

Tsuut'ina Nation Community-Based Interventions Supporting Youth Involved, or at Risk of Being Involved, in the Justice System to Inform Delivery of Similar Programmes in Aotearoa New Zealand.

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Winston Churchill Trust Fellowship Report





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Bryan Ward

Tamaki Makarau 2024

Disclaimer

All views expressed in the report are the author's only and do not represent the views of the New Zealand Police, Ministry of Justice, Department of Corrections, Oranga Tamariki or any other New Zealand Government agency or department or that of the Tsuut'ina Nation/Tsuut'ina Nation Police Service.

Executive Summary

In 2024, as part of a Winston Churchill Fellowship, a study was conducted with the Tsuut'ina Nation Police Service (TNPS) in Alberta, Canada, focusing on community-based initiatives aimed at supporting youth aged 6 to 25 who are either involved in or at risk of entering the justice system. The objective of this Fellowship was to analyse the effectiveness of TNPS interventions in reducing youth justice involvement and to apply these insights to similar programs and strategies in Aotearoa, New Zealand.

TNPS interventions within the Tsuut'ina Nation employ holistic strategies, addressing not only legal challenges but also the social, emotional, and cultural dimensions of young individuals' lives. This approach acknowledges the deep intergenerational trauma experienced by the Tsuut'ina Nation as a result of colonization, alongside a historical mistrust of government institutions.

Active collaboration with the band (tribe), community members, and leaders has been vital in building trust and ensuring that all implemented programs are culturally relevant and widely accepted. Key factors contributing to reduced youth recidivism include strong support systems like mentorship, family involvement, TNPS's 'humanising of the badge' philosophy, and the cohesive strength of the community.

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Introduction

The purpose of this Winston Churchill NZ memorial trust fellowship report was to travel to Canada to observe the Tsuut'ina Nation/ Tsuut'ina Nation Police Service community-based interventions supporting youth involved or at risk of being involved, in the justice system to inform delivery of similar programmes in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Methodology

The methodology for my Winston Churchill Fellowship to the Tssut'ina Nation has involved conducting comprehensive interviews and discussions with staff at the Tsuut'ina Police Service, members of the Tsuut'ina Nation, and the Peacekeepers Court to gather firsthand insights into real-life experiences and practices influencing the nation's community and its relationship with youth. This qualitative research is further supported by a detailed analysis of crime data reports from the Tsuut'ina Police Service, an exploration of local issues through informal interviews, internet searches, and media sources, as well as a review of academic Indigenous research papers. Examination of developmental crime prevention and youth justice interventions that have impacted or been adopted by both the Tsuut'ina Nation and the broader Indigenous community in Canada.

The findings are derived through qualitative methods, including both formal and informal interviews with TNPS officers, staff, youth support services personnel, Tsuut'ina Nation community members, and local youth. Furthermore, TNPS program documentation and recorded outcomes have been reviewed to enhance the analysis.

Goals of Fellowship

The goal of the Winston Churchill Fellowship was to bring a fresh approach to community policing and youth engagement in Aotearoa/New Zealand by studying TNPS's model, which supports youth aged 6-25 who are involved or at risk of involvement in the justice system. TNPS has achieved worldwide recognition as a diverse, community-focused police service, located near Calgary.

By enhancing a Churchill-inspired approach in Aotearoa/New Zealand, this entails seeking innovative solutions and taking decisive action based on fresh perspectives. Indigenous principles—respect, community, balance, and stewardship—bring significant benefits to both communities and society. By integrating these values, communities can draw inspiration from the Tsuut'ina Nation's method of fostering strong and respectful relationships.

Key Issues in New Zealand

97% of young offenders aged 10-13 years have been subject to care and protection orders due to traumatic incidents. Chief Children's Commissioner Dr. Claire Achmad and grassroots leaders believe punitive measures will not effectively curb crime (1).

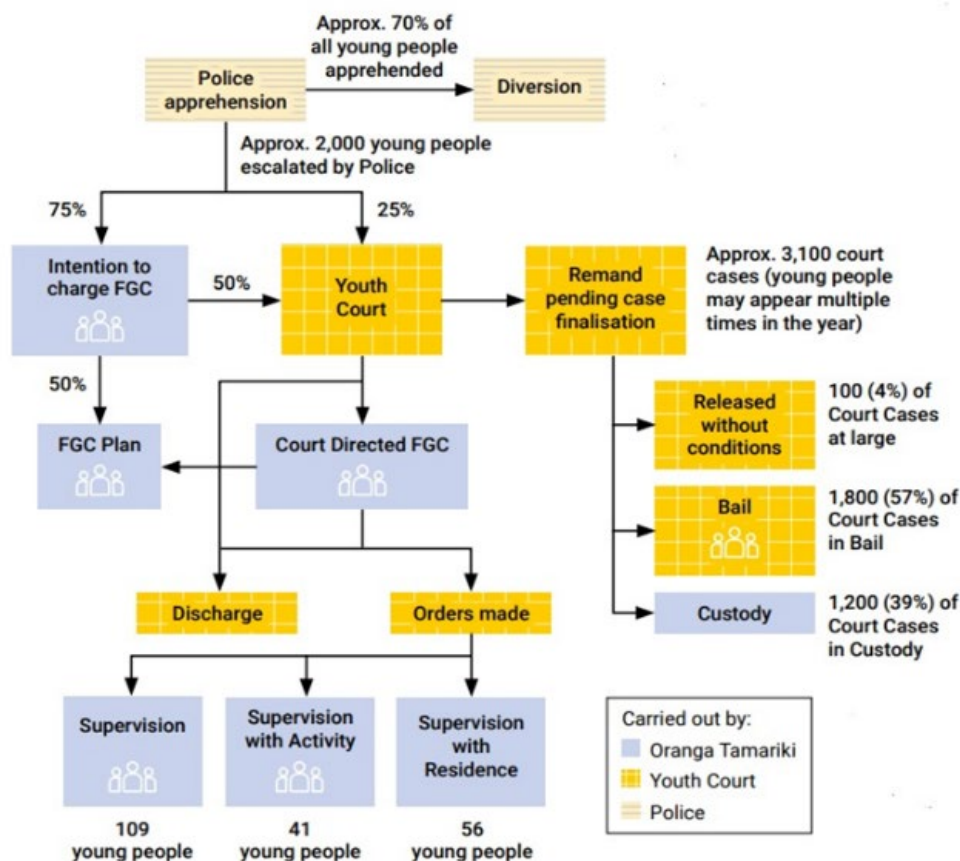
Māori Over-Representation: Māori account for 81% of youth in custody daily (2), and those aged 15-24 make up 40% of criminal apprehensions (3).

Increased Custody Placements: Reduced residence capacity led to an increase in overnight police custody placements from 154 in 2022/23 to 418 in 2023/24, with an estimated need for up to 173 custody beds by June 2025 (4).

Persistent Offending: There are currently 1,100 children and young people with serious and persistent offending behaviours (5).

State of Youth Justice System

The youth justice system in Aotearoa/New Zealand is experiencing increased youth crime, with more children and youth entering the system for the first time in the year ended June 2023



Developmental crime prevention, especially community-based interventions, are most effective when applied early in a child's life.

