts seem to have come from all socio-economic backgrounds, some growing up in highly affluent families.

B. Preconditions and Conditions Contributing to a Criminal Lifestyle and Violence

To determine what initiatives are most likely to be effective in addressing youth violence, and the participation of youth in a criminal lifestyle, we reviewed the available research and listened to the perspectives of community leaders, service providers and impacted individuals. We identified the following factors, organized under four main themes, as contributing in some way to the choice of youth to adopt a criminal lifestyle and to use violence as a means of resolving disputes.

Historic and Current Contextual Factors

- The marginalization of South Asian people by mainstream society (experience of being considered as 2nd class citizens) resulting in feelings of anger and despair, and desire to fight the mainstream. This marginalization has also had the effect of increasing tensions within the South Asian community, which in turn can be viewed as contributing to violence within families and the community.
- The experience of 'classism' within the community and the roots of the caste system that exist in certain ancestral communities.
- Maintenance of 'village' mentality from historic roots; a time when violence was an accepted way of resolving disputes between families and communities.

- Lack of integration of South Asian community into the mainstream Canadian society, which involved many South Asian families attempting to limit their own and their children's interactions with non-South Asian Canadians.
- Growth of South Asian population beginning in the 1970s resulting in more internal competition among families for power, money and prestige, as well as immigration of more traditional Sikhs, resulting in differences in belief systems within the Sikh portion of the South Asian community. This immigration pattern also led to the growth of economic inequality within the South Asian community resulting in a more fractured community.
- Accessibility to crime and drugs, unique to the Lower Mainland.
- Lack of acceptance, trust and regard for the Canadian Justice system.
- Movement of successful South Asian 'role models' into the mainstream community resulting in them being distanced from the South Asian community.

Family, Schools and Community Life

- Learned belief that violence is an acceptable, and culturally-sanctioned, means of resolving disputes. This learning takes place through numerous ways including:
 - Observing role models at home and in the community engage in physical violence as means of dealing with family, cultural, or religious disputes.
 - Misunderstanding of the role of violence in the history and beliefs of Sikhism (i.e., considered a last resort means of fighting for justice and fairness, and not a valid means of achieving power, financial success or status).
- Lack of healthy attachment and connection between some youth and their parents, formed by a lack of emotional support, an authoritative environment and an absence of open and honest parent-child communication in some South Asian families. This environment does not allow youth to explore their individual and cultural identities and develop a positive sense of self within the broader Canadian community.
- Absence of emotional security and structure, particularly for boys, in family life;
 - Boys experience a very unstructured, permissive and forgiving environment,
 - Girls experience a very structured, controlled, and unforgiving environment.
- Lack of involvement in schools and education system by many parents. Anecdotal evidence suggests that many South Asian children fall behind expected learning levels at early ages in terms of numeracy skills and literacy, and that many youth who engage in violence experienced academic difficulties in school.
- Lack of training in 'peaceful' means of addressing and resolving disputes.
- Lack of alternatives, beyond the Temples, for community connection.
- The fragmented nature of the South Asian community, including the fact that the leadership within the temples has not been able to meet the needs and concerns of South Asian youth within the changing South Asian and Canadian cultural milieu.

Cultural Beliefs and Values

- Importance of status, reputation and image in South Asian culture, fostering the use of violence as a means of saving face, earning respect and deterring further violence.
- Lack of openness to different perspectives regarding other cultures and traditions.
- Importance of financial success and the accumulation of wealth.
- Due to fear of stigmatization, parents and youth are often reluctant to acknowledge problems when they exist as well seek help from community resources.
- Loss of a 'moral compass,' and the accepted use of less than ethical means of pursuing and achieving power, money, and status by some South Asian people.
- Lack of accurate understanding of religious history and the true meaning of Sikhism, resulting in misguided perceptions regarding the acceptability of violence.

Role of Media

- Lack of positive role models portrayed within the community and by the media.
- Sensationalistic coverage of South Asian 'gangsters' that contributes to the stereotyped perception of South Asian youth as violent. This perception, in turn, can contribute to use of violence due to taunting and self-fulfilling prophecy.

C. Statements of Opportunities

Our review of the above factors led us to develop the following statements that highlight the key needs to be addressed if we are to reduce the levels of South Asian youth participating in criminal lifestyles and using violence as a means of dealing with disputes.

Opportunity Statement #1

The need to prevent and reconcile cultural conflicts occurring within South Asian families, which create family environments that push youth toward finding individual identity and social connection from clusters of other youth who may be engaging in criminal activity and violence.

Opportunity Statement #2

The need to support the development of academic and life skills of South Asian youth in order to help prevent youth who are experiencing difficulties at home or in school from adopting a criminal lifestyle.

Opportunity Statement #3

The need to redress the learned belief among certain members of the South Asian community that violence is a valid and morally-justifiable means of achieving, maintaining and protecting success, power, status and reputation.

Opportunity Statement #4

The need to create a safe and trusted support system to help youth currently drawn to or involved in a criminal lifestyle to transition to a safer and more productive life.

III. REVIEW OF CURRENT AND PROPOSED COMMUNITY-BASED PROGRAMS

We received information regarding a number of current and proposed community-based initiatives aimed at reducing the level of criminal activity and violence in the South Asian youth community. Consistent with our mandate, we outline here initiatives focused on addressing the preconditions and conditions leading to criminality and violence, and not programs that deal with the issues involved in enforcement. Nearly all of these efforts have been implemented by volunteers from within the South Asian community.

