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# Organized Crime and Policing

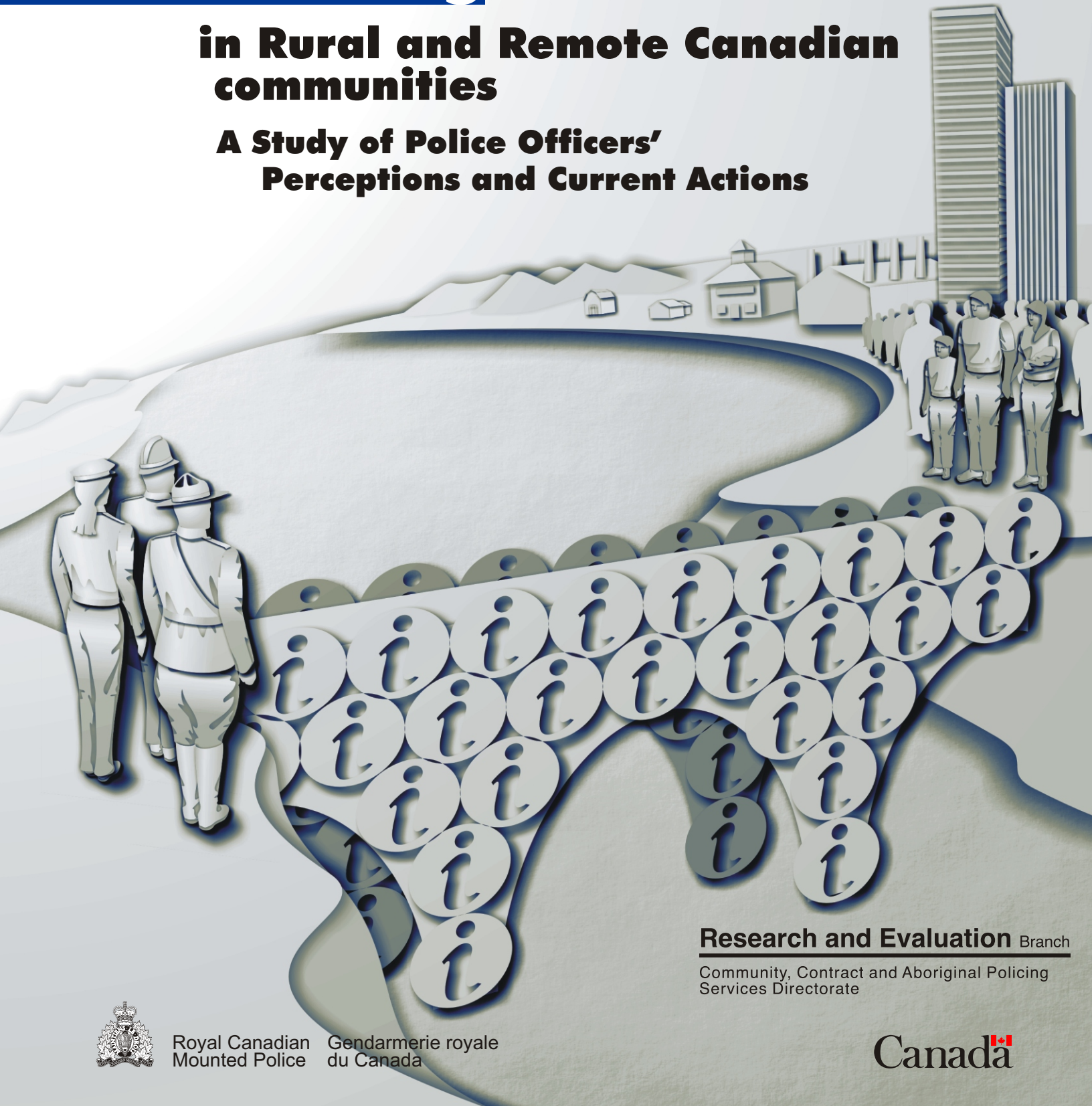
**RCMP**



ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE

## in Rural and Remote Canadian communities

### A Study of Police Officers' Perceptions and Current Actions



**Research and Evaluation** Branch

Community, Contract and Aboriginal Policing  
Services Directorate



Royal Canadian  
Mounted Police

Gendarmerie royale  
du Canada

Canada

# ORGANIZED CRIME AND POLICING IN RURAL AND REMOTE CANADIAN COMMUNITIES

## **A STUDY OF POLICE OFFICERS' PERCEPTIONS AND CURRENT ACTIONS**

Preliminary Field Research Results

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Ottawa 2005

Opinions expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police or the Government of Canada.

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## Foreword

*Organized crime in rural communities was selected as a 2004-05 research priority by the RCMP Operations Council. For the first time, a researcher has had the opportunity to travel and meet with front-line responders and their supervisors. Federal and International Operations and Community, Contract and Aboriginal Policing Services Directorate should be proud of having encouraged and supported such an innovative work project. Throughout the study, many members expressed their appreciation to National Headquarters for supporting research on this very important and challenging issue.*

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This publication documents groundbreaking research on the policing of organized crime in Canadian rural and remote communities. Its objective was to discover how local police dealt with organized crime activities. However, a conflict between the original research objective and reality on the ground quickly emerged. First, organized crime is not a high priority in rural and remote communities. Law enforcement officers focus on keeping the peace and managing/responding to crime-related activities. Second, since organized crime is not a daily issue, police officers and managers tend to believe there is none locally.