Sir Winston Churchill

The mood and temper of the public in regard to the treatment of crime and criminals is one of the most unfailing tests of the civilisation of any country. A calm and dispassionate recognition of the rights of the accused against the state and even of convicted criminals against the state, a constant heart-searching by all charged with the duty of punishment, a desire and eagerness to rehabilitate in the world of industry of all those who have paid their dues in the hard coinage of punishment, tireless efforts towards the discovery of curative and regenerating processes and an unfaltering faith that there is a treasure, if only you can find it in the heart of every person – these are the symbols which in the treatment of crime and criminals mark and measure the stored up strength of a nation, and are the sign and proof of the living virtue in it. (7)

Tsuut'ina Nation Police Service (TNPS)

The Tsuut'ina Nation has suffered immense intergenerational trauma and distrust of government agencies, making the task of addressing youth offending challenging. However, TNPS exemplifies exceptional Indigenous and community-focused policing, utilizing programs like Rkeepers 7 and Idanaguzhot-na/Youth Services Section to assist all Tsuut'ina youth, not just those that are offenders.

The Heritage and History of the Tsuut'ina Nation

The Tsuut'ina Nation, historically called Sarcee, meaning "stubborn ones" in Blackfoot, is known as the "Beaver People" or "Tssut'ina," symbolizing resilience and self-reliance. They are part of the Athabaskan language family, closely related to the Navajo and Apache, with their language preserving its pure Athabaskan roots. Their journey reflects a proud legacy of cultural heritage, economic ambition, and unyielding determination to preserve their sovereignty.

Tsuut'ina elders interpret the name to mean "many people" or "beaver people." They are signatories of the Peace and Friendship Treaty No. 7 and have staunchly safeguarded their inherent and treaty rights since its signing in 1877. Chief Bull Head (CHULA), representing 255 followers, reluctantly signed this treaty and fought for lands near Fort Calgary, eventually securing three townships west of the fort in 1881.

Presently, the Tsuut'ina Nation resides on the Tsuut'ina 145 reserve, adjacent to Calgary's southwestern boundary. Spanning over 27,685 hectares, the population grew to 2,719 in 2022, reflecting a thriving community poised for growth.

The Tsuut'ina Nation's vision for the future shines through the Taza Mixed Use Development. Launched in 2016 with a \$4 billion investment alongside Canderel Developments, the project

spans 1,200 acres and is among North America's most ambitious First Nations real estate ventures. It provides vast educational and job opportunities for future generations.

In 2023, the Buffalo Run shopping centre emerged as part of the Taza project, serving as a beacon of progress and creating a foundation for over 25,000 future residents.

The tribe's past is deeply connected to their proximity to Calgary, facing challenges ranging from illicit trade and substance abuse to criminal activities. In Chief Bull Head's era, the lack of food and resources led to persistent advocacy with governmental authorities and even royal visitors.

Introduced in 1885, the federal Canadian Government's pass system severely restricted Indigenous mobility, confining them to reserves and hindering trade for over 60 years. The system's abolition in 1951 marked a slow step toward restoring Indigenous freedom.

The Tsuut'ina's Separation Story narrates their mythical journey south in the 1700s, with the Taslani dragon splitting the frozen lake and dividing the Tsuut'ina from the Dene people. This tale reflects their enduring cultural heritage.

The Tsuut'ina people faced significant challenges in 1895, including fears of extinction as well documented by Indian agent Samuel Brigham Lucas. Chief Bull Head sought to empower the community through self-sufficiency, encouraging initiatives such as crop cultivation and house construction while embracing missionary-led education for children. These efforts aimed to build resilience in the face of adversity.

However, broader systemic efforts to assimilate Aboriginal peoples were exemplified by the Canadian Indian residential school system. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2015) highlighted its intentions: equipping students for a market-based economy, promoting political assimilation by encouraging them to leave reserves, and attempting to transform Indigenous identities into Christianized, Eurocentric ones. The 'Sixties Scoop' intensified assimilation by forcibly placing Indigenous children into white foster homes, often with the involvement and assistance of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. One officer who was based at TNPS even experienced this firsthand, reuniting with his birth parents only after high school graduation after being 'scooped' at the tender age of ten.

In 2013, the Tsuut'ina Nation concluded an agreement with Alberta for Calgary's ring road development, transferring 428 hectares in exchange for reserve lands, funds, and replacements for affected structures.

The Tsuut'ina Nation exemplifies perseverance, adapting to modern developments while honouring its rich legacy. Their achievements, from economic projects to cultural preservation, inspire hope for a prosperous and unified future.

The establishment of The 'Tosguna'

When the Tsuut'ina migrated south and joined the Blackfoot Confederacy of Nations, they realized the need to maintain order, ensure peace, and preserve their language and cultural

traditions. This led to the creation of a warrior society, 'Tosguna'. The Tosguna served as the original Tribal Police, acting as peacekeepers during serious disputes, mediators in disagreements, and healers when things went wrong. Known as the revered 'Black Soldiers', they played a crucial role in maintaining harmony within the Tsuut'ina Nation.

In 1993, the Canadian government established First Nations Policing Policies to enhance understanding and sensitivity in First Nations communities, enabling Tsuut'ina to officially begin their own police service. The Tosguna, now uniformed with unique laws and regulations, became an official part of the Tsuut'ina Nation.

Today, the Tsuut'ina Nation Police Service (TNPS) recruits' officers from both within and outside the Tsuut'ina Nation, welcoming both Indigenous and non-Indigenous men and women to the service. Despite the changes in contemporary policing challenges, TNPS continues to emphasize community service.

TNPS and the emphasis on Community Service.

The TNPS's commitment to community service is reflected in their Mission, Vision, and Principles as per the Tsuut'ina Nation Police Service Annual Activity Report 2022-2023.

Mission: "A safe community through collaboration, innovation and respect." **Vision:** "To continue building a leading-edge police service that is committed to serving the Tsuut'ina Nation." (8)

Principles:

- Provide professional service to all members of the public without regard to race, religion, or social standing.
- Maintain a balanced perspective of the community.
- Respect the social and religious customs and traditions of the Tsuut'ina People.
- Uphold the rights and privileges of TNPS members and provide appropriate support and training.
- Prioritize the physical and mental well-being of TNPS members.
- Adhere to the Mission Statement and Principles in all duties.

Chief Keith Blake emphasized the dedication and passion of TNPS members, stating, "There is a lot of things that they do here that other services wouldn't even consider." (9)



L to R - Tosguna Staff – Pride Day Pic/Advisory Group/Groundbreaking ceremony and Tosguna Shoulder Badge

Īdānágúzhōt-ná (I-da-na-gu-shot-na) Youth Services Section

The Īdānágúzhōt-ná Youth Services Section (YSS) is a community-based intervention program delivered in partnership with the Tsuut'ina Nation Police Service and funded by Public Safety Canada. It supports youth aged 6-25 years who are involved or at-risk of involvement in the Criminal Justice System. The program is unique because it ensures both community and cultural needs are met, unlike many youth services programs that lack direct community involvement.