We wish to acknowledge and commend the organizations, groups and individuals who have undertaken these efforts and pay tribute to the host of volunteers who have contributed their time to helping our youth and families. These include the following groups and projects: A Community That Cares, CORSA, MOSAIC, PICS, SEYVA, SSOLM, South Asian Interactive Society, South Asian Youth Alliance, Team IZZAT, UNITED, VIRSA, West Coast Sikh Youth Alliance.

Recreation and Recognition Programs

Several sports programs have been organized and running in several localities offering South Asian youth an alternative to hanging out on the streets. A youth awards program has been established to recognize success for South Asian youth in academics and volunteering.

Intervention and Guidance Programs

Youth mentorship programs have been implemented in some schools in the Lower Mainland. These programs offer South Asian youth information and guidance on how to make good choices for their lives at either a group level or in one-on-one mentorship relationships.

Parent education programs have been piloted to help South Asian parents learn how to understand the cultural conflict that may be occurring with their children.

A job skills and employment program is currently being offered that provides a select number of South Asian youth assistance in finding and succeeding in a job.

A 24-hour Help Line has been proposed that is intended to offer South Asian parents and youth being impacted by crime and violence a confidential resource to discuss issues and challenges.

Public Awareness and Education Programs

Several community resources have been developed to provide members of the South Asian community information and guidance on community life in the Lower Mainland.

Public service advertisements are currently being developed to promote positive awareness in order to encourage youth to stay away from a criminal lifestyle and violence.

IV. CRITERIA FOR DETERMINING AND DELIVERING COMPONENTS OF INTEGRATED ACTION PLAN

As a means of guiding the elements of the Integrated Action Plan, we established a set of criteria upon which we evaluated each initiative as well as the overall integrated model of service delivery. We recommend that these criteria be used as a basis for funding decisions related to all future programs and initiatives.

- **Transformative** – A starting premise we must all accept is that certain ways of thinking and acting in our community are inconsistent with the goals of positive integration and sustaining a peaceful and harmonious community. Therefore, we must change this way of thinking and acting if we are to be successful in our effort to reduce youth violence and criminality.
- **Accountable** – Mechanisms must be put in place to track and evaluate program, and individuals and groups involved in planning, adopting and implementing the program must be held accountable for the achievement of expected outcomes.
- **Transparent** – The process of decision-making, the reasons for allocating funds, the implementation plan, and the evaluation method must all be open to scrutiny from all stakeholders.
- **Evidence-based** – Program must have a basis in theory, research or practical experience that supports its potential effectiveness.
- **Effective** - Program must be viewed as addressing, either directly or indirectly, a root cause of youth violence as defined in the Opportunity Statements.
- **Culturally-sensitive** – Program must be designed and delivered in a manner that is non-judgement, non-discriminatory and respectful of “meeting people where they are at.”
- **Community-based** – Program must involve the South Asian community at each stage of the planning, adopting and implementation process.
- **Inclusive** – Program must reach out to, and be accessible by, all relevant stakeholders.

V. THE INTEGRATED ACTION PLAN

A. Integrated Model of Program Delivery

The Group of 10 was established with two primary goals. One goal was to identify the programs and initiatives that are needed to reduce the level of South Asian youth violence. The corollary objective was to identify a method of 'integrating' the community response to South Asian youth violence in order to enhance the breadth and effectiveness of these efforts (i.e., avoid service duplication, enable agencies to build on strengths).

We commend the organizations that have been and continue to provide culturally-sensitive interventions aimed at addressing issues important to the South Asian community, including programs attempting to reduce youth violence. We believe that these efforts need to be greatly expanded, but in a manner that ensures maximum impact as well as optimal use of, and accountability for, the spending of community and government resources. We also believe that the success of this Integrated Action Plan will require support from all levels of government.

Thus, to achieve the objectives of program integration, expansion, effectiveness and accountability, we recommend the creation of the **South Asian Youth and Family Integration Strategy (SAYF)** for the Lower Mainland. The concept of 'Integration' in this Strategy has a two-fold meaning. First, it reflects the goal of integrating the efforts aimed at reducing the incidence of youth violence and criminality within the South Asian community. Second, it recognizes the relationship between South Asian integration into Canadian society and the emergence of South Asian youth violence and criminality.

Objective

The overall objective of SAYF will be to facilitate, coordinate and monitor the community response to South Asian youth violence. Thus, SAYF will provide the unifying mechanism to oversee and guide the implementation of programs and initiatives intended to reduce the incidence of South Asian youth adopting a criminal lifestyle and engaging in violence, and support the positive integration of South Asian families and youth residing in the Lower Mainland into Canadian society.

Structure

We recommend that SAYF function under a Board that consists of eight to ten members of the South Asian community along with representatives from all three levels of government. We understand that this partnership structure is working well to support parallel efforts involving contributions from the community and the various levels of government.

We suggest that the SAYF Board represent the diversity of the South Asian community in the Lower Mainland. We also believe that the SAYF Board should be a non-political body whose role is to provide an objective mechanism for strategic facilitation, the allocation of resources and the evaluation of program effectiveness. Therefore, we recommend that South Asian members on the Board be independent of any organizations that may receive funding from SAYF, and that all members not be currently sitting on, or running for, a provincial or federal executive. We also recommend that at least one seat be designated for a youth member (i.e., 18 years or younger).

