IT'S ABOUT
real people • real connections • real impact
annual report 2012 - 2013
Message from the President

It was an honor and a privilege to have been selected as Chair and President for the Society for Safe and Caring Schools & Communities. I intend to continue moving our society towards our vision - a vision in which “Every school and community will be a safe, caring and inclusive environment where each child will grow to be a respectful and responsible citizen.”

The ongoing role of the Board of Directors is to:

- Review recommendations from the Board’s standing committees and the Society’s Executive Director
- Conduct performance review and manage the contract of the Society’s Executive Director
- Ensure the Society’s programming continues to meet its mandate
- Ensure ongoing succession planning
- Assist with fundraising and promotion
- Ensure sustainability by building and strengthening the Society’s relationships with partners in government, education, community and corporate sectors
- Create policies, and as necessary, make amendments to the Society’s constitution and by-laws for consideration at the annual general meetings

This past year saw great change at both the Board and executive level. Bev Esslinger, long time Board Member and Chair, and Donna Blundell, long time executive director, bid the Society farewell. Both individuals gave a great deal of themselves to support and help the society grow and their efforts will leave a long lasting impression on the organization.

The Governance and Succession Planning Committee began and concluded an executive search. They were successful in hiring Dr. Marni Pearce as the new Executive Director. Seconded from Alberta Education, Dr. Pearce brings to the organization a great deal of experience in teaching, research and policy making and has the drive and dedication to continue moving the Society for Safe and Caring Schools & Communities forward.

We have had many new beginnings this year with the rebranding of the organization. Simplifying the name of the Society to “Safe and Caring” and giving Niska a new look has been rejuvenating. I am also honoured to have Associate Minister of Family and Community Safety, Sandra Jansen, named as the Honorary Chair of Safe and Caring.

The Board will continue to utilize the diverse backgrounds and expertise of its members to provide the Society with strategic recommendations, create greater awareness of evidence-based programming and reach into new schools and communities across the province. The Board will also continue to work closely with the Society’s staff, along with our many partners and supporters to promote Safe and Caring as a primary source of research-based violence-prevention tools and resources.

I would like to thank the board, staff and partners for their continued contributions and support to Safe and Caring.

Respectfully Submitted

Ron Taylor, President
Rayna, a grade 8 student, recently shared: “Safe and Caring ...helps us to step outside the box that bullying puts us in.” Rayna’s words remind us that real people continue to be impacted by issues of violence and bullying. We are further reminded that each of us holds the power to both help someone step out of the box that bullying can create and to also help prevent such boxes from appearing in the first place.

This year, Safe and Caring’s goal has been to establish real connections with the community, our schools and our youth. We have worked hard at establishing new relationships, developing new partnerships and engaging our youth in meaningful ways to support our efforts to promote healthy, respectful relationships and prevent violence and bullying. We have been pleased to strengthen our relationship with researchers and policy makers and have introduced the role of special advisors to help guide and inform our work.

As a result of these efforts we are making real impact. Our board, advisors, staff, volunteers, partners and supporters have demonstrated that through working together - sharing resources, conversations and ideas - we can make a positive difference in the lives of children and youth and provide the adults who support them the tools and information needed to step in, stand up, and address issues of bullying and violence and even prevent...
these issues from occurring in the first place. Through our questions and curiosity of what else and who else is out there, we have found new ways of working collectively with others to produce better outcomes. This is our goal moving forward - to continue to leverage our collective impact by focusing on promoting and supporting healthy relationships to prevent bullying, violence and exploitation at the onset.

Safe and Caring has three main areas of focus: supporting safe and caring school cultures, working towards safe and caring communities, and facilitating youth engagement. These three interconnected themes will continue to drive our work for the coming year. For example, we plan to continue to work closely with The Government of Alberta. The new Associate Minister of Family and Community Safety, and Safe and Caring’s new Honourary Chair, has a mandate to address bullying (including cyberbullying) violence, and sexual exploitation, and support efforts to build healthy relationships. Alberta Education introduced a new Education Act (2012), which clearly states that in order for children to be successful, schools must be welcoming, caring, respectful, safe, and free from physical and emotional harm. The Education Act also instructs school boards to create a student code of conduct that addresses bullying and ensures students impacted by inappropriate behaviours, including bullying, as well as those who engage in such behaviour, receive adequate supports. Safe and Caring applauds these changes and looks forward to supporting this work.