In 2019, the Tsuut'ina Nation Police Service obtained grant funding from Public Safety Canada for a 5-year project aimed at reducing violence among at-risk youth, including bullying, cyberbullying, and gang involvement. This reliable funding stream replaced enforced government mandates with a community-based intervention program and eliminated the dependency on often unreliable charity funding.

Community Involvement

In the Īdānágúzhōt-ná YSS program, community members are encouraged to contribute ideas and suggestions as equals. This approach promotes empowerment, sustainability, community consultation, engagement, and a diversity of ideas. Mrs. Ngatai Crowchild, Principal of Chief Big Belly School when I toured the school on my fellowship emphasized the need for empathy over sympathy for indigenous children's wellbeing with a view to the future.

Addressing Common Issues

The program addresses common issues such as low literacy rates, broken homes, lack of fathers at home, low incomes, malnutrition, and poor school attendance—issues that have been identified as leading to higher use of social services by disadvantaged adults. Research, including the New Zealand Based 'Dunedin project', have clearly shown the importance of addressing childhood disadvantage early to benefit both high-need individuals and minimize societal costs.

Achieving Community Base

The small population, locality, and affiliation within the Tsuut'ina Nation benefit the program. By using multifaceted approaches involving all aspects of the community, the engagement by Īdānágúzhōt-ná YSS and Tsuut'ina Nation Police Service achieves progress and community engagement where many other communities do not. The framework and structure of the program provide guidance on building an engaged and proactive community, aiming to help youth realize their value and worth.

Key Learnings on Īdānágúzhōt-ná Youth Services Section (YSS)



Framework of the Youth Services Section

Elder Advisory Committee Three Elder advisors provide feedback on beneficial programs/events for Tsuut'ina youth and nation members. They guide youth in understanding their culture and connecting with their families. Elders suggest activities like storytelling nights, dreamcatcher and drum making workshops, and cultural harvesting. For instance, organizing a naming ceremony fosters cultural identity, belonging, and community. Elders also support events with opening and closing ceremonies/prayers and offer guidance throughout the year.

“It’s that consistency - doing things not just when you can, but you make time to do... engaging with youth, elders, and community members – proactive and preventive and trying to be there.”
(10)

Youth Advisory Committee This group of 4-5 Nation youth volunteers is compensated with gift cards for attending events as chaperones, following criminal and vulnerable sector checks. Recruitment is continuous with assistance from committees, local schools, and community members. The program has 41 formal participants and over 1,000 informal clients, with activities including:

- Human trafficking presentations
- Biking adventures
- Sporting and cultural events
- Buffalo roundups
- Collaboration evenings with court victim services
- TTN children services presentations
- Movie nights
- Healthy relationships training at local schools
- Collaboration with Calgary Police Services YARD program

Day-to-Day Operations

The public safety grant has created four job opportunities within the Tsuut'ina Nation Police Service, supporting 50 youth formally and 1,000 informal clients over the next three years. These roles include social workers providing central points of contact for youth, supervised by a senior social worker and a TNPS police sergeant.



Tsuut'ina Nation Powwow poster/Buffalo Ranch/Drum Workshop activities.

Streams of Support

First Stream Community programming offers unique opportunities addressing risks for youth, helping them develop skills, confidence, and belonging. Programs include workshops, sports, cultural activities, training, conferences, and community projects. Families receive support through educational resources and tools specific to the Tsuut'ina Nation, with consultation sessions addressing community, social, and educational issues.

Informal activities focus on cultural sensitivity and promoting pride and belonging in Indigenous culture. Family nights at the TNPS station enhance the sense of family, culture, and belonging. The program offers voluntary, free-of-charge assistance, fostering approachability and proactive early intervention.

Second Stream One-on-one support from outreach workers addresses the root causes of crime through individualized case plans based on clients' goals. The wraparound case management approach helps youth make positive changes, with guidance on courses, apprenticeships, or job prospects as part of the Nation's investment in its people.

Additional Services and Feedback

YSS services observed include organizing psychologist sessions, internet safety lessons, court support, ribbon skirt making classes, beading, elder bingo evenings, elder guidance, tutoring, youth nights, sports tournaments, and coaching. These events, often held at the TNPS station, aim to break down barriers and dehumanize the badge. Continuous feedback from participants, including band elders, helps TNPS improve its performance in the community.

“Whether you like it or not you have to listen to what they are saying, what we are not doing and what are the expectations of the community. We have to ask and hear no matter how bad it is.” (10)

Shift Logs and YSS Engagement

Shift logs from frontline officers provide TNPS executive with insights into incidents, enabling YSS to approach individuals proactively and positively. YSS supports youth with psychological assessments, referrals, and treatment programs both in downtown Calgary and on Tsuut’ina lands. Weekly sessions with a psychologist are organized locally to eliminate travel barriers. Employing social workers and nation residents in YSS ensures consistent program delivery and allows TNPS officers to focus on core duties.

Challenges

Many YSS clients, like those in Aotearoa New Zealand, face hidden disabilities, learning impairments, substance abuse, and histories of broken homes and sexual abuse. YSS staff attend court to support youth in the judicial system and educate those vulnerable to gang activity. Participation in Īdānágúzhōt-ná is voluntary but encouraged by YSS and the Peacemaker Court, based on the belief that youth benefit more when they choose to engage.

Participant Challenges and Goals

Challenges: Attitude, Disengagement, Substance misuse, Minimal follow-through,

Understanding court processes, obtaining a driver’s license, Returning to school and finding a place to live

Goals: Mental health and social engagement, Bus pass and money management, Finding employment, Returning to high school, meeting probation requirements, Receiving tutoring for upgrading, attending Mount Royal University for Bachelor of Arts

YSS Metrics and Community Engagement

YSS measures success not by the number of clients but by the consistency of engagements and individualised programs. Professor Elliot Currie’s research emphasizes the importance of strong community ties and supportive family environments in reducing crime and promoting social well-being. Investing in community resources and family support systems is essential for creating safer and healthier societies. “It’s about the quality of the engagement and not about the number of engagements we do.” (10)

Mission Statement

The Īdānágúzhōt-ná Youth Services Section empowers Indigenous youth to connect with their community and culture, promoting positive and spiritual development through the described methodologies.

Truth and Reconciliation and Calls to Action

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's (TRC) 2015 report included 94 Calls to Action, emphasizing the integration of Indigenous cultural practices in correctional services to support the rehabilitation and reintegration of Indigenous offenders and reduce their overrepresentation in the criminal justice system.

Research shows that youth experiencing their first time in a jail cell face significant psychological and emotional impacts, including:

Psychological Impact: Intense feelings of isolation, fear, and anxiety, potentially leading to severe mental health issues like depression and suicidal thoughts.

Solitary Confinement: Exacerbates psychological issues, leading to hallucinations, self-harm, and a sense of abandonment.

Developmental Harm: Lack of social interaction and educational opportunities hinders development and reintegration.

Increased Recidivism: Initial incarceration increases the likelihood of further justice system involvement.

Mental Health Deterioration: Severe mental health issues, including depression and PTSD.

Increased Risk of Self-Harm: Higher risk of self-harm and suicidal actions.

Cognitive and Social Development Delays: Isolation hinders cognitive and social development.