The Board will be responsible for:

- Confirming and managing the initial implementation of the Strategy outlined in this report.
- Requesting and adjudicating proposals from service agencies for programs and initiatives to be implemented under the Strategy.
- Developing a method for evaluating the success of programs and initiatives
- Facilitating the coordination of community and government efforts.
- Hiring an Executive Coordinator to support the activities of the Board as well as be the coordinating resource for community projects.

Process

The first step of the process will be to establish the initial membership of the SAYF Board. We recommend that the South Asian members of the Board be nominated and selected using a similar process as the one used to recruit the Group of 10. This process would involve members of the South Asian community nominating individuals to serve on the Board, and that an independent review process be implemented for final selection.

Once established, the SAYF Board will finalize its terms of reference and recruit and hire the Executive Coordinator who will run the daily operations of SAYF. They will also confirm the vision, mission and core objectives of the Strategy, and meet with agencies already providing important services in the community.

Funding

We recommend that SAYF receive a five-year commitment, with an annual funding level that will fully support the operational needs of SAYF and ensure the implementation of all the programs recommended in this report. We recommend that Canadian Heritage and the Government of Canada, consistent with the role that it has played in funding the Tyakoff report and the Group of 10 processes, fund the initial set-up and operational needs of SAYF. We look to the Government of Canada to provide program funding to support the implementation of the specific programs recommended in this report. We also see an important role for the Province of British Columbia and encourage the Province to also support the success of SAYF by contributing both core and project funding for initiatives that typically fall under provincial jurisdiction.

We envision that the initial funding level would need to cover costs associated with:

- (a) The recruitment of the Board,
- (b) The hiring of the Executive Coordinator,
- (c) The development of the Vision, Mission and Core Objectives,
- (d) The development of a website for SAYF,
- (e) The funding needed to support the recommended components of the Strategy outlined in the next section of this report.

B. Recommended Programs and Initiatives

1. One-to-One Youth Mentorship

A mentoring program is recommended as one component of the overall strategy. Successful mentoring can provide needed life, social and academic skills that may be lacking in some South Asian youth. Mentorship can be designed in a manner that can address the needs expressed in all four Opportunity Statements. It enables successful South Asian adults to pass on their knowledge and skills to future generations.

In general, a mentorship program would involve linking South Asian youth perceived to be struggling with identity issues due to the conflicts between the cultures within and outside the home with a South Asian adult who has had that similar experience and successfully overcome it. Youth may be identified through the schools or through the Help Line described later in this report.

The National Mentoring Centre notes mentoring can improve a youth's academic standing, reduce risky behaviours, and improve his/her development emotionally and socially. The Centre reviewed research on mentoring and found "well-designed mentoring programs produced much greater impacts on the lives of the youth than poorly designed mentoring programs." According to research (i.e., Meta-analytic review by DuBois, Holloway, Valentine and Cooper, "Effectiveness of mentoring programs for youth, *American Journal of Community Psychology, 2003*) cited by the Centre, well designed mentoring programs including the following:

- ongoing training for mentors,
- structured activities for mentors and youth as well as expectations for frequency of contact,
- mechanisms for support and involvement of parents, and
- monitoring of overall program implementation.

We believe that mentors should be volunteers from the community and that student participation must be voluntary. To implement this program, we recommend that a single agency be selected to manage the mentoring program throughout the Lower Mainland and be provided with funding for the training and coordination of the volunteer mentors.

More specifically, we envision that the program would enable school staff (teachers, administrators or child care workers) to identify a youth who would benefit from a mentoring relationship and submit a referral to the mentoring agency. A youth, as well as his/her parents, through school staff, should also be able to request a mentor. In addition, a youth and/or a parent on behalf of a youth can self-identify through direct contact with the mentoring agency or through the Help Line that can have links with the agency managing the mentorship program.

For the program to be effective, research suggests that, at a minimum, mentors should get together with their mentees once per week for one or two hours. Time together could be spent after school or on the weekends, or during school hours, depending on the needs of the youth. If the mentoring takes place during school hours, the cooperation of businesses would also be required, as the mentor may need permission

to amend his/her work hours. Businesses who allow time-off for mentors should be recognized for their community involvement, possibly through some type of media release. The mentoring agency could work with businesses in the Lower Mainland to encourage their support.

Transparency within the mentoring program is necessary. How mentors are selected and also the type of training provided needs to be open to scrutiny to ensure the best interests of the youth are maintained. Criminal record checks and extensive interviews would need to be conducted when selecting volunteer mentors. Culturally-sensitive training is essential. Trainers should have prior experience in mentoring or supervision and be available to address critical issues that may arise. Legal and ethical obligations would need to be taught. Training should enable mentors to address life, social and academic needs. Mentors should be available, at a minimum, for a whole school year, at least one or two hours per week. Regular de-briefing for mentors is advisable to ensure critical issues are addressed (such as confidentiality issues that may arise from time to time.) The mentoring agency may also want to consider developing opportunities for mentors and mentees to participate in group activities.

We recommend that the mentoring program be evaluated regularly to ensure identified youth are being provided with quality mentors and benefiting from the program. The mentoring agency should liaise regularly with teachers, administrators, parents and the mentees to ensure quality. The SAYF Board should require the mentoring agency to submit regular reports documenting the outputs and outcomes of the program.