Increasingly, there is a growing awareness that achieving real and long-lasting positive change for children and youth requires coordination of programming, strategies and policies across a range of community stakeholders which reach well beyond the boundaries of any individual school or community. Research suggests that the power of such collective efforts results from the coordination of many differentiated activities through a mutually reinforcing plan of collective action. If Alberta is to support healthy relationships and create welcoming, caring, respectful, and safe learning environments, there is a pressing need to identify, understand and coordinate the diverse activities of existing stakeholders and to understand system barriers across the province.

Safe and Caring shares the Government of Alberta’s vision by working to ensure every child in Alberta has the opportunity to grow up in a caring and nurturing home, an engaging and supportive school, and a safe and inclusive community. We know that achieving this vision requires the involvement of parents, teachers and all the important adults and community members in a young person’s life.

We believe Safe and Caring is positioned to play a unique role as key facilitator (e.g. network hub, systems change leader) in developing and supporting school-community systems to improve such outcomes for children and youth.

Together we can support real people, make real connections and have a real impact.

Dr. Marni Pearce, Executive Director
**real People**

Safe and Caring has been very active in developing real partnerships that represent strong collaborative efforts to broaden the reach and increase the impact of our work. Some of our connections this year include:

- Providing workshops at: the Alberta Teachers’ Association Beginner Teachers Conferences; the Leadership Essentials for Administrators Conference; Literacy and Learning Day; Grant MacEwan Child Care conferences; the Alberta Restorative Justice Association conference; and various schools, youth serving organizations and communities across the province

- Consulting with Nova Scotia’s Department of Education on strategies for enacting their new legislation to reduce sexual minority bullying and their “Speak Out!” anti-bullying conference planning

- Guest Lectures at the University of Alberta and Concordia University

- Working with the Alberta Mentoring Partnership on a peer mentoring toolkit and serving as a key member of a Children and Youth in Care Mentoring sub-committee, exploring research and the development of a model designed to address the specific needs of children and youth in foster and group care

- Participating on the Multi-Disciplinary Consultation Committee for High Risk Youth (Child and Family Services Authority Region 6) and supporting planning for Alberta’s first High Risk Youth Conference Steering Committee (HRYC) to be held in May 2014

- Working with practicum students from the Grant MacEwan Faculty of Health & Community Studies Bachelor of Science in Nursing Program to develop a training module for use by health care professionals across the province to increase the ability to promote, create and support healthy relationships

- Participating on the Community Initiatives Against Family Violence Bullying (CIAFV) Bullying subcommittee

- Working with 2Learn, providing webinars to Alberta schools

- Facilitating the development of community initiatives such as the Gender and Sexual Diversity Centre and the Caring for Campus – Health and Wellness Council for students at the University of Alberta
special Events

HEROES of a Safe and Caring World Awards

This award is designed to honour children, youth, adults and community leaders/organizations who are making exceptional efforts to create a safe and caring society. Champions of Safe and Caring, including former Prime Minister of Canada the Honourable Paul Martin, Martin Luther King III, and former child soldier and international recording artist Emmanuel Jal, were part of a composite video message congratulating the award recipients and inspiring the community at the 2013 Creating Safe Spaces Breakfast. This year’s inaugural award recipients were recognized by Human Services Minister Dave Hancock and Associate Minister Sandra Jansen and included:

- Wren Kauffman, Grade 7 student, Edmonton
- Taegen Domstad, Grade 7 student, Airdrie
- Oski Pasikoniwew Kamik School, Wabasca
- Building Assets and Memories (BAM) Youth Group, St. Albert
- The Command Sisters, Spruce Grove
- Association des jurists d'expression française de l'Alberta (AJEFA)

“My students are learning to ask for help and are learning that the adults will step in and do it.”
The Creating Safe Spaces Waffle Breakfast is designed to serve as a fundraiser and a celebration, honouring key supporters, recognizing achievements and showcasing some of our work and partnerships. Our seventh annual event, on November 20th, 2013 at the Sutton Place Hotel Edmonton, attracted over 330 guests including corporate, government and education and youth leaders. This year’s event, hosted by Josh Classen and Donovan Workun, welcomed Safe and Caring’s new Honourary Chair, Associate Minister of Family and Community Safety Sandra Jansen and celebrated the winners of the Art of Caring Contest and the inaugural HEROES of a Safe and Caring World Award recipients.