Nevertheless, this report highlights major barriers to fighting organized crime efficiently, lists current and future challenges, and proposes recommendations for action. It is a valuable reference document for what works and doesn't work in fighting organized crime from the perspective of rural and remote communities. It also highlights the value of intelligence gathering and sharing across Canada.

Based on the results of this research, it is apparent that five issues must be addressed to improve the effectiveness of rural and remote policing of organized crime:

- n Awareness
- n Competence
- n Confidence
- n Priorities
- n Resources

## Awareness

Organized crime and the collection of related information are far from a detachment's daily priority. The term "organized crime" still elicits, for some, stereotypes such as "Mafia" based groups or motor cycle gangs, which in most locations are not a concern. At the detachment level, police have difficulty identifying organized criminal activities that don't fit this model and therefore do not document any. In other words, organized crime is present but rather difficult to define and identify it in their areas.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Awareness

Competence

Confidence

Priorities

Resources

Recommendations

*Local police forces neither see nor attack organized crime on a regular basis. Based on interviews, there are organized crime activities in these communities. However, these activities tend to be submerged by routine work and responding to calls for services.*

- n Organized crime is manifested differently in different regions and localities in the country.
- n In many cases, the perceptions and description of organized crime reflect the local crime and police work activities.
- n Detachments have local concerns that are not necessarily linked to national priorities pertaining to organized crime.
- n In all divisions visited, drug activity is seen as the main example of linkages with organized crime; break and enters are another example but they are rarely documented.

The RCMP Operational Model provides general direction for police operations and in particular for police investigators. Most interviewees thought that organized crime investigations were the responsibility of General Investigations Section and specialized units in headquarters. This perception was supported by the demand of some Divisional headquarters that the information be sent to them for entry into the National Crime Database (NCDB).

There was also a perception that members' first priority was general duty policing to respond to community needs, not organized crime. However, this is flawed logic. If every police officer contributed effort and information in his or her capacity and competencies, chances are that the fight against organized crime would be greatly improved.

## Competence

Human resources, time management, work habits, information and intelligence gathering all play a major role in fighting organized crime. Our data show that adequate human resources is a permanent concern; time management is still a topic for ongoing training; work habits are difficult to change; and information-gathering remains a challenge for detachments and the RCMP as a whole.

At the micro level of daily police work, there are the challenges of:

- n doing regular data entry in relevant data banks, in particular NCDB
- n developing reliable informants
- n being more proactive in fighting organized crime specific to their location and its challenges
- n learning time management

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Awareness

### Competence

Confidence

Priorities

Resources

Recommendations

*Human resources, time management, work habits, information and intelligence gathering all play a major role in fighting organized crime.*



Detachments need to learn how to collect and contribute information to data banks, and to improve sharing of information particularly among front-line duty officers.

- n There were no dedicated human resources in the detachments visited who specifically address the broader issue of organized crime and its impact in these communities.
- n The issue of collecting and contributing information to National Crime Data Bank (NCDB) remains a major concern.
- n Information is still shared informally as it was in the past.

## Confidence

There is considerable uncertainty regarding the impact of organized crime on communities because of the lack of solid information and intelligence. This results in a lack of confidence that local detachments can address organized crime activities.

Many interviewees said that with their busy schedules they have no time left to deal with organized crime. Reasons include:

- n incomplete knowledge about how to deal with both information and intelligence
- n lack of human resources and budget limitations
- n absence of good work methods
- n no established operational priorities and having to respond to communities' needs

## Priorities

At the macro level, it is important to strike a balance between the RCMP's national priorities, and local and regional priorities for detachments. Local RCMP detachments are responsible for:

- n municipal police services
- n being accountable to municipal councils
- n provincial law enforcement
- n rural policing services
- n daily activities and police practices
- n fighting the natural tendency to keep things as usual
- n keeping spending low

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Awareness

**Competence**

**Confidence**

**Priorities**

Resources

Recommendations

*It is important to strike a balance between the RCMP national priorities, and local and regional priorities*

## Resources

The level and scope of knowledge, comprehension and perceptions of organized crime of front-line duty officers and supervisors tend to be stereotypical and limited because of:

- n the daily work reality – what they see in terms of arrests, search warrants, what they know about informants and how to deal with information
- n insufficient human and financial resources – the feeling of not having enough time to be efficient or funds to accomplish all tasks
- n the tools available and actually used – tools are of limited value without training in their use

There are some differences in the state of technology and its use across the divisions visited. For example, some police cars are equipped with Global Positioning System while others do not have laptops.

## Recommendations

1. In order to educate supervisors as well as front-line duty officers to the importance of fighting organized crime, we suggest the dissemination of this report as part of a larger communication strategy aimed at documenting