Under the proposed SAYF Board, all agencies interested in providing mentoring services should be invited to submit proposals to manage this program. To avoid a duplication of services and promote efficiency, we suggest that one agency be selected to develop and coordinate the mentoring program for the Lower Mainland. The SAYF Board may wish to have the program initially piloted in several schools across the Lower Mainland and then expand the program as resources allow.

Funding

We recommend that the initial SAYF budget include funding for the implementation of this program. Agencies that can contribute to the funding of the program, thereby reducing SAYF costs, should be given preference as long as they meet all the criteria established for coordinating the program. We envision that program costs include expenses for training processes and materials, wages for an agency-based Program Coordinator, operational costs, and advertising to advise schools and families of the program as well as to attract potential mentors (i.e. pamphlets.)

2. Youth Violence and Criminality Prevention Course

Modeled on the G.R.E.A.T. (Gang Resistance Education and Training) program developed in the U.S. (Department of Justice), we recommend the development and implementation of a specialized course aimed at teaching youth the awareness and skills needed to resist adopting a criminal lifestyle and engaging in violence. A central focus of the program would be to teach youth the reality of living a criminal lifestyle and the ultimate consequences of gang involvement and violence. This program is viewed as addressing the issues expressed in Opportunity Statements 1 and 3. This program should be offered to culturally diverse groups of students in a school setting.

This program would involve the delivery of a 9-week curriculum targeted at students in grades 6 - 9. In contrast to the G.R.E.A.T. program which uses uniformed police officers to deliver the program, we recommend that our program be taught by individuals who have the life experience to connect with South Asian and other youth. Potential facilitators include South Asian individuals who were formerly involved in a criminal lifestyle, as well as counselors, police officers, university students, community activists or other community members who would be able to learn the curriculum and effectively provide it to students in a classroom-type setting.

The lessons involved in the G.R.E.A.T. curriculum include:

1. **Introduction** - Students get acquainted with the program, each other and the instructor
2. **Crime, Victims and Rights** - Students learn about crimes, their victims and their impact on families, schools and the community.
3. **Cultural Sensitivity and Prejudice** - Students explore how cultural differences affect their school and community.
4. **Conflict Resolution (two lessons)** - Students are taught how to resolve conflicts without the use of violence.
5. **Meeting Basic Needs** - Students learn how to pursue their needs and desires without joining the criminal lifestyle.
6. **Drugs and Community** - Students are educated about drugs and how they can affect their health, lives and community.
7. **Responsibility** - Students examine the diverse responsibilities of people in their school and community.
8. **Goal Setting** - Students learn the need for goal setting and how to establish short and long-term goals.

Funding

We recommend that interested agencies and individuals be invited to submit proposals for the development and delivery of this program, and that SAYF fund the initial roll-out of the program. We would encourage community funds to be raised to support the ongoing delivery of the program.

3. Counselling, Transition Support and Peacemaking Program

We recommend the development and implementation of information, counselling and intervention support programs that can provide members of the South Asian community experiencing critical life challenges with timely information and guidance on a confidential basis.

Help-Line

One service would involve the development of a phone and email help line to be staffed by bi-lingual individuals trained in crisis intervention and counselling. Due to the uncertainty regarding utilization, we would envision the phone line to be initially staffed for a few hours each day, with the opportunity for callers to leave a message and have a counsellor call them back. Callers unable or unwilling to leave a message would be advised of the hours during which a counsellor would be available. Callers to this Help Line would be provided with confidential:

- Support to explore their challenges by a trained, skilled and culturally-sensitive listener,
- Information about community, social, school and government resources and supports,
- Guidance on positive and constructive approaches to address challenges.

Access to information should also be provided on the SAYF website, and counsellors could also respond to requests/questions submitted by email.

Transition Support

The second service of this program would involve providing counselling services to troubled youth looking for help either resisting or looking to transition out of participating in a criminal lifestyle. Counsellors could assist youth in assessing their options and provide youth with support in pursuing educational or employment opportunities and goals. We suggest that the counsellors providing this service would need to have the knowledge and life experience that would enable them to be successful working with youth in these situations. We would encourage SAYF to consider recruiting and training individuals who can connect with these youth 'where they are at' such as individuals that have had former experience in the criminal lifestyle.

Peacemaking Program

We believe there is an opportunity to reduce the use of violence by enabling youth who are confronted with conflict to resolve their differences through non-violent means. Therefore, we recommend the development of a confidential resource to act as an emergency conflict resolution team. This team would need to consist of individuals who have connections (in some capacity, such as family members, former 'crew' members, social leaders, religious leaders) to the youth involved in these potentially violence situations. This team could then be dispatched to "hot" spots between "warring" parties in an attempt to redirect the conflict toward a non-violent resolution. We understand this type of initiative has been implemented in other cities with success.

Funding

Although we leave the implementation plan for these initiatives to the SAYF Board, one approach would be to offer them as a direct program of the SAYF. The Help Line could be established at the SAYF Resource and Activity Centre (see Program 8). We envision that three full-time counsellors could be reasonable to launch these initiatives. They could share responsibility for staffing the Help Line while also providing the direct counselling services to youth in need across the Lower Mainland. They could also be asked to develop an implementation strategy for the Peacemaking service.