Safe and Caring would like to thank our media sponsor CTV and role model sponsors, Enbridge, Charmaine Hammond and Team Toby, Island Industries Ltd., Alberta Mentoring Partnership and the University of Alberta School of Retailing.

The 2013 Safe and Caring Art of Caring Contest invited children and youth from around the province to share their artistic expression of what a safe and caring world means to them through song, video, poetry, drawing, sculpture, or an essay. Their creations have inspired others to join in making their vision for society a reality. In addition a signature art piece representing Safe and Caring’s work in the community was created by Kelsey Nowaczynski and her art students at Dan Knott Junior High School. 2013 Art of Caring Contest winners were recognized by Minister Dave Hancock and Associate Minister Sandra Jansen and included:

- Mrs. Laurie McIntosh’s Grade 2 Class, St Thomas Aquinas Roman Catholic Separate Regional Division
- Ceilidh Wyllie, Grade 9, Edmonton Public Schools

Justin Hines Vehicle of Change Benefit Concert

There are many ways to inspire change and make a difference. Great things happen when organizations collaborate with one common mission… to make the world a better place.

Canadian songwriter and musician, Justin Hines, is making a difference on a global level through his music. On September 8, 2013, Justin visited Edmonton on his Vehicle of Change Tour; his performance benefited The Society for Safe and Caring Schools & Communities, and Chimo Animal Assisted Therapy. This event was a positive demonstration of the power of collaboration and cooperation, and a reminder that it takes a community to raise a child, and create a safe and caring world. This particular collaboration also included Safe and Caring’s mascot, Niska, and a team of therapy dogs who greeted people at the door, and demonstrated the positive impact of connection, and unconditional acceptance and kindness.

The event was hosted by Charmaine Hammond, of Team Toby, whose mission is to improve lives by teaching kindness, acceptance and respect.
Community Supporters and Volunteers

Thank you to all the individuals who participate in or contribute their time and positive energy to the success of Safe and Caring.

A-Squared Communications
Aimee Caster
Alberta Health Services - Addiction and Mental Health
Alberta Human Rights Education and Multiculturalism Fund
Alberta Liberal Opposition
Alberta Mentoring Partnership
Alberta School Employee Benefit Plan
Alberta Justice & Solicitor General
Alva Shewchuk
Al Shamal Shriners
AMA School Safety Patrol
Alberta Traffic Safety Fund
Andy Holt
Andrea Berg
Alberta Retired Teachers’ Association
Alberta School Boards Association
Assante Wealth Management
Association des juristes d’expression francaise de l-Alberta
Alberta Teachers’ Association
Barry Davidson
Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society’s Coyote Kids Program
Bev Dekker
Bev Esslinger
Bigstone Community School
- Oski Pasikoniwew Kamik School
Bigstone Cree Nation Band
Military Family Resource Centre
Brittney Mack
Caledonia Park School
Calling Lake School
Canadian Legacy Project
Camrose Composite High School
Canadian Red Cross
Caroline Missal
Child Development Institute
Charlie Killam Junior High School
Central Middle School
Centre High
City of St Albert
College of Alberta Psychologists
Conseil scolaire Centre-Nord
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Human Rights Education and Multiculturalism Fund
Island Industries Ltd.
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Joan McDonald
John Paul II School
Josy Wicentowich
Karen Hobbs
Karen Lynch
Kathleen Ryan
Kelsey Nowaczynski
Kids Help Phone
Kipochtakaw Education Centre
- Alexander First Nation
Kyle Murray
Kyle Shukaliak
Laura Fitzgerald
Legendary Woodsman
Liam Pearce
Linh Lu
National Crime Prevention Council
- Public Safety Canada
Nick Diaz
Nida Farooqui
Scotia (Westmount)
Marilyn Huber
Mark Cabaj
Marni Pearce
Maureen Ungarian
Mental Health Foundation
Michele Toma
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Nancy Cummings
Nathan Pelachuk
NCPC (National Crime Prevention Council)
Nida Farooqui
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Organization Health (OHI)
Out of School Time Network
Patti Giersch
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PREVnet
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Public School Board Association of Alberta
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Randy Hobbs
Randy Hobbs Professional Corp.
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Safe Communities Innovation Fund
Seedcheck Technologies Inc
Sheila Nash
Sherwood Heights Junior High School
Staples
Stollery Charitable Foundation
Status of Women (Government of Canada)
Sue Hopgood
Tami Friesen
TELUS
TELUS Community Board - Edmonton
Terra Centre
Terry Fortin
Terry Gunderson
Tefaye Ayalew
Tim Battle
TOSH
United Way
University of Alberta - Faculty of Extension
University of Alberta-School of Retailing
University of Victoria
Val Riewe
Wen Kauffman
Wendy Heydemann
Wendy Jensen
Westmount Junior High School
Wildrose Official Opposition
Kris Wells
Lana Wells
About Us

