

---

## NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release  
2019EDUC0021-000362  
March 12, 2019

Ministry of Education

### **Helping B.C. students fight lure of gangs with new ERASE strategy**

ABBOTSFORD – Students, parents, educators, law enforcement and local partners in 12 B.C. communities will immediately begin receiving additional support and training opportunities to help at-risk kids get off the pathway to gun and gang violence, with a \$1.12-million investment from the Province.

“Young people are being supported to make the right decisions and not join gangs, with the backing of our education, law enforcement and community partners,” said Rob Fleming, Minister of Education. “We’re ensuring all B.C. students receive an education free from discrimination, bullying, harassment, intimidation and, most importantly, violence, for generations to come.”

The funding supports the new ERASE (Expect Respect and a Safe Education) school-based gang prevention program. It will be offered in priority communities identified by police and safety experts as those that could benefit from additional gang prevention support. Communities include Abbotsford, Burnaby, Delta, Kamloops, Kelowna, Langley, Nanaimo, Prince George, Surrey, Vancouver, Victoria and Williams Lake. The program will see the creation and delivery of new training and intensive supports focused on gun and gang violence awareness and prevention, and will also include the creation of resources for classroom teachers.

Funding will go to the B.C. School Superintendents Association (BCSSA), supporting districts in 12 priority communities to partner with the Boys Club Network. The Boys Club Network is a B.C.-based non-profit organization that works with school districts and community partners to create safe spaces for boys aged 12-19. Through the partnership, after-school programs will be set up (where they do not already exist), and new local secondary school elective courses will be created, focused on connecting teenage boys with positive adult role models and providing leadership and career development opportunities.

The BCSSA will also use the funding to provide 2,200 students, 1,500 parents and 2,500 educators, law enforcement officials and representatives of community-based organizations with an opportunity to participate in gang prevention and awareness education and training sessions.

The sessions will be provided by Safer Schools Together, the Ministry of Education’s service-delivery partner for ERASE. Topics will include an overview of the current B.C. gang landscape, how gang members are recruiting, myths and realities of gang membership, warning signs and how to help if someone is being recruited or is already involved in gang-related activity.

Safer Schools Together will also develop a new provincial learning resource for B.C. education professionals focused on gang prevention. It will be aligned with the provincial physical and

health education curriculum, and will include videos and a teacher guide focused on helping all students develop healthy relationships, avoid unsafe or exploitive situations, and how to protect themselves from harm. Localized monthly reports on public social media activity regarding gang activity will also be provided to school districts, along with support as needed on how best to address any concerning online behaviour.

“Ending the gun and gang violence that’s taking young lives and threatening our communities will continue to require strong, strategic prevention and enforcement efforts,” said Mike Farnworth, Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General. “Early intervention and prevention programs like ERASE are vital to ensuring our young people are both knowledgeable and resilient to the lure of gangs and gang violence — helping them make their own positive life choices. Our government will continue to pull out all the stops to identify bold, new actions that can support police, our justice system, our schools and our communities in curbing gang and gun violence and saving young lives.”

The provincial ERASE strategy offers services and resources to foster school connectedness, address bullying and prevent violence in B.C. schools, and provides support to school districts during critical incidents. Throughout the 2018-19 school year, ERASE is being expanded to be a more comprehensive resource, and will also focus on gang prevention, mental health and wellness, substance use, social media and sexual orientation and gender identity.

#### **Quotes:**

##### **Glen Hansman, president, British Columbia Teachers’ Federation (BCTF) —**

“The BCTF and our members are very supportive of all efforts to make our schools and communities safe and inclusive for all children, youth and families. The government’s efforts with the ERASE strategy will help us combat bullying, violence and harassment through education. We look forward to working with the government and other partner groups on this gang-prevention initiative.”

##### **Stan Petersen, chair, Abbotsford Board of Education —**

“The Abbotsford community continues to face challenges with ongoing gang conflicts that involve some Abbotsford students. We are pleased to see a portion of this funding coming directly to our community for specialized programming and education, serving our students who need additional support and access to resources.”

##### **Walter Mustapich, president and co-founder, Boys Club Network —**

“If boys do not understand and value themselves and their human potential, and make enduring connections with positive adult male mentors and role models within their primary spheres of influence — family, school, extracurricular — they will seek connection elsewhere. Elsewhere can be dangerous, damaging, devastating. For many complex reasons, things have changed considerably for boys in our schools and communities. All adolescent boys, not just boys conventionally identified as being at-risk through social or economic circumstance, benefit demonstrably from the consistent fortification of mentorship, moral courage and authentic hope offered in our after-school clubs and local curriculum. We are by no means the only solution, rather just one arrow in the quiver of targeted programs.”

**Hamid Moradi, Grade 12 student at Sutherland Secondary School, North Vancouver, and a Boys Club Network chapter leader —**

“The Boys Club Network gives us hope to shift our lives to something better. It’s more than just family, it’s a safe and vulnerable space. The mentorship connection is so pure we can trust it to help guide us through school and hard decisions about life. This city seems quiet, but it isn’t — there is so much going on below the surface. The real life lessons and moral courage I’ve learned at our meetings will stay with me always.”

**Theresa Campbell, president, Safer Schools Together —**

“Building on the success of the provincial ERASE strategy, a multi-tiered approach has been developed in response to gang activity. School communities across our province will now be equipped with education and resources to help identify young people engaged in gang associated behaviour or who are on the pathway to join a gang.”

**Quick Facts:**

- The \$1.12-million investment to support the program was announced by Farnworth in July 2018.
- On March 5, 2019, the federal government announced \$5.3 million in new funding for B.C. projects that help understand, prevent, disrupt and combat gun and gang violence, through the Initiative to Take Action Against Gun and Gang Violence.
- The Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General will receive the funding over two years. The initiative will include community consultation, targeted training and development of Indigenous gun and gang violence prevention tools.
- In October 2017, the B.C. government announced annual funding of \$500,000 for the Surrey wraparound program, commonly known as Surrey wrap.
- Another \$239,000 has been provided to the Province’s Gang Exiting and Outreach Pilot (for those seeking to exit the gang lifestyle) to support the pilot through to the end of its evaluation phase.
- End Gang Life school presentations have been delivered to over 25,000 students around the province. An initiative of the Combined Forces Special Enforcement Unit B.C., the program presents to secondary, middle and elementary schools and is involved in after-school programs, career fairs and community functions.

**Learn More:**

To view the new ERASE website and access new resources for students, parents and education professionals: [www.erase.gov.bc.ca](http://www.erase.gov.bc.ca)

For students worried about something at school or in their personal lives, and who are interested in letting an adult in their district know who can help resolve the situation, visit: [www.erasereportit.gov.bc.ca](http://www.erasereportit.gov.bc.ca)

View gang prevention resources for parents, visit the Combined Forces Special Enforcement Unit B.C. website: [www.cfseu.bc.ca/end-gang-life](http://www.cfseu.bc.ca/end-gang-life)

Learn more about the Boys Club Network: [www.boysclubnetwork.com](http://www.boysclubnetwork.com)

**Contact:**

Government Communications and Public  
Engagement  
Ministry of Education  
250 356-5963

---

Connect with the Province of B.C. at: [news.gov.bc.ca/connect](https://news.gov.bc.ca/connect)