Alternatively, the SAYF Board could invite proposals from community agencies for developing and implementing these initiatives. We understand there is already a proposal for a help line as a coordinated effort between VIRSA and SDISS. We recommend that this proposal be passed on to the SAYF Board for consideration.

4. Academic Skills Program

There is considerable anecdotal evidence collected from South Asian educators that a large number of South Asian students both in elementary and secondary school are performing below expectations in regards to the Provincial Curriculum. The two primary areas where these deficits occur are in numeracy skills and literacy.

Considerable research has been conducted in the United States in regards to after school programs aimed at addressing these types of deficits. According to this research, after school programs have proven to be immensely effective as many researchers and experts confirm that these programs assist in keeping kids safe, improve academic achievement, and aid in relieving stress on working parents. Most importantly, the programs serve as violence prevention and intervention for our youth.

For instance, in Los Angeles, a UCLA evaluation of an after school program named LA's Best provided evidence that students who participated in this program had better school attendance and higher scores on literacy and numeracy standardized tests than those who did not participate in the initiative. Furthermore, the correlation between after school program participation and violence prevention was evident through joint studies performed by the *After School Programs: Keeping Children Safe and Smart*, US Departments of Education and Justice. The joint report showed that students in after school programs exhibit fewer behavioural problems, demonstrate better ability to manage and resolve conflicts, and display improved self-confidence. Other educational researchers, (e.g., Dr. Reginald Clark and Deborah Vandell), have confirmed that student participation in effectively operated after school programs results in improved academic achievement and better work habits.

Research has also determined that effective after school programs involved the use of structured activities and meet on a regular basis. Furthermore, these activities are designed to help youth develop new skills and provide remediation. Research suggests that not only do elementary students benefit from after school programs but middle school and high school students can benefit most from these programs.

Locally, we know that the after school hours are deemed critical for our children. For older youth, this time period is when juvenile crime and 'risky' behaviour most often take place. Specifically, the immediate hour after dismissal from school is when juvenile crime is reported to be at its peak. This is where after school programs for older youth can play a positive role during these important hours of the day by offering these youth an opportunity to learn and grow.

After school programs can offer youth learning support that is convenient and in an environment that is conducive to learning. These programs not only improve academic performance, which assists in self-esteem building, but can create a safe and worthwhile venue for children to experience community service, mentoring, and the development of life skills such as conflict resolution.

Thus, we recommend the development of an Academic Skills after school programs for South Asian Youth to be made available in different formats for youth at every development stage.

Pre-school - At this level the program would be designed to help children develop the necessary skills, in concert with parents, for success in kindergarten and beyond. The program can focus on the learning needs of the children, as well as on methods for parents to support their children's learning needs. We recommend that parents sign a contract as part of the program in which they agree to participate with their child in the after school program on a regular basis.

K - 7 - An after school program at these levels would be designed for children who have been recommended by the teacher or school counsellor because of a learning deficit. Specialists at the school or district level would be called in to work with these children to address these deficits. Again, for optimal success we recommend that parents participate in the program and attend the sessions with their children. This program should involve structured learning activities, meet on a regular basis and be tailored for the individual needs of participating students.

Grade 8 and 9 - As with the younger students, an after school program would be available for youth who have been identified by the teacher or school counsellor as having a learning deficit or behavioural challenge that appears to be interfering with their learning. At this level, the program should be designed to help students make the transition from elementary to secondary school easier.

We suggest these programs include the following general features. We believe the specific programs should be designed by specialists within the schools system, in collaboration with community leaders and the SAYF Board.

- Provide tutoring in basic grade level numeracy and literacy as well as homework assistance, and life skills training as needed.
- Run by school administration with the assistance of paid and volunteer staff as determined by School Districts and support agencies. We believe that parents, community activists, older youth among others should be allowed to support the delivery of these programs.
- Be offered 3 - 4 times per week between the hours of 3 p.m. and 5 p.m.
- Be offered in schools where there is a large number of South Asian students enrolled, while also making them accessible to all students in that school.
- Take place in schools where students can stay at their own schools without parents having to worry about transportation, or at local community centres, or where students/parents can become more familiar with their community and students can experience a change from their school environment

Funding

Due to uncertainty regarding jurisdictional issues, we recommend that an initial objective of the SAYF Board should be to develop an action plan for the implementation of these after school programs. We also believe that funding should be allocated toward developing new pre-school opportunities for South Asian youth.

5. Life Skills Training Program

Social learning theory and research provides evidence that children who are exposed to violence (increasing in our multi-media society), changing family situations and uncertainty about their futures will learn unhealthy ways of reacting to life's challenges and stresses. We believe that these influences are affecting the youth in our community. To counter these influences, we see the need to create opportunities for youth to acquire important life skills that may be neglected at home and in school in such areas as critical thinking, effective communication, decision making, and media literacy. We believe that this type of training will help youth avoid becoming unduly influenced or manipulated by social pressures, and as a consequence react adversely to difficult life situations. The proposed Life Skills Program may not address violence directly, but we believe it can help young people learn how to better assess their social situation and avoid the need to use violence.

The program would ideally be managed by a non-profit community organization that can provide the program in an accessible manner across the Lower Mainland. This organization must value diversity, be sensitive to the needs of young people from various cultures, and have been successful in implementing evidence based prevention programs. We believe this program should be based on a health-promotion model and encompass a community development approach. It could involve collaboration between schools and the community agency, or simply offered through the agency itself. The SAYF Board may also want to consider a way of integrating the Life Skills training with the Academic Skills program previously described.