The Society for Safe and Caring Schools & Communities (Safe and Caring) is a not-for-profit organization, which builds community capacity to prevent bullying, violence and exploitation of children and youth through the promotion of healthy relationships.

Our Vision is Alberta’s Vision

Every school and community will be a safe, caring and inclusive environment where each child will grow to be a respectful and responsible citizen.

The Safe and Caring vision is closely aligned with the priorities of the Government of Alberta. Alberta’s new Education Act will require that students, parents and school boards contribute to building a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environment that respects diversity and fosters a sense of belonging. The government’s Social Policy Framework and the Children First Act state that we must all work together to support the safety, well-being and development of children in Alberta. Safe and Caring shares a similar vision by working to ensure every child in Alberta has the opportunity to grow up in a caring and nurturing home, an engaging and supportive school, and a safe and inclusive community. Achieving this requires the involvement of parents, teachers and all the important adults and community members in a young person’s life.

What We Know

- Bullying, violence and sexual exploitation can have traumatic, devastating and long-lasting impacts on those individuals involved.
- Children and youth learn more effectively when they feel safe and are cared for.
- Non-violent behaviours and healthy relationship skills must be taught, modelled and reinforced consistently by the important adults in a young person’s life.
- Reducing child and youth risk factors and increasing protective factors relies on collaboration among all community partners.
- Promoting healthy relationships and eliminating violence is the responsibility of all adults in the community.
- Rates of bullying and violence against children and youth are too high: 36 per cent of students have participated in bullying; and one in three girls and one in six boys are sexually abused.
- Rates of family violence against children and youth are on the rise.
Our Guiding Principles

- Dignity and Respect – We promote healthy relationships, respect and dignity as a means of supporting diversity and inclusion in our schools and communities.
- Evidence Based – We provide research-based programming, resources and workshops that help adults create safe, welcoming and caring spaces for children and youth.
- Empowering Schools and Communities – By teaching prevention and intervention strategies, we help make schools and communities safer and more caring.
- Engagement of Children and Youth – Listening, understanding and responding to the needs of children and youth is necessary to effectively mobilize their passion, energy and values. We support youth action that helps to create ethical citizens and social change.
- Collaboration with Partners and Stakeholders – We work with individuals, groups and organizations to promote healthy relationships that will positively impact our communities.

real Connections

We believe that in order to accomplish our goals and live up to our principles we need a comprehensive approach which includes support, cooperation and teamwork from our partners. We have established three interconnected themes to support the work of the Society.

- Supporting Safe and Caring School Cultures
  Desired Outcome: Educators and other staff have the tools and knowledge to create, safe and inclusive learning environments, free from violence and bullying.

- Towards Safe and Caring Communities
  Desired Outcome: Parents and other adults who work with children and youth have the skills they need to support healthy relationships, address bullying and resolve conflicts respectfully.

- Facilitating Youth Engagement
  Desired Outcome: Youth have the necessary leadership opportunities to develop healthy relationships and prevent violence and bullying so they can take action on issues that matter to them.
real Impact

our Focus

Supporting Safe and Caring School Cultures

Ongoing Work: The ongoing work in this area includes many of our projects and programs which have been developed and implemented for several years. These include our SACSC Model for Implementation, our Safe and Caring Curriculum, and our Professional Development Working Series.

In addition to our ongoing work our current focus related to supporting safe and caring school cultures includes:

Adopt –a-School

Funder: “Creating Safe Spaces” Waffle Breakfast Fundraiser

Duration: November 2012—December 2013

St. Rose Junior High School in Edmonton joined Safe and Caring as our ‘adopted school’ from January to June of 2013. During this time the students participated in a Youth Action project focused on Relational Aggression. A group of staff and students were introduced to the concept of Action Research at a workshop facilitated by Safe and Caring. Following the workshop, Safe and Caring met with lead teachers to review the project components and offer ongoing support to the school. This included providing materials and resources to support ‘Next Steps’ and ongoing sustainability.

