



WE CALL THE POLICE TOO MUCH

*It's time to empower our communities to
be able to do more than wait for
laws to be broken*



EDITOR'S NOTE

I want to discuss in detail how we can bring our communities together, with the objective of optimizing community safety and well-being. This white paper aims to analyze and provide solutions with a complete respect of police work.

I have worked in many situations where community based safety solutions were implemented. I can certainly say that taking responsibility for people within the community has always been well-received by the police. The reactions were in fact generally those of curiosity and positivity.

I am inspired by these experiences and want to work towards making this a reality in more communities as I know this is a solution that can really work. Over the coming months, I will add to this series, sharing different pieces I have encountered while working with communities; I will focus on those ideas that can empower community members and stakeholders within a community.

This paper will be followed in a 6 part series that focuses on some of the elements briefly covered in this paper such as support of grassroots organizations, community patrols, better use of commercial security and institutional barriers to employment.

*Daniel Waycik,
Co-Founder of PCS*



Communities within Canadian cities have been struggling with homelessness, addictions, crime and a reduced sense of safety. Recent calls to defund the police demonstrate that people are disillusioned with the services that are supposed to help with these problems.

The truth is that nine times out of ten, where a situation has devolved to the point that police intervention is required, we have failed as a community. Calling the police is like applying the brakes when you realize you are about to get into an accident with another vehicle; there were many things you could have done to avoid the accident, but by that point, it is too late. Police intervention, like braking, can reduce further damage due to crimes and threats to public safety. However, they cannot address the cause of the incident and do little to prevent it from happening again.

Communities should stop problems from ever getting that bad. Unfortunately, they do not always have the capacity to do so.

We already have knowledge and expertise to address these problems. It is a matter of building our capacity to have a network that brings existing resources together. In our recent history, we had to delegate authorities once held by police to a completely new type of service.

The City of Red Deer's Ad Hoc Committee on Community Safety noted "Policing and enforcement are, without question, crucial components of community safety. But a vision for safety [in our community] cannot simply be legislated or enforced." Red Deer has since moved to a model where education, early intervention and education play an increased role in crime prevention and distress aid.¹



Getting to the root of the problem

A common issue in communities today is property theft. When a crime, such as a break and enter, occurs, the victim is rightly afraid. The homeowner has no way of knowing what motivated the intruder to commit such a gross violation of their safety and privacy. Whether this was a "survival crime"² or they were the victim of a career criminal is not relevant to the homeowner upon discovering their home has been broken into. Ultimately, somebody is the victim of a break and enter, there should be no hesitation as to their course of action -- call 911.

Everybody can agree that the best case scenario would be if this never happened in the first place. This is where the motivation of the burglar becomes relevant: for career criminals, we will always have to rely on police. However, addressing problems that motivate survival crimes in order to prevent them from being committed in the first place is well within our ability as a community.

The "survival crime" theory claims that "people [who face barriers to their wellbeing through marginalization] commit property crimes and low-level infraction in order to secure their basic survival." Christopher Rufo claims that traditional enforcement against people who commit these crimes is "...a violation of their basic human rights..." stating that we have a responsibility institutionally and ultimately in society to seek actions that don't "criminalize homelessness" and "criminalize poverty".²

This may be a controversial statement. However, what is likely not controversial is that arresting somebody who has committed a "survival crime" does not solve their problem of survival in the first place. They will go to jail for some time; however, when they have served their time they will still be in the same situation (or worse).



Bear Clan Community Patrol. Manitoba

We've asked this question before...

When we start to look at the capacity of a community to be able to proactively solve its own problems, we have to answer the question: are the services we currently rely on the right ones?

We have put an inappropriate level of responsibility on our existing emergency services. We put our front-line personnel into many situations for which they are not properly prepared. This observation isn't anti-police, but rather reflects the natural evolution of our communities' needs; and it's not the first time we've had this conversation.

In 1966, a historic report called into question our reliance on police and existing public health standards in north america.³ With increased motor vehicle usage in the preceding decades, injuries and deaths from automobile accidents were rising at an alarming rate. Additionally, available lifesaving techniques from the military weren't recognized as accepted medical practice. As a result, "if seriously wounded... chances of survival would be higher [in warzones] than on the average [American] city street". The report called for "permanently assigned physicians and paramedical personnel trained in all aspects of the care of trauma."³ This report is still known today in the paramedicine community as "The White Paper".

Then, as now, the evolution of society created a problem that required a solution. As stated by proponents of proactive law "We need to move away from the traditional reactive model [placing emphasis] on understanding and enhancing the drivers of success."⁴

A new era

Just two years after the release of 'The White Paper', St. Vincent's Hospital in New York City created America's first mobile coronary care unit using physicians, and eventually paramedics.⁶

A similar solution for community-based security and well-being, which helps prevent crime, is possible.

The problem of increased trauma due to motor vehicle accidents wasn't solved by simply giving police more training and equipment. Police already had the full-time responsibility of performing the essential role of law enforcement, which requires them to respond to law enforcement emergencies; the types of emergencies that they are trained for and specialized in dealing with.