We recommend that this type of program be facilitated by someone who can relate to youth and who the youth can relate to, such as a community-based Social Worker or Community Developer. The program must engage school age children, preteens and teens (tailored for different ages) from all backgrounds and we believe that diversity in the program is beneficial. The program can also follow the train the trainer concept in which interested youth who have taken the training can become Volunteer Leaders upon completion of the program and support the training of other children.

We recommend that the training program specifically cover topics including anger management, problem solving, assertiveness, balancing life/school/family, decision making, and self-esteem. We suggest that the program be targeted at youth who have been identified as low to medium risk and have demonstrated challenges in these topic areas, and particularly with issues related to violence.

Funding

We recommend that the initial SAYF budget include funding for this training and that interested community agencies be invited to submit proposals for the development and implementation of the training as a pilot project. We envision the program can be run by a single professional who travels to schools or community centres to offer the program. We suggest that the funding for such a program is consistent with the mandates of the Ministries of Health and Multiculturalism. We think that community funds could also be allocated to this program as it develops. Success of the program should be evaluated to determine future directions.

6. Parent Education Program

We have observed how South Asian youth violence and criminality can, in part, be linked to cultural conflicts occurring within the family environment between youth and their parents and grandparents. We believe that an important prevention program to support families involves providing South Asian parents support in learning how to parent in a positive manner within the Canadian context. We observe that many South Asian parents believe that "old ways" of parenting are effective and acceptable, and that in the Canadian context these ways can contribute to children disconnecting from their home and family environment. We also know that youth in Canada today have different concerns, challenges and lifestyles than children did in ancestral societies. The goal of this program is not to lay blame on parents, but to support and strengthen their awareness and skills so that they may guide their children's development in healthy and effective ways.

More specifically, a Parenting Education Program can help South Asian parents learn about critical relationship issues in the family such as the importance of healthy attachment, the stages of development that children go through, and the need to have open communication with children about their needs and goals. The program can empower parents to help their children deal with life's challenges and pressures in healthy ways, and let them know how important they are in their children's lives. Thus, this program will help normalize the parenting struggle for and break the myths and taboos they may hold about parenting in Western culture.

We believe that the program needs to be structured and designed in a manner that offer parents a safe and sensitive environment, an environment that allows them to not be afraid to talk about their fears and concerns. It also needs to be offered in parent's first languages, and be provided at no cost to promote participation and ensure that financial ability does not stop anyone from attending a course. We recommend that the course should initially be taught by trained professionals, and that volunteer instructors may be used as the program expands.

Funding

We recommend that this program be contracted to a community agency to manage, and that SAYF be provided initial funds to support the development and implementation of the program so that it can be offered in all communities across the Lower Mainland. We envision that the program can be offered in agency space, community centres or schools, as well as in the proposed SAYF Resource and Activity Centre (see Program 8). We suggest that interested agencies be invited to submit complete proposals for the coordination and implementation of the program and that previous experience providing this type of program be considered as one of the criteria in the selection process. We envision that funding for this program falls under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Children and Families.

7. Media Campaign and Media Watch Program

Media Watch Program

One concern we identified from our assessment of the roots of violence is the role that the media plays in creating stereotypes and contributing to cultural misunderstandings and conflict. We observe how news media often racializes violence when events involve individuals from minority groups. In response, we recommend that a media watchdog is needed to monitor and support the media's efforts to report stories in a culturally-sensitive and responsible manner. It could do so by monitoring news stories and providing additional information to set the record straight on important issues that have received biased or slanted coverage. We believe that an independent, aggressive and critical media are essential to an informed democracy. However, we also need to ensure that our community is fairly and accurately portrayed in the media.

Thus, we recommend that SAYF establish a media watch program with initial responsibility for the program being assigned to the SAYF Executive Coordinator. The EC could develop a media watch strategy in consultation with community leaders. One approach to developing this strategy would be to organize a conference of South Asian community members who regularly serve as media contacts and facilitate discussions toward the development of a common media strategy.

Positive Media Campaign

We believe that one way to address some of the challenges related to violence and crime within the South Asian community is through the development and implementation of a well-designed public media campaign. This campaign can promote a positive and constructive message to South Asian families and youth, as well as the public in general, on the strengths of our cultural diversity and positive ways to contribute to ones community and society. We believe that attitudinal change is needed within our community to support peaceful and positive integration in a manner that respects tradition while promoting behaviour change where needed. One model for this type of campaign is the efforts of MADD (Mothers against drunk driving) to stop drinking and driving.

During our process of deliberation, we received information about a media campaign being developed by A Community that Cares. We understand that two members of the South Asian youth community have partnered to create a large scale media campaign to promote positive awareness in order to encourage youth to stay away from a criminal lifestyle and violence. They plan to create TV, radio and print ads to run as public service announcements in partnership with DDB Canada. We were advised that they have previously produced an effective PSA ad on drinking and driving.

Funding

We understand that A Community That Cares had raised \$7,000 from the community as of mid-October and that they have an overall budget of \$40,000 for the campaign. We recommend that SAYF receive initial funding to fully support this project and immediately provide A Community That Cares with the necessary funding to complete and implement this campaign. SAYF should also request a proposal to expand this campaign in the future.