McKenzie Towne Elementary School in Calgary joined us as an ‘adopted school’ in 2013. The school has worked with Safe and Caring on a comprehensive approach to create a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environment. This involved linking new activities with core curriculum and current classroom practice. Class promises were developed by each class.

Comments from staff members at the beginning of the collaboration included:

“This was great information and brought some topics to light that we need to address as a staff and school. Safe and Caring provided very useful ideas of how to deal with some specific topics.”

“This workshop provided a grounding and foundation for our school to continue the conversation about creating a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe environment for everyone.”

“The workshop gave us a lot of great food for thought to help us get started on implementing the safe and caring principles at our school.”
**WITS – Creating Responsive Communities to Promote Healthy Relationships in Young Children**

Funder: Public Health Agency of Canada  
Duration: Jan 2011—December 2014  

The three-year WITS (Walk Away; Ignore, Talk It Out; Seek Help) research project was concluded in June 2013. Data gathered continues to be analyzed by the research team at University of Victoria and will continue to be shared with all participating schools including the 10 from Sturgeon School Division.

Results included:

- Baseline data indicate that children reported high levels of physical and relational peer victimization in their schools.  
  Approximately one in 10 children are persistently victimized by their peers.

- Child reported frequency of parent involvement in school activities was associated with lower levels of peer victimization within a school year.

  A University of Victoria survey of schools implementing WITS Programs was completed at the end of June 2013. One question asked of teachers was: “Share your unique experience in using the WITS Programs.” Some comments gathered include:

  - It was great to the sense of school community created when the WITS program was put into effect.

  - Parents are extremely supportive of the Program because they want Peer Victimization to be reduced for their children at school. Parents have looked at the WITS website and read books to their kids.

  Comments from staff members

  - It is wonderful to hear students use the WITS vocabulary within our school and on the playground. Also when students transfer into our school once they hear that we use WITS they feel comfortable because they used the programs in their previous school.

  - I use the WITS program and we’ve incorporated these lessons into our daily lives, at home and with friends that come over. They are great life lessons and easy for kids to remember,

  - Love watching kids self manage without intervention in the schoolyard. It empowers students to learn how to resolve conflicts.

Currently, WITS Program dissemination initiatives are under way throughout Canada. Central office personnel were sent e-mail information about WITS and steps for implementation. In Alberta, brochures have been included in Guidance Council Conference delegates’ bags. A WITS display garnered much interest at the Red Deer Diversity Equity and Human Rights Information Fair.

Attendance at conventions to present/display information about WITS is planned as well as other initiatives to provide information regarding the French version, Dire. New books and lesson plans are being added to the online resources. A Youth Action Contest has been sponsored to award thirteen $500.00 awards for youth groups who are doing something about reducing bullying behaviour to create safe school environments.
From Risk to Resiliency: Implementing SNAP® (Stop Now And Plan)

Funder: Alberta Safe Communities Innovation Fund
Funder: National Crime Prevention Centre, Public Safety Canada
Duration: May 2009—June 2013

Safe and Caring engaged four schools to implement a project involving SNAP®, intended to address risk factors and build protective factors in identified high risk youth (age 6-12).

These sites included Kipohtakaw Education Centre in Alexander First Nation, Forest Green School in Stony Plain, Bigstone Community School in Wabasca and Calling Lake School. The schools implemented the SNAP® for Boys and SNAP® for Girls programs as well as the SNAP® for Schools program.

The Stop Now And Plan (SNAP®) program is a proven preventative intervention approach that reduces and prevents crime in high-risk youth. It is listed by the National Crime Prevention Centre of Canada as an evidence-based, best-practice model. The project’s goal was to provide youth with the skills they need to make good decisions, teach them alternate strategies for controlling impulses, and provide their support networks (parents/adults and school staff) with proven strategies to ensure they have the knowledge and skills they need to be successful. The SNAP® program teaches impulse control and problem solving skills and is targeted towards children with behaviour problems and those most likely to become involved in the youth justice system. Studies have shown that children who participate in the program are twice as likely not to have a criminal record by their 18th birthday.

534 youth participated in this project and based on testimonials and standardized testing, significant positive changes have been noted as a result of this work.

