

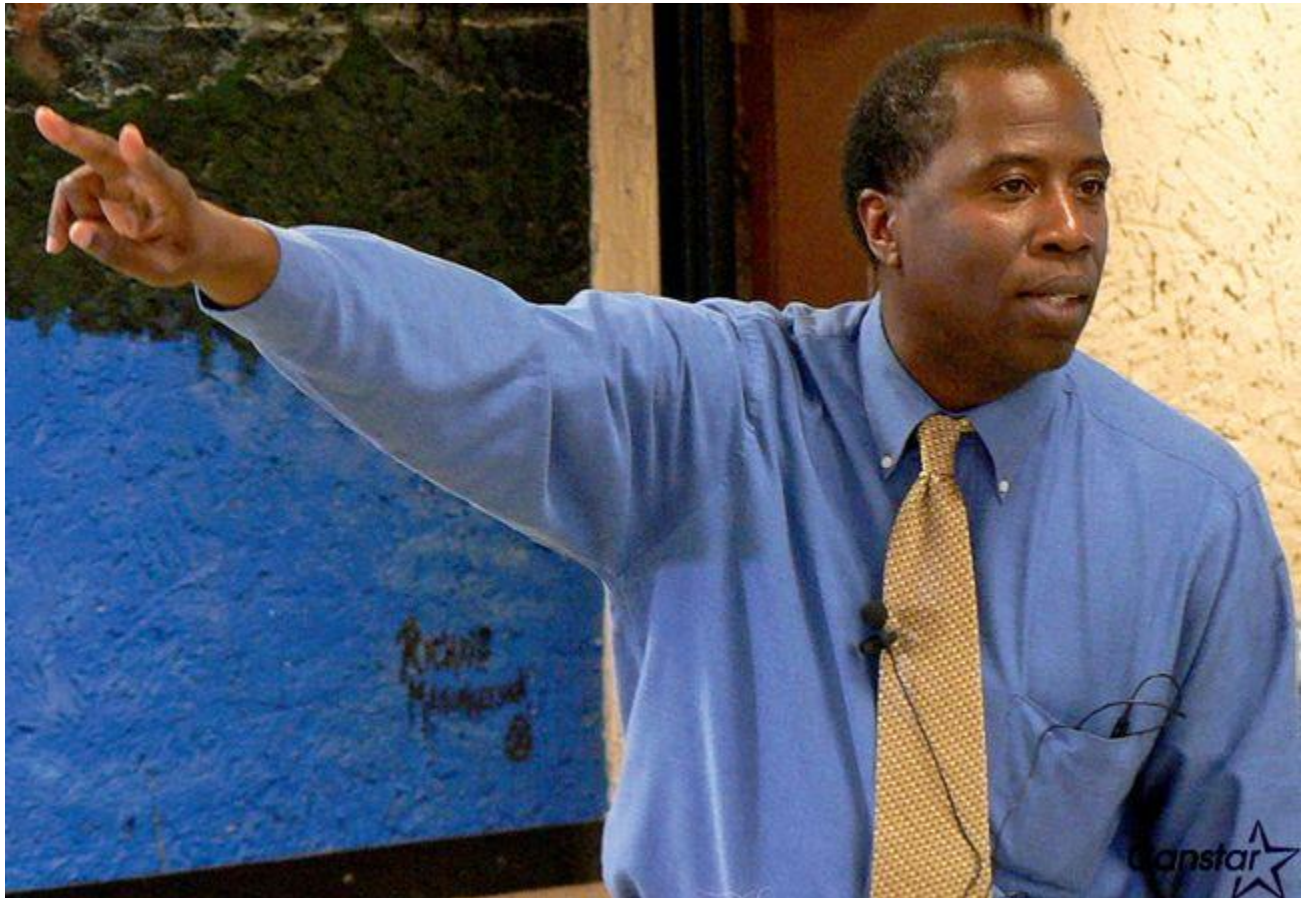
# THE TIMES

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## Youth gang recruitment real, says speaker Programming alternatives key in reducing youth gang recruitment in city

By: **Rob Brown**

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ROB BROWN [Enlarge Image](#)

Gangs and Youth violence specialist David Reid was in Winnipeg on Tues., March 22 to speak about reducing youth crime and gang involvement in the city. Reid has more than 25 years experience and his work has taken him to neighbourhoods in both Toronto and New York City.

Gangs are poised to put a stranglehold on Winnipeg youth, says a prominent American youth violence specialist.

David Reid, director of teen services for the Boys and Girls Clubs of America, was in Winnipeg March 22 to discuss methods of reducing and preventing youth crime involvement.

Reid was part of a workshop that outlined a comprehensive approach aimed at directing at-risk

youth towards positive alternatives instead of crime. More than 30 Winnipeg youth service agencies attended the workshop, as well as the Winnipeg Police Service, the RCMP and several city school divisions.

"From my observations, there are the right ingredients here for gangs to gain a real foothold — but we are not there yet," he said last week after his presentation to a packed room at the Freight House in West Alexander.

Reid has more than 25 years of experience in the field and has led youth violence and gang prevention work in Toronto and New York.

"My goal was to introduce the idea of assessing youth gang and delinquency challenges in Winnipeg," he said.

"From there we can implement an approach to offer life-changing programs and services to youth running the risks of turning to crime."

Reid's presentation was timely. A 16-year-old youth was charged last week in relation to a March 16 homicide. Abdul Jemei, 22, was stabbed while walking along Vaughan Street. Winnipeg police say the teen charged has a significant history with police.

According to the National Crime Prevention Centre, almost 50% of all youth gang members are under the age of 18. In Manitoba there is a growing percentage of female gang participation. Currently, 10% of gang members in Manitoba are female.

Allan Wise, executive director of the Central Neighbourhoods Development Corp., said gangs looking to draft youths into their ranks is something his organization takes very seriously.

"That is why we are looking at programming that counteracts the lure of gangs for youth," he said, noting the Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg held another workshop on youth and gang activity last week.

Some representatives of community groups in attendance at Reid's workshop had learned less than 24 hours prior earlier that federal Youth Gang Prevention Funding, expected to run out on March 31, would continue.

It was reported last week by the Winnipeg Free Press that five Winnipeg groups received word from Public Safety Minister Vic Toews' office funding would continue.

"I felt ridiculous being invited to this workshop knowing our YGPF was ending the following week. This news made coming to work a lot brighter today," said one community worker who didn't wish to be identified.

Reid said the key to Winnipeg groups moving forward was both constant contact and money. "Next steps of an action plan will have to be serious look at funding sources," he said.  
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