While the above issues either singularly or collectively as a whole should be cause for immediate action, the fact that a significant proportion of youth in detention have disabilities further aggravates the issues faced by youth when they are placed into a cell. Estimates have suggested that between 30% to 60% of incarcerated youth have disabilities, with some estimates as high as 85% (11).

Canadian police services have been slow to adopt TRC recommendations due to systemic issues and traditional colonial-based policing systems. Many forces have few Indigenous liaison officers, who often face a lack of recognition and understanding from their departments.

TNPS, being a relatively new police service, started with a cultural competence policing model. This approach extends to their holding cells and processing areas, aiming to provide a safe space for conversation and humanize incarceration.

Tsuut'ina Police Holding Cells



Buffalo Woman Helping Call Your Spirit Home, by Nathan P. Meguinis.

Photo B. Ward 2024

TNPS Holding Cell Murals:

The murals in TNPS holding cells are part of efforts to deliver culturally relevant and sensitive services. Other initiatives include traditional Tsuut'ina prayers painted on walls and a “soft room” for family smudging and prayer. Smudging, a deeply spiritual ceremony, removes negative energy, promotes healing, and creates a positive environment.



Mother Earth, by Keegan Starlight. TNPS Holding Cell

Photo B. Ward 2024

Artwork and Reflection: All cells have plaques explaining the artwork's meaning. Officers and detainees often stand in silence to reflect on the artwork. Indigenous artist Keegan Starlight stated, "I want people to know that if you come here, you're protected and that there's some sort of connection, a purpose. It's an honour to do a piece like this." (12)

By humanizing the holding cell area through art and reflection, TNPS addresses issues like angst, isolation, and despair affecting youth in custody. Cultural relevance and calming messages help detainees feel connected to Tsuut'ina culture, regardless of their actions. The artwork softens the custody experience, reminding detainees of their identity and offering hope during unsettling times.

Conclusion

The work displayed in TNPS holding cells humanizes the custody experience, creating an environment that fosters cultural connection and hope. As Winston Churchill wrote, "Nothing can be more abhorrent to democracy than to imprison a person or keep him in prison because he is unpopular. This is really the test of civilization." (13)

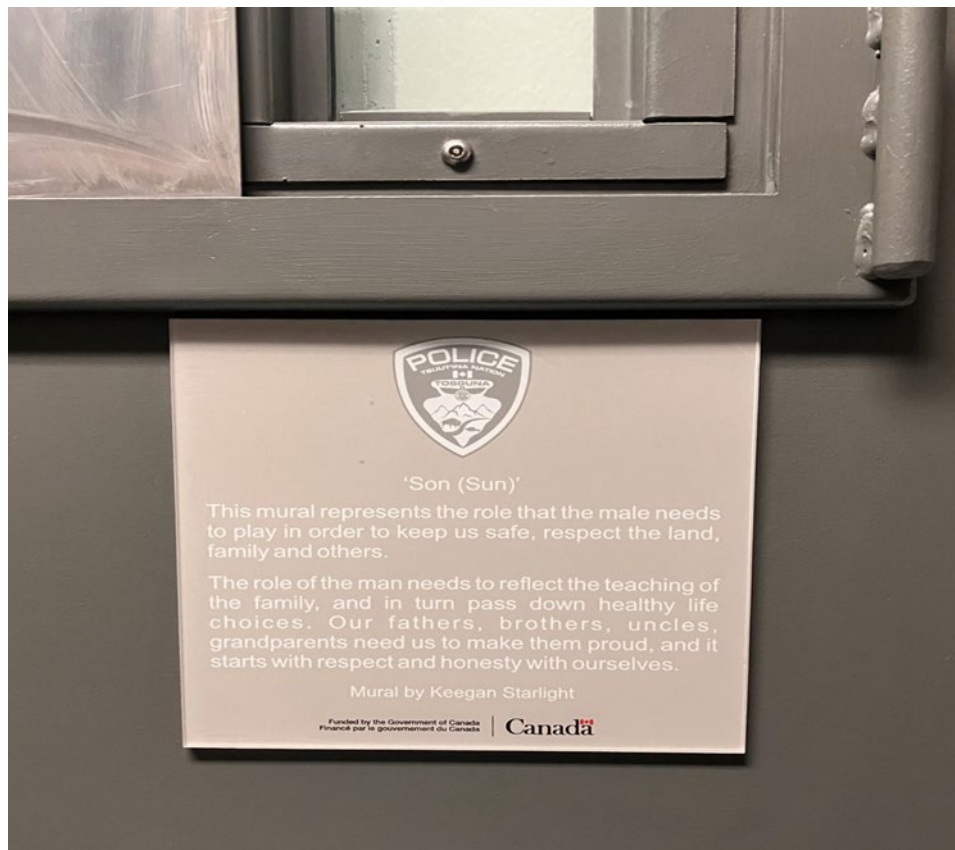


Photo B. Ward 2024

Peacemakers Court



Established in October 1999, the Peacemakers Court holds jurisdiction over criminal, youth, and bylaw offenses on the Tsuut'ina Nation reserve. Traditional European-based court systems often instil fear and intimidation in First Nation peoples and have frequently failed them. The Peacemakers Court aims to create a justice system sensitive to Tsuut'ina culture, beliefs, and community, helping reduce the high rate of Indigenous incarceration. The court has improved attitudes towards the justice system, making nation citizens more willing to report offenses.

Objectives of the Aboriginal Justice System

The Department of Justice Canada outlines the objectives:

- Help Aboriginal people assume greater responsibility for administering justice in their communities.
- Reflect and include Aboriginal values within the Canadian justice system.
- Contribute to reducing crime, victimization, and incarceration rates among Aboriginal people.