8. SAYF Resource and Activity Centre

For positive integration to occur, we believe that youth and families need to have a place to go for resources and recreation. We understand that there are existing community centres in all Lower Mainland communities, however many members of the South Asian community do not feel comfortable using these facilities due to a perceived lack of cultural sensitivity. For example, a number of these centres do not permit culturally-related activities.

We also understand that there are significant limitations on the space available currently in schools and community centres for sports and recreational activities. We support the continuation of sports programs currently being provided by groups such as UNITED and VIRSA, and understand they are hampered at times by limited access to space.

Thus, we believe it is imperative that a resource and activity centre be developed for the specific use of the South Asian community as part of our efforts to reduce the level of our youth adopting a criminal lifestyle and engaging in violence. We envision that this Centre would serve as a base of operations for SAYF, as well as provide a variety of space needs and recreational facilities needed for the South Asian community.

We propose that while the Centre would focus on the needs of the South Asian community, we believe it should be available and accessible to all youth and families, similar to the Jewish Community Centre in Vancouver. Therefore, the Centre will not only support the needs of the South Asian community, it will also offer opportunities for intercultural experiences and support the goal of positive integration into the community.

We are recommending that an initial Centre include the following features.

- A large gymnasium with equipment to support all types of sports (e.g., basketball, volleyball, soccer, floor hockey, etc.)
- A large multi-purpose room that can be used to house homework clubs, group mentorship programs, parent education classes, small celebrations, etc.
- A sound proof room for musical training and practices
- Two small conference/classrooms that can be used to deliver training programs and hold smaller group meetings.
- Several small rooms designed to support one-on-one counselling/mentoring.
- A kitchen
- An ice rink
- A resource room to provide written information about a variety of community services and programs, as well as internet access
- A 'Pioneer Heritage Hall' to showcase cultural artefacts from the early immigrants to Canada and BC and present information about the diverse and rich histories of the South Asian people.

Funding

We believe that the development of this Centre should be supported by the South Asian community, with support funding also coming from the initial budget given to SAYF. We envision the need for such a centre in several communities in the Lower Mainland due to the large geographic dispersion of the South Asian population across the Lower Mainland (e.g., Vancouver to Abbotsford). Yet, we recommend that one unifying Centre be initially developed and other centres be considered for development in the future.

To initiate this project, we propose that the SAYF Executive Coordinator be assigned responsibility to form a task group involving community leaders to develop a business plan for the Centre. We anticipate that the overall project would require approximately 10 - 25 million dollars, depending on the final design, to construct, operate, and maintain the facility for a period of five years. We understand that the India Cultural Centre in Richmond has offered to provide land to support this project.

Until the Centre is built, we recommend that SAYF find temporary space to serve as a base to support the implementation of the programs outlined in this Strategy.

9. Additional Recommended Initiatives

Community Based Participatory Action Research (PAR)

We believe that ongoing research into the factors related to youth violence and the methods of reducing this violence is important to meeting our goals. We recommend that the SAYF Board consider ways of supporting new research and that this research use the approach known as participatory action research (PAR). PAR involves and empowers participants in a manner that balances power between those who wield it and those who bear its consequences. By doing so, the production and use of knowledge is transformed into a collective enterprise with value to all participants.

PAR involves doing research with and for people, rather than doing research on them. The specific focus of PAR projects is on working with people to identify problems in practice, define and implement solutions, monitor the process of change, and evaluate the achievement of outcomes. Action research incorporates three elements, all of which contribute to both the process and the outcome, (a) participatory methods; (b) equality between researchers and participants; and (c) praxis, which includes reflection and action. The strength of action research lies in its ability to influence practice positively while systematically collecting data. Systematic feedback makes it possible to evaluate the accuracy of data and to change the process over time.

The following are guidelines to follow in implementing PAR projects:

- Honour the life circumstances of the people involved in the research
- Be sensitive and responsive to the values, cultures, and priorities of individuals and communities
- Codes of ethics and foundation principles for research projects should be developed in conjunction with communities involved in the research
- Research is to be responsive to identified community needs, and support those who have the most barriers or challenges in our community.
- Research is to be educational.
- The research goal is to improve fundamentally the lives of those involved, through structural transformation.
- The community is involved in controlling **the entire** research process.
- Trained researchers might be outsiders to the community, but must be committed learners in a process that leads to change rather than detachment.

We believe that PAR research projects could be developed to further investigate the 'roots' of youth violence as well as evaluate the effectiveness of the programs being established to reduce this violence. We encourage the SAYF Board to consult with specialists in PAR and develop projects to help support the goal of reducing youth violence through research as well as program implementation.

Incident Investigation Team

One final initiative we recommend for consideration is the creation of an incident investigation process and team to provide an independent and objective review of community incidents (e.g., in schools, parks, shopping malls) perceived to have cultural, racial or ethnic components. We observe that many misunderstandings have occurred in the response to past incidents and that this response may have contributed perpetuating stereotypes and future violence. We believe that an independent investigation into such incidents can shed insight into the factors that contribute to them arising and enable our institutions to develop more targeted prevention strategies. We envision this process to fall under the jurisdiction of the Attorney General, but leave decisions regarding placement and implementation to the SAYF Board.