Creating Caring, Respectful and Safe Learning Environments

Funder: Alberta Teachers’ Association
Funder: Alberta Education
Duration: April 2012—March 2013

To help prepare schools for proposed changes to the Education Act, this project involves the development of a comprehensive process/guidebook on what schools can do to create and maintain caring, respectful and safe learning environments, free from bullying. Research and data is being summarized and collected through a literature review and from various education audiences in order to capture and share good practices. Representatives from the Alberta Teachers’ Association, Alberta Education, Alberta College of School Superintendents, Alberta School Council Association, University of Alberta, University of Calgary, and the University of Lethbridge are helping to guide this process.
our Focus

Towards Safe and Caring Communities

Ongoing Work:
The Safe and Caring Society continues to support the “veranda” community workshop series, host the Annual Creating Safe Spaces breakfast and provide Information Booklets and Tip Sheets on our website.

In addition to our ongoing work our current focus related to safe and caring communities includes:

Community Engagement to Prevent Youth Gang Involvement

Funder: Department of Justice Canada-Youth Justice Fund
Duration: January-March 2013

The purpose of this project was to complete a community assessment in Wabasca to increase the effectiveness of local or regional efforts to address youth gangs. An advisory committee was established composed of community members representing St. Theresa School, Mistassiniy School, Oski Pasikoniwew Kamik, Peekiswetan Let’s Talk Agency, Gang Task Force—Crime and Gang Reduction, Northland School Division, RCMP, Bigstone Cree Nation, MD of Opportunity #17 and Probation/Community Corrections.

Committee members reviewed and provided feedback on the data collection instrument created to gather information on the existing programs and resources in the community, assisted with collection of data, assisted in the correlation of the risk and protective factors with the existing program and resources and identified the gaps in the community related to programs and resources.

The members of the committee also shared the project results with the rest of the community.

Preventing and Reducing Violence Against Women and Girls in High Risk Neighbourhoods

Funder: Status of Women Canada
Duration: February 2013-February 2015

The primary mandate of this project is to provide a forum for those involved (from education and community support backgrounds) to review documents and provide information, which will then guide the selection and implementation of a program that will help to prevent and reduce violence against women and girls in the community of Wabasca. A community-based steering committee has been established to oversee and guide the project. Currently, a needs assessment with community members and school staff is being conducted. The results will be reviewed by the steering committee and this will aid in the selection of the program that will be implemented in the two community elementary schools, as well as other required supports.
Beyond the Crosswalk–Living Respectfully
Funder: Alberta Traffic Safety Fund
Duration: November 2012–December 2013

The Alberta Motor Association along with Safe and Caring developed Beyond the Crosswalk – Living Respectfully Program. This program focuses on respectful behaviour in schools and communities by providing students, school staff and parents the skills necessary to model and reinforce respectful behaviours with a focus on school traffic safety.

Parents and teachers collaborated in the development of resources that tied together traffic safety and living respectfully - incorporating messages such as “Be an Example”, “Be Safe” and “Be Respectful”.

School staff piloting the resources shared:

“The students LOVED the activities and it made positive changes in some, reinforced good behaviours in others, gave everyone a common language, and helped reinforce our school rule of ‘Show Respect’.”

“I have learned that by making students well aware of these concerns, they will begin to take ownership of traffic safety issues and it is through them, that this incentive will work.”

AMA School Safety Patrol has generously provided funds to develop the resources to include SmartBoard interactivity. The revised resources will be piloted with several AMA School Safety Patrols across the province in the spring of 2014.

Engaging Youth-Preventing Bullying and Racism Through Human Rights Education
Funder: Human Rights Education and Multiculturalism Fund (HREMF)
Duration: Sept 2013—Aug 2014

Through this project we are engaging youth and educators at Centre High Campus in developing a youth action project where they will:

- Identify the issues in their school community related to violence and human rights
- Develop and implement an action plan to address the issues identified once the action research is complete
- Share results and recommendations as to how this youth action project can be integrated into curriculum and advise how project learnings could change school and district policy.

Centre High Campus, located in Edmonton, houses a very diverse population. Approximately 3,300 students attend the school and of these 25% are coded English Language Learners. Centre High provides services to approximately 260 self-identified First Nations, Metis and Inuit (FNMI) students and over forty-one different languages were identified as spoken by students in 2013.