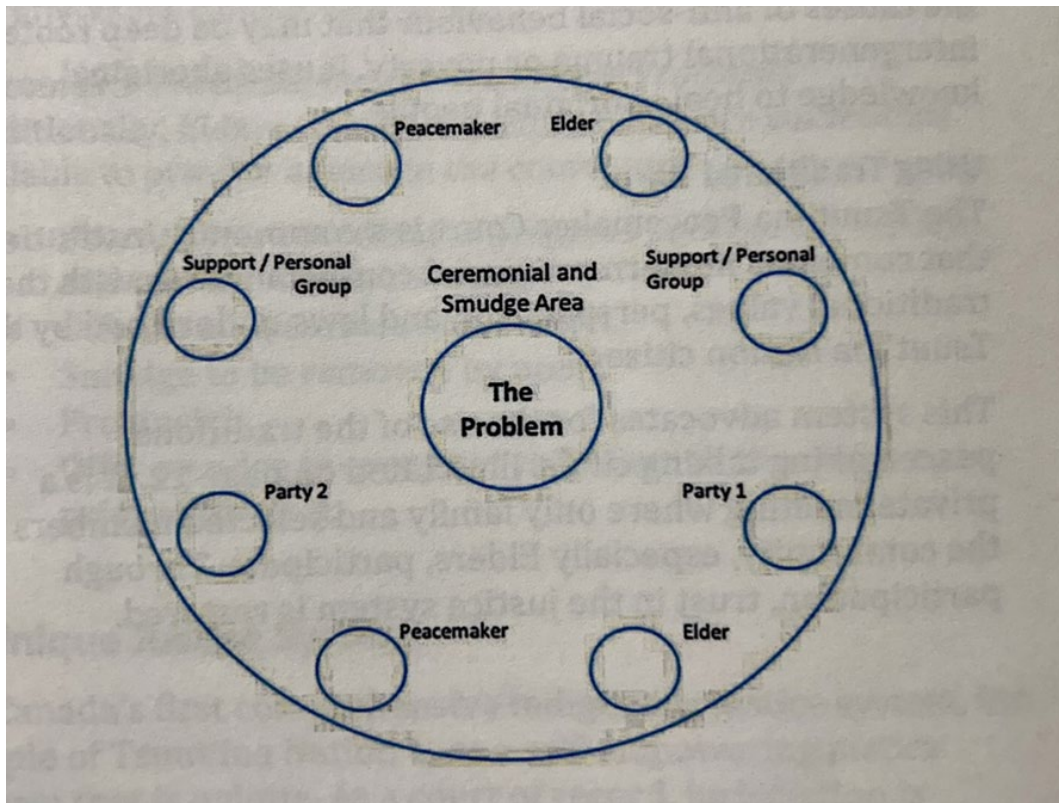
Two Cultures – One Process

The Peacemakers Court combines the Alberta Provincial Court and the Peacemaker process, bridging Euro-Canadian legal norms with Indigenous community practices. Key features include:

Circular Arrangement: The courtroom's circular design fosters inclusivity and equality, with Aboriginal participants filling roles such as judge, prosecutor, and defence counsel.

Symbolic Design: The courtroom's shape mirrors a beaver den, and smudging with sage or sweet grass is part of the process. Clerks wear embroidered eagle feathers.

Peace-making Circles: Used to resolve conflicts, heal offenders and victims, and restore relationships. Ceremonies initiate these circles, which involve everyone speaking in turns about what happened, its effects, and what should be done.



Peacemaker Court Diagram/Tssut'ina Nation – Photo By B Ward 2024

The courtroom's design was a collaborative effort with First Nations and Métis communities, aiming to be flexible enough to accommodate Aboriginal justice.



Photo B. Ward , 8 April 2024

Judge L. S. Mandamin, an Ojibway Alberta Provincial Court judge who was the first presiding judge at the Tsuut'ina Peacemaker Court stated that :

Peace-making circles work to resolve the conflict, heal the offender and the victim, and restore relationships. A peace-making circle begins with a ceremony. It may be a traditional ceremony using sage or sweetgrass, a prayer, or just a simple statement that the circle is about to deal with an important matter. When a circle is held, each person speaks uninterrupted, while the others listen. The first time around the circle, people speak about what happened. The second time around, each person says how he or she was affected by what happened. The third time around, they speak about what should be done. In the fourth round of the circle, participants speak about what is agreed. Circles may take from two hours to two days, although most conclude within an afternoon.

Recidivism rates are lower for offenders who attend peacemaker court as opposed to attendance at regular court (14).

Effectiveness for Youth Matters

The Peacemakers Court is especially effective for youth, achieving faster dispute resolutions. Youth are encouraged to contact the Peacemakers office if charged, as shorter justice system involvement reduces recidivism. The court focuses on understanding the root causes behind offenses and involves community resources in rehabilitation.

Requests for Peace-making

Requests can originate from various sources, including the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, schools, HR departments, Elders, families, programs, and agencies. Referrals can be made before charges are laid, after charges, or via sentencing circles.

Focus of the Peacemakers Court

The court's focus is on teaching, rehabilitation, healing, and spirituality, aiming to restore harmony within the social and cultural fabric of the Nation. Goals include restoring peace between wrongdoer and victim, making both functional community members. Tsuut'ina police and the Nation address crime and youth issues through:

- Tailored services with effective community representation.
- Interventions considering cultural practices, beliefs, and values.
- Acknowledgement of Elders' knowledge in all interventions.
- Community investment in cultural beliefs and values.

This approach enhances engagement and outcomes, applying a racial equity lens to crime and youth offending, addressing unique risks and needs of the Tsuut'ina people.



RKeepers7 – ánágúdiyòn-ná wúsaa oghà ‘- The Wisdom Keepers for Our Future

RKeepers7 is a community-driven initiative aimed at increasing resources and support for youth under 29 years old. Funded by the Building Safer Communities Fund (BSCF) through Public Safety Canada, its goal is to protect and redirect at-risk youth away from human trafficking, violence, gang activities, and criminal behaviours while promoting healing and cultural heritage.

Background and Funding

Tsuut’ina Police and the community proactively applied for and obtained BSCF funding, which supports Indigenous communities in addressing gun and gang violence through community-led projects. On July 11, 2023, Minister of Public Safety Canada, Marco Mendicino, announced that Tsuut’ina Nation would receive up to \$1.13 million to prevent crime. Chief Roy Whitney emphasized that these funds allow for preventative measures to protect the community and reduce crime.

Government Support

The funding is part of broader efforts to improve public safety in Indigenous communities, including recognizing First Nations police services as essential and increasing funding flexibility. Tsuut’ina Nation's application for the RKeepers7 Strategy focused on preventing youth from joining gangs and firearms use, with TNPS identified as the best avenue for achieving these goals.

RKeepers7 Strategy

The RKeepers7 Strategy aims to create a plan that enhances resources for youth on Tsuut’ina Nation, enabling them to become future leaders and knowledge keepers. The focus is on youth aged 29 and younger. The strategy’s first year (2024) involves planning and identifying community needs, with program delivery starting in 2025/2026.

Community gatherings will begin in February 2024 to ensure that the strategy is driven by and for the community, facilitated by consultants and guided by a steering committee. The strategy aims to enhance existing on-Nation programs, focusing on healing and protective factors for younger generations, and addressing gaps without duplicating services. This ensures that no other community program is threatened but instead strengthened.



R Keepers 7 Engagement Session 05/03/2024 – TNPS Instagram

Goals and Vision

RKeepers7 aims to provide TNPS with a firm funding stream for youth strategy and commitment within the Tsuut'ina Nation over the next five years, adopting a multi-generational community-led approach. The mission goal statement underscores the program's essential component: "For the community, from the community, by the community; creating spaces for our youth to become The Wisdom Keepers for Our Future." (15)