VI. CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

The roots and overall strategy outlined in this report provide an extensive amalgamation of ideas, thoughts and programs designed to reduce the incidence of South Asian youth violence. As we proceed with implementation, we must keep in mind that the growing level of youth violence is a recent phenomenon; therefore, much of the information we can draw on is describing the concern in its early development. In addition, we need to be mindful that the great majority of South Asians residing in the Lower Mainland are law-abiding and productive members of our community and society.

Although much of our information about this concern is anecdotal, the awareness of the issue, and need for community mobilization to address the concern, could not be stronger. We understand that the *South Asian Youth and Family Integration Strategy* outlined in this report is the first of its kind in British Columbia, and that the design of the Strategy may be unfamiliar to many in the community. We believe that the Strategy, with its goals of community development and change, represent a unique opportunity to stem the proliferation of aggression among South Asian youth. A core component of the plan is to plant the seeds for long-term community enhancement through integration. The recommended programs, developed from a review of community research and through community consultation, are essentially instruments for social change that will support our existing institutions such as the family and school system as we pursue our common goals.

Furthermore, the creation of a Board to facilitate and monitor the Strategy will help to centralize the intervention and prevention efforts in a manner that is open to the community and supports the effective and efficient use of resources. Some may attempt to view these initiatives as instant cures or question the efficacy of such programs without the backbone of law enforcement. We want to reiterate that the goal is to mobilize our community and provide a guiding mechanism to support, expand, and coordinate the services being provided by the existing quality organizations already working with dedication and resolve on these issues. The success of the Strategy can be judged on how well the community continues to flourish without the violence and criminality that is harming the South Asian community in the Lower Mainland.

APPENDIX - BIOGRAPHIES OF GROUP MEMBERS

Kashmir Besla

I am the proud parent of a fourteen year old boy. I have been working in the counselling profession for over twelve years. Currently, I am working as a family counsellor at the Children's Foundation in Surrey. I am also in the process of completing my thesis for a Master's degree in Counselling Psychology through City University.

Rosy Deol

I have spent over eight years working on social justice and political issues in the Lower Mainland, including community development initiatives specific to South Asian and Asian communities. I live and work by the motto, "Every revolution needs an anthem."

Andrea Amritpal Dulay

I am an Indo-Canadian female, born in Vancouver and raised in Richmond, and am currently married with 3 children. I have taught for the Delta School District for 8 years at both the high school and elementary school levels. I have B.A., B.ED., and M.A. degrees from the UBC Education Department. I am currently working towards my Ph.D. in Education and am studying issues related to Indo-Canadian students learning patterns.

Avtar S. Gosal

I am a retired, long-term resident of the Lower Mainland and have been involved in supporting community issues for many years. I am currently the Vice President for the National Indo-Canadian Council, Vice President of the India Cultural Centre of Canada, and committee member of the Lower Mainland Sikh Societies. I have also held the position of General Secretary for the International Punjabi Society for over 25 years. I am a past president of the India Cultural Centre of Canada and the Vancouver Khalsa Diwan Society and was a member of the City of Vancouver Special Advisory Committee on Cultural Communities for 9 years.

Robinder Singh Sandhu

I was born, raised and educated in South Vancouver. After graduating from UBC, I returned to South Vancouver to teach at David Thompson Secondary School for 28 years, and 2 years at University Hill Secondary School. I have worked at the Ministry of Education for two years and was President of the B.C. Social Studies Teachers' Association. During my 30 years in education I have participated in four Provincial Curriculum revision processes. I have been active in promoting issues and concerns of Indo-Canadian students for over 34 years within the school system and most recently with various levels of government.

Sweetie Sanghera

I was born in India, grew up in England and married in Canada. I have been married for 20 years and have 4 children, 2 boys and 2 girls ranging from 13 - 18, all teenagers! I have worked in the non-profit field for over 10 years, and have been involved with the community that I live in on a social level and work level. Along with my family I have been involved with the Vancouver Police Soccer Team and Youth for 20 years. Currently, I am the Program Manager for Deafblind Services Society for BC.

Sepia Sharma

Coming to Canada in my late teens in 1987, I am currently married and have a 21/2 year old son. I have over 14 years of experience in community engagement and capacity building work and implemented a one of a kind Multilingual Information & Support Help Line 1992 for the growing diverse population of Lower Mainland. Since 2004, I have worked as a Community Developer and recently as a Regional Coordinator for Vancouver Coastal Health Falls & Injury Prevention program.

Harjit Singh

I have a degree from UCFV's Criminal Justice Program, and am currently working on my Master's degree in Criminology at SFU. I conducted an exploratory study of South Asian gangs in the Lower Mainland, the first study to show issues from the perspective of gang members.

Jet Sunner

I am 36 years old, married with a 3 year old son. I have been a RCMP Police Officer for 13 years, all my service in the Lower Mainland. Currently, I am a Patrol Supervisor on a Watch in Richmond. I have been involved in youth related projects during my entire career. I coached basketball for four years in West Whalley and am currently the team leader for Team Izzat - a program involving Police Officers in Richmond who volunteer their time to connect with youth

Gary Thandi

I am 30-years old, married with an 18-month old child. I obtained my Bachelor's Degree in Social Work in 2000 and am currently taking a part-time Master's Degree in Social Work. For the past 5 years, I have worked as an Adult Probation Officer in Abbotsford, BC, where I coordinate and facilitate group programs in spousal violence, substance abuse and anger management.