

## Gangs growing: police

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Officials with the Criminal Intelligence Service Saskatchewan organization issued an urgent call Monday for a provincial strategy to deal with the crime and violence caused by aboriginal-based gangsters.

Representatives of the CISS, which is made up of 21 police organizations in the province, released a report at a Regina press conference that noted that Saskatchewan has the highest per capita number of youth involved in gangs in Canada.

"There is a pressing and urgent need," to deal with both youth and adult gangs, said Regina Police Chief Cal Johnston, who is the chairman of the executive committee of the CISS.

A comprehensive strategy that involves prevention, education and continued police enforcement is needed to deal with gangs, Johnston said.

Communities across Saskatchewan, along with the provincial government and police departments, need to work together to solve the problem, Johnston said.

Saskatoon Police Chief Russ Sabo agreed a concerted approach is needed.

"I think coming forward (in the report) and letting the public know this is a growing issue in the community and the province is going to help in the long run to bring this under control," Sabo said.

Justice Minister Frank Quennell responded during a scrum with reporters at the legislature.

"I meet regularly with police services in Saskatchewan about the issues around organized crime, so I'm aware of these issues," Quennell said. "We are working on providing resources and tools to our police service to combat these specified problems."

But Quennell said social, economic and community problems also needed to be addressed as part of the solution to the gang problem.

While the presence of criminal gangs in Saskatchewan is no secret, Johnston said he and many other members of CISS were somewhat surprised by the extent of the problem

"It happens in urban communities, it happens in rural communities and the deep impact of some of the behaviour is very pervasive," Johnston said.

While there are also non-aboriginal gangs in Saskatchewan, the report released Monday focused on aboriginal youth gangs.



CREDIT: Don Healy, The Leader-Post  
Regina Police Chief Cal Johnston

The report indicated that there are an estimated 1,315 members of youth gangs in Saskatchewan and that number (on per capita basis) is the highest in Canada.

A combined total of 500 gang members are believed to live in Regina, Saskatoon and Prince Albert, with the rest spread around other Saskatchewan communities.

"In particular, over the past year, residents of Regina, Saskatoon and Prince Albert have experienced an increase in extreme violence involving aggravated assaults, shootings and murders as gangs compete for territory," the report said.

While the drug trade is one of the biggest-paying activities for gangs, information released at the press conference indicated that gang members are involved in a wide variety of criminal activities, including robberies and thefts that are sometimes undertaken as part of an initiation process.

In addition to the larger cities, the report said gangs are active in southern Saskatchewan in smaller cities and towns such as Fort Qu'Appelle, Broadview, Indian Head, Yorkton, Carlyle, Moose Jaw and Kamsack.

Further north, the report said gangs are active in places like North Battleford, Pelican Narrows, Stanley Mission, Pierceland, Meadow Lake and La Ronge.

The report said the gangs operate under a wide variety of names such as the North Central Rough Riderz, the Indian Mafia Crips, the Indian Posse, the Native Syndicate, the Crazy Cree, the Redd Alert and the Tribal Brothers.

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