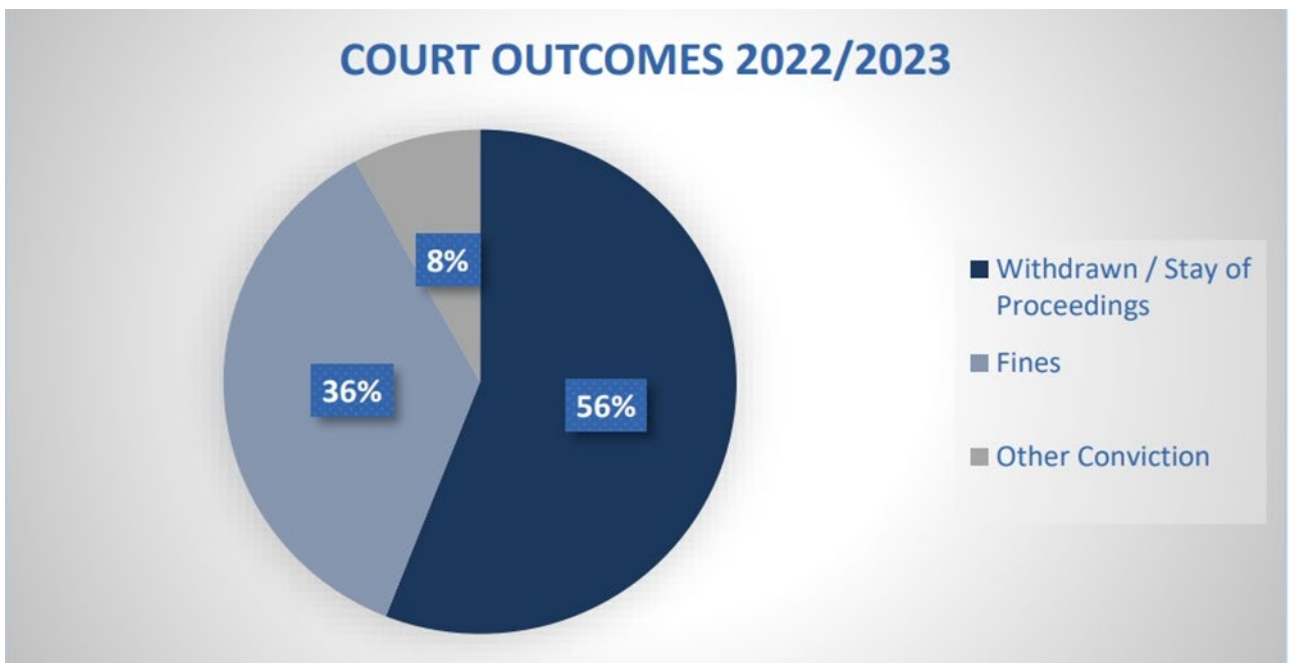
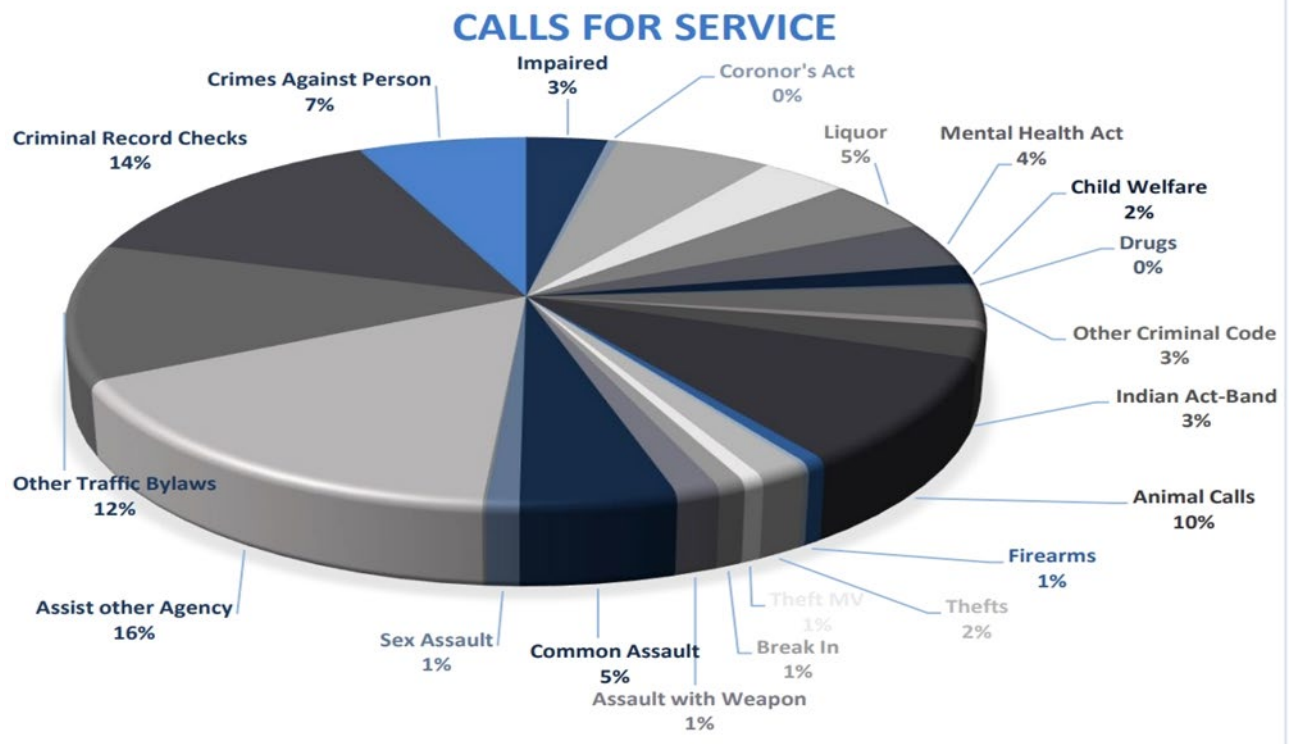


R Keepers 7 overview – TNPS PowerPoint 2024

Crime Statistics For the Tsuut'ina Nation

While the crime statistics, resolution figures and even the population of Tsuut'ina Nation look very minimal compared to police districts/communities of Aotearoa/New Zealand, a comparison can be made with an area such as Kaitia or Opotiki. This then gives the New Zealand based reader an idea of an equivalent size of the demographics of the Tsuut'ina nation even though the nation shoulders the city of Calgary. Calgary while having a population of close to 1.4 million and ranking “6th among Canada’s safest cities in 2024” (16) creates other concerns stemming from transient migration.

In 2022-2023, there was a total of 328 people charged by TNPS (see figure below). Over 90 percent of court proceedings end in a fine, a stay of proceedings or are withdrawn because of the work of the court, peacemakers court agent, and the Tsuut'ina Nation itself in assisting that person to seek assistance with their issue/s and correct their misdemeanour/behaviour so that offending is kept to a minimum.



Calls for Service/Court Outcomes TNPS (17)