We recognized that we were identifying a role - now known as paramedicine - that would require personnel that were fully dedicated to providing emergency medical interventions.

We need to start looking at today's problems in the same way. In 1994, the Bureau of Justice Assistance in the United States envisioned the future where "With the police no longer the sole guardians of law and order, all members of the community become active allies in the effort to enhance the safety and quality of neighborhoods."⁷

There is a clear role in our communities that needs to be filled: that of providing support, information and resources to would-be perpetrators of survival crimes. Through education and resources, the chain of events that lead our victimized homeowner to call 911 may never have happened in the first place.

This will take commitment

Critics may have concerns that this approach is a copy of what we have now with a new look. While there have been some solutions that resemble that which is described in this paper - (i.e. deterrence-based foot patrols) they have consistently fallen short. This usually comes down to a lack of resources and institutional support, which are required to provide the necessary training to enable personnel to be an effective, empowering resource for the communities they serve. The difference can be seen in communities where similar programs are properly supported both financially and institutionally by their community and its stakeholders; such as Kwanlin Dun First Nation.



Before 2019, the community of Kwanlin Dun First Nation in northern Canada, had a reputation for being a dangerous place, and fights were commonplace. Between 2014-17, four people were killed in a community of 1000; "a number that's well above the national rate of two out of every 100,000", said an article in the Globe and Mail.⁸

Their Chief, Doris Bill, noted, "Women were sleeping with baseball bats beside their bed." There were two police officers assigned permanently to the community, but they were often called for serious emergencies in other areas.

Police officers are not social workers, they are not mental health nurses, or paramedics... It is not good enough for police custody to be used as an overspill facility.

However, in 2019, the community trained and designated four safety officers to work in collaboration with the police. These officers are uniquely committed to this neighborhood, and maintain strong ties therein. Their role includes responding to less serious calls, like domestic disturbances and public intoxication, as well as checking in with those experiencing addictions or domestic violence.

These safety officers receive role-specific training ranging from conflict resolution, addressing intergenerational trauma, critical incident stress management, and bylaw interpretation.⁸ As Chief Bill said, "there was a gap, and we filled it"; in less than a year there was a noticeable improvement in the well-being of the community, leaving it unlikely to ever go back to the status quo.



Kwanlin Dün First Nation launches first community safety officer, land steward program. New officers will act as a bridge between community and police

This approach assumes that communities will need policing for the foreseeable future -- not that they need to be replaced. It is about recognizing a whole separate area of work that could be addressed full-time by new services. As former British Primeminister Theresa May articulated, "Police officers are not social workers, they are not mental health nurses, or paramedics... It is not good enough for police custody to be used as an overspill facility".⁹ This is a sentiment that is also often shared by police services.



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Lieutenant Colonel Melvin Russell, the Chief of the Community Partnership Division of the Baltimore Police Department, did not mince words in describing this situation saying "We have put too much responsibility on law enforcement. Too much."¹⁰ In his view, we are relying on the police to solve an increasing number of problems, many of which are unrelated to their training and scope of practice.

Just like in the 1960's --- with the lack of paramedics -- we are starting to see incidents in society that require a new field of professionals and services that draw on modern knowledge and understanding.

Across the country, communities have already started to create their own organizations in a bid to address the problems in their community; such as the Bear Clan Patrol in Winnipeg started in 1992.¹² These grassroots organizations, in many cases, draw upon existing essential relationships within communities, and could serve as the foundation for a community-based solution, in concert with adjusted training standards, partnerships, rules and responsibilities.

Community capacity building supports not only "...work for the people, but by the people. After all, it's the people most affected by a problem who are in the best position to determine its solution".¹¹