The project is led by a steering committee, composed of school staff and community members.
Facilitating Youth Engagement

Ongoing Work:

Safe and Caring Society continues to provide Peer Mentoring training support as well as Youth Action Guides. In addition to our ongoing work our current focus related to facilitating youth engagement includes:

Peer Mentoring

Funders: Children’s Mental Health with added funding from Telus Community Foundation for 2013-2014
Duration: November 2012—December 2014 (funding increased to June, 2014)

Peer mentoring is about developing healthy, supportive relationships between youth. This project focuses on raising awareness regarding the harmful psychological effects of relational aggression and cyberbullying. Student mentors from 13 junior and senior high schools across the province have been paired with younger peers from their own or a feeder school. Research indicates that youth who feel connected to their school, who develop healthy relationships and who demonstrate empathy are less likely to be involved in or tolerate bullying, and peer mentoring provides the perfect opportunity for these healthy relationships and behaviours to form.

The 175 mentors and their mentees met weekly and focused on getting to know each other, building relationships and/or increasing awareness of relational aggression and cyberbullying. The mentors in many schools took the initiative to make a difference in their school community by creating videos to inform students about relational aggression, speaking to classes about the harmful effects of bullying, creating anti-bullying posters and posting them around the school, speaking with the RCMP and Rotary clubs about the mentoring program, volunteering in their community with their mentees and developing a by-stander pledge taken by all students in the school.

Students have commented that one of the most enjoyable things about being a mentor was being able to help others. Other comments included:

“My mentee looks up to me so it helps me to act better”
“Being a mentor has made me realize it’s not just about me, it’s about what I can do for others.”

Responses from parents included:

“It is a very good program that helped my child to develop empathy and leadership skills”
“My daughter has relished being a mentor. This experience has given her a much stronger connection to school”
Mentees have said such things as:

“I finally have an older friend to do things with”

“I don’t get in as many fights now and making friends is easier for me”

One of the staff facilitators commented that “This program has not only helped our class by improving our leadership skills but also allowed us to take our skills into the real world. It has also helped our school as we have been involved in a number of activities around raising awareness about bullying”.

Alberta Mentoring Partnership has supported Safe and Caring with the evolution of this project over the past 6 months and is now partnering on a Peer Mentoring toolkit.
Next Steps

Media attention to the incidences and impacts of issues of bullying, violence and exploitation of children and youth and public awareness is increasing. Emerging research is clearly showing the devastating and potentially life-long impacts these traumas have on the developing child. New evidence and research suggests the creation of positive, safe, caring, healthy and respectful relationships are proving to be the most effective means to reduce bullying and other issues. Alberta’s new Associate Minister of Family and Community Safety, Sandra Jansen has also been named the new Honourary Chair of Safe and Caring. We believe this, together with Alberta’s new Social Policy Framework, the Children First Act and the new Education Act, will help facilitate stronger community-government collaborative efforts where real people make real connections to have real impact. Now is the time for all of us to work together to create safe and caring environments for all children.
The Safe and Caring Board of Directors includes representation from the Alberta Teachers’ Association, the Alberta School Boards Association, the College of Alberta School Superintendents and other community organizations and individuals committed to the children and youth of Alberta.

Tesfaye Ayalew, Member at Large
Andrea Berg, Alberta Teachers’ Association (ATA) Appointed
Mark Cabaj, Member at Large (as of September 2013)
Dr. Lori Campbell, Member at Large
Barry Davidson, Member at Large
Bev Esslinger, President/Chair, Member at Large (until March 2013)
Nida Farooqui, Member at Large
Laura Fitzgerald, Member at Large
Terry Gunderson, Alberta School Boards Association (ASBA) Appointed
Randy Hobbs, Secretary/Treasurer, Member at Large
Joan McDonald, Member at Large
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Dr. Christina Rinaldi, Member at Large
Kathleen Ryan, Vice-President, Member at Large
Ron Taylor, College of Alberta School Superintendents (CASS) Appointed (President/Chair effective March 2013)

Special Advisors (effective September 2013)
Dr. Marilyn Huber, Alberta Education
Dr. Kris Wells, University of Alberta
Lana Wells, Brenda Strafford Chair in the Prevention of Domestic Violence at the Faculty of Social Work, University of Calgary
LIMITLESS

2013 signature art piece representing Safe and Caring’s work in the community
Created by Kelsey Nowaczynski and her art students at
Dan Knott Junior High School
Edmonton, Alberta