Representation of Indigenous Populations

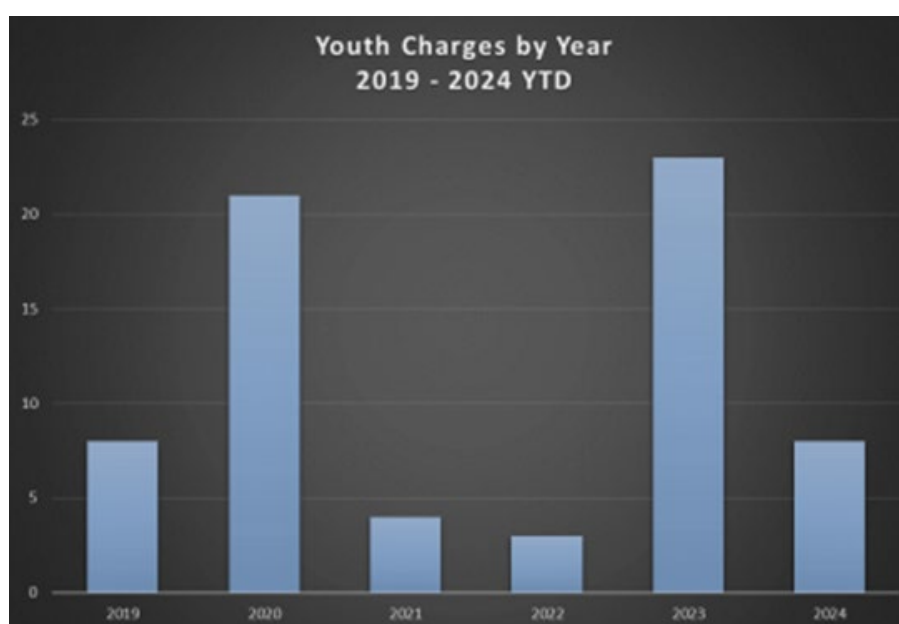
Indigenous populations as a whole experience disproportionate incarceration rates in Canada. In 2020-21, there were, on average, 42.6 Indigenous people in provincial custody per day per 10,000 population, in contrast to four non-Indigenous people, according to Statistics Canada.

The fact that TNPS is a self-administered police service means it is more representative of the community that it serves and its values, culture and traditions. Even though the TNPS remains funded by three different sourcing streams. According to a 2022 Statistics Canada report, Indigenous people, at 17 per cent, were about twice more likely than non-Indigenous people, at 9.2 per cent, to have little or no confidence in their local police service, which may be an underestimation, it notes (18).

As TNPS Chief Keith Blake states “It allows us to be better at de-escalating situations that may not happen in different mainstream police services when you don’t know who you’re encountering and you’re not certain of the relationship you have with that individual” (19). Because of this de-escalation many incidents/callouts which may result in arrest in a larger city/area do not occur because of the exceptional and community/problem focused policing methods adopted by the TNPS. This de-escalation and a familiarity with the community it serves means that TNPS is aware of the triggers, background situations and stories of the people within the community it serves. This may in turn lead to the low incarceration rate as officers are able to seek alternative resolutions/policing or social service strategies on the nation rather than those that are utilised by Police who just respond to issues/incidents without any reflection of why the issue/s may be occurring.

Youth Offending

A review upon request for this Winston Churchill fellowship report was conducted of charged youths from 2019 – 2024 YTD by TNPS Intelligence Department. In total, 67 incidents involved youths and a total of 45 individuals had charges brought forward from TNPS. In examining the charges by year, 2020 and 2023 were noted to be significantly higher than the other years. In fact, 2021, 2022 and 2024 YTD have seen very few youths charged.



Youth Charges by Year 2019-2024 . TNPS Intel report (17)

Of those who have had been identified as committing a criminal offence, the majority are 15 – 16 years old, with a small number being between 7 – 12 where no charge can be laid under the Criminal Code / YCJA. Many of the youths that were apprehended had 1 – 2 incidents with only 3 youth having 3 casefiles and one youth having 9 (17). The youth with 9 casefiles was most active in 2020, with 7 and only a single incident each in 2021 and 2022. There has been no contact with police since that time. The disposition for most of that youth's cases were dealt with via conditional discharge or a peace bond; one case is still in progress. (17)

The fact that a youth who had nine case files with Police now comes to no police attention speaks volumes to the work and proactive measures adopted by TNPS and TNPS YSS. Their attempts and that of the nation as a whole to reduce youth crime and better the lives of youth of the Tsuut'ina Nation is commendable and something others should look to emulate. In many cities or areas around the world this youth would now be incarcerated with a future that would little hope or prospects for the future.

Further analysis of the report supplied by TNPS intel reveals that almost 50% of all cases with youths were dealt with through alternative sentencing arrangements. The only cases that led to judicial processing, warrants, probation or sentencing were 11 cases involving nine individuals. Of those nine individuals that were given an alternative judicial path, none reoffended outside of that year where that type of path was utilized.

Actions Initiated Following the Granting of the WCF

How can we make this work in Aotearoa/New Zealand

Following my visit to the Tssu'tina Police and the Tssu'tina nation, I have implemented several initiatives in my local community, aiming to replicate some of the practices observed during my Winston Churchill Fellowship. While one person can only do so much, I hope these efforts will inspire others to drive change in this area or in their community. These efforts include:

Scholarship Program: Launched a scholarship program funded by a local youth charity to support young individuals aspiring to join the police force.

Youth Hauora Group Collaboration: Engaged with the Youth Hauora Group and delivered an evening presentation on WCF, involving connected whānau, schools, and youth groups. This initiative aims to replicate programs observed during my WCF.

Local Sports Team Engagement: Encouraged local sports teams to collaborate with the police, promoting interaction and engagement with local youth. In 2025, this effort could potentially involve a super rugby franchise.

Student Leaders Council: Planned for 2025, the formation of a student leaders council to assist social agencies, youth groups, and local police in addressing issues identified by local youth in the community.

Developmental Crime Prevention Kits: Redesigned NZ Police educational 'developmental crime prevention' kits for use by School Community Officers nationwide.

Custody Area/Cell Art Project: Initiated discussions on trialling a custody area or cell featuring themed concept art by local artists or schools, inspired by the TNPS holding cells.

Public Speaking and Lectures: Delivered talks at community groups (e.g., Rotary, Lions) sharing my experiences in the Tssu'tina nation and emphasizing the community's role in crime prevention and youth matters in New Zealand.

Police Iwi Liaison and Local Marae Engagement: Collaborated with the Police Iwi Liaison officer and local Marae to discuss huis, prevention messaging, and youth matters, aiming to address the root causes of crime and youth offending locally.

Discussions with Local MP/Minister of Police: (TBC) Engaging with Local MP/Minister of Police Rt Hon Mark Mitchell to discuss WCF findings, observations, and potential community interventions.

Formal Presentation to Police Leadership: Presented findings and recommendations following the WCF to the Assistant Commissioner of Police and the District Leadership Team – Waitemata Police.

Collaboration with School Counsellors and Educators: Strengthened ties with school counsellors, RTLB, Kahui Ako groups, and junior teachers to identify children and families needing support in the community.

While these are initial steps, recent recommendations from the Understanding Policing Delivery Programme highlight the importance of community engagement and effective community policing, like those I observed with the TNPS.

Conclusion

Tsuut'ina Nation Police Service Approach

The incredible policing style/justice system that I observed at Tssu'tina Nation Police Service remains the most proactive and community-based style of policing/justice that I have ever seen in my travels around the world and research into community policing. What makes it uniquely dynamic is that fact that TNPS is run by a passionate police Chief (Chief Keith Blake) who not only listens to the community but also his officers regarding the issues in the community.

Chief Blake and the TNPS believes in the importance of providing community centred/problem orientated policing, that adapts to meet the cultural and socioeconomic needs of the Tsuut'ina Peoples and to address root causes of crime. Blake's leadership team (like the Chief) at TNPS are highly motivated, community focused and realise the incredible honour they have been given in policing the Tsuut'ina Nation.

Indigenous policing and community-focused policing brings immense benefits to the community and the nation, but particularly more so in addressing the needs of youth. "I think one of the things you'll find when you do have a self-administered Indigenous police service is that it's more representative of the community's values, culture and tradition" (19).