A way that brings benefits for everyone

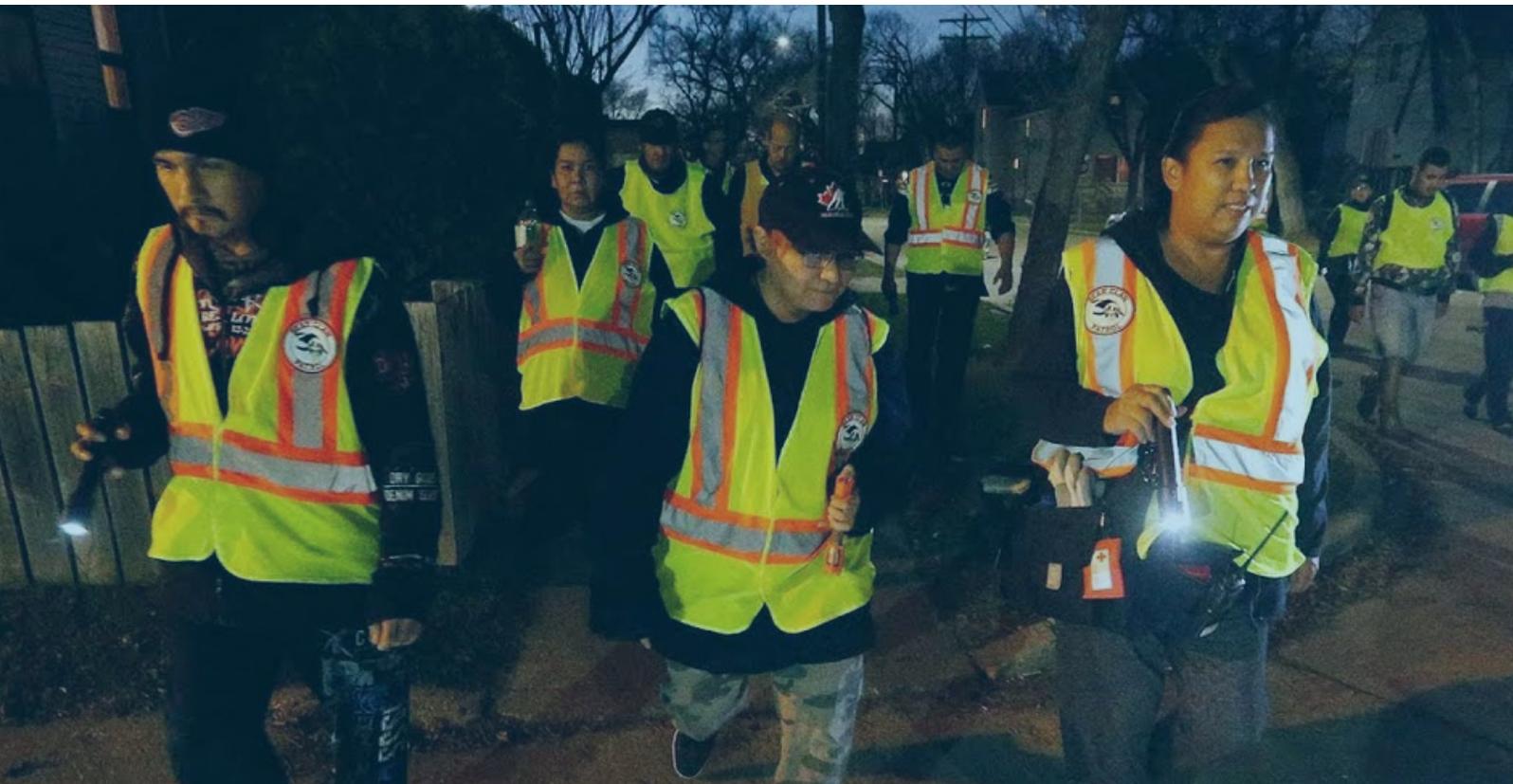
The approach described herein will create the ability to build and reinforce connections between a wider number of community members and stakeholders; not replace them. It will create services that can be 100% devoted to the community they serve with a specific scope of practice that meets the needs of their community.

Most importantly, this approach means that people won't feel insecure in their communities --- calling 911 as their only recourse once a law is broken. People will be empowered through having real access to effective services, and can even take up a career in serving their own community.

This is a solution that is possible, and implementation can happen in the immediate future. People already have the knowledge and expertise and clear examples where pieces of this approach are already working. We have dealt with a similar challenge in the past and succeeded, and the solution today - paramedics - is something people could never imagine being without. We are, once again, at a stage in our evolution as a society.

Before 1966, the concept of a paramedic was completely non-existent; However, today we find ourselves in a world where it is a reasonable expectation that you would call 911 for a medical emergency and be helped by professionals trained exactly for that task. It would seem completely bizarre for police to respond in their police cruiser and transport somebody to the hospital in the back seat of their car. Of course, they will always help in a pinch; but our society made a point of having better options so that there are more tools at our disposal to address the diverse needs of being human.

We need to do better in our communities to prevent crimes from happening, and stop assuming that the police must be the solution to all of our problems. We already have knowledge and expertise to address these problems; the personnel are available. It will be a matter of building our capacity to have a network that brings existing resources together and create trained, dedicated personnel who can make this a priority.



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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Daniel Waycik is Co-Founder and Operations Director at PCS. He is committed to creating sustainable programs that can operate autonomously based on a foundation of empowering the individual. Prior to that he leveraged over 10 years of experience, consulting as a Specialist in Community Safety, Security and Emergency Response for small communities and not-for-profit organizations.

Daniel has experience in security and traffic management for mass invitee venues for the likes of music festivals, parades and CFL stadiums. He has also created security or similar patrol programs in a diverse range of smaller tight knit communities, ranging from francophonie to biker culture. Apart from longer term projects, he is often contacted for those 'one-off' events where the right solution is illusive.

Due to his experience Daniel is familiar working within nonprofit and crown governance structures which allows him to integrate seamlessly with such organizations without disrupting what makes them distinct. He is always looking forward to the next challenge where he can both bring and expand his experience.

PCS is a social enterprise that provides services to empower communities and resolve security and community issues in new and sustainable ways. They work to reinvent community well-being through security and social innovation to create positive and lasting change; creating a more fulfilling society where well-being and dignity are essential values for all.

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