Cultural awareness, community engagement, and holistic support systems all have huge importance in the TNPS and Tsuut'ina Nation methodology for its people and especially its future generations. This is an approach that creates and enhances multi levelled environments through the nation where youth feel understood, supported, and valued by all.

Tssut'ina Police/Tssut'ina Nation's community focused policing/justice model actively involves the community in the creation and implementation of strategies that are relevant and effective for that community rather than being driven as policy from a centralised location.

So, what's holding back a country, renowned for its collaborative relationship between the Crown and iwi, and for its innovative spirit, from embracing such advanced justice and policing practices?

New Zealand's Approach

"This is no time for ease and comfort. It is time to dare and endure" as Churchill once said. This statement holds very true with regard to youth justice. In 2001 the About Time report regarding youth offending in Aotearoa was released by the Department of corrections was released it has all the information this report has in it – early interventions, cultural and community-based interventions and holistic approaches.

"We must act to stop children from socially and economically disadvantaged families growing up into a life of crime. We know the earliest possible intervention works best and costs the least. Working with a five-year-old to change aggressive and defiant behaviour is estimated to

cost \$5,000 and has a success rate of 70 percent; the same behaviour at age 20 costs \$20,000 and has a success rate of only 20 percent” (20).

The About Time report refers on multiple occasions to prevention and early intervention as means to reducing youth offending in Aotearoa. In 2018 the New Zealand Prime Minister’s chief science advisor Professor Sir Peter Gluckman published “It’s never too early never too late”- a discussion paper on preventing youth offending in New Zealand; the findings were comparable to the About Time report with its recommendations. Gluckman’s report has multiple recommendations for community-based interventions regarding youth, these interventions reflect those that TNPS has put into action.

Perhaps the biggest issue are the facts as Gluckman concluded in his report that- ‘There are no quick fixes, there is international and local evidence that action with children and young people (up to age 25 years) can make a real difference’ and that “developmental crime prevention” works (21).

As Gluckman notes however, we need to think about the Aotearoa/New Zealand we want future generations to inherit. Is that a country/society with rising prison populations, at high cost to the taxpayer, over representation of indigenous peoples and a society where youth are both victims and offenders in the justice system. This ‘victimhood’ occurs due to their learning, disability, developmental, emotional or societal issues or in some cases all of the aforementioned.

Lofty headline grabbing declarations such as “Youth justice has a target to reduce youth offending by 15 percent” (22) recently made by Oranga Tamariki is nothing more than rhetoric lip service to Aotearoa’s youth and youth offending. As any street police officer knows, incarceration of the nation’s top ten youth offenders will likely result in the offending dropping by 15 percent or more.

A consistent effort is required by all agencies that dealt with youth from the initial arresting police officer to attending court youth advocates to the social worker dealing with the youth and their family is required. Statements like a reduction in percentage or offending figures often sound impressive but can be unrealistic and difficult to achieve in practice. It's important to that we set realistic, achievable goals when addressing complex social issues like crime/youth offending and goals that aren’t easily manipulated by statistics to suit their master(s).

Youth crime in Aotearoa/New Zealand is trending upwards but has halved in the past decade, but Police are taking proceedings against tamariki and rangitahi Māori at more than twice the rate of other children and young people (23). If this is considered, then clearly the cycle will continue for youth. As Sir Gluckman noted “The evidence and all the recommendations say it does not have to be so, but it will require strong courageous leadership to commit to and implement programmes that produce sustained positive change across the justice system” (21).

Implementation Recommendations

A Police service delivery model, justice and social services that are based on ethics, integrity and has a strong commitment to the community and Indigenous peoples, much like that which I observed in Tssut'ina Nation, with a strong commitment to future generations is required. Without those commitments, the model is just another iteration of reactive policing.

In the New Zealand Police community, youth staff are very often the first staff to be reassigned or redeployed to other duties. Because of this development, crime policing and community orientated policing consistently struggles to make any progress as it is often overlooked, unappreciated and misunderstood by senior police management, many of whom haven't been community officers themselves, so they fail to see the value or results of a long-term community policing approach to the community they serve.

Even the New Zealand's Police recent ambitious Understanding Policing delivery programme in its second paper has as one of its key recommendations:

Community engagement and accountability

1. Value relational ways of working with communities and police experienced whānau to provide more effective solutions. Resource communities to engage and advise, support and learn from Police Employee-Led Networks, invest in more specialised community roles within the Police (such as Iwi, Pacific, Ethnic, Diversity and Gang liaison officers), and utilise this expertise in frontline operations, investigations, policy, research, communications, monitoring and evaluation.
2. Amplify Māori and community-led local collaborations, where the Police play a supporting, enabling and resourcing role, aligned with iwi and community aspirations, such as Whāngaia Ngā Pā Harakeke.' (24)

Perhaps the last words should be from those in the 'arena' who are from both ends of the organizational spectrum. They suggest the following:

Chief science adviser to the justice sector, clinical psychologist Professor Ian Lambie, of Auckland University, who has suggested that the current youth justice system does an exemplary job, said evidence suggested further improvements in youth justice required a "developmental crime prevention" focus, which meant focusing on early intervention (25). Lambie has also suggested that People with therapeutic expertise should work alongside cultural groups, NGOs and schools to help children at risk and their families.

Aaron Hendry from youth development group Kick Back has stated that:

We know who these children are. We know who their families are, we know who their whānau are, we know who their communities are there's opportunity for the government

to get really targeted and go to those communities, those whānau and say, 'what do you need to really care for your kids? And how can we wrap the services around you, and the support around you, to get the best result we can?' (26)

It should be noted that both academia and the practitioner agree on what could work for Aotearoa/New Zealand's youth justice and police interventions with youth. A lot of those conclusions/suggestions look like the current practice of the Tssut'ina Nation with regard to its justice system, policing direction, youth services and three aforementioned published reports in New Zealand ("It's never too early never too late", "About Time" and "Understanding Policing Delivery").

Which leads the reader to the conclusion that the issues might not be the abundance of agreement of interventions, developmental crime prevention focus, community engagement suggestions to assist youth in staying out of the justice system via community-based interventions... It might be the fact that we lack the maia to deliver for Aotearoa/New Zealand's Tamariki.

The Maia Required

All these recommendations and practices illustrate the importance of having positive relationships with community and Whanau and working in partnerships to resolve issues with youth and the community. So, we know what the answers are, and we have done for a number of years – the implementation of bold social policy; which is essential for achieving impactful change. Leaders must make decisive, and often unpopular decisions to tackle deep-rooted issues like inequality, poverty, and injustice all seen to be key drivers of a youth being involved in the policing or justice system.

The creation of such policies and the direction with such decisions taken may challenge the status quo regarding investing in communities and ensuring resources and opportunities for vulnerable populations. Churchill himself illustrated many times throughout his political career - strong and effective leadership cultivates a progressive, inclusive society focused on the well-being of all of its members not just a select few.

Ko te pae whiti, whāia kia tata. Ko te pae tata, whakamaia kia tina.

The potential for tomorrow, depends on what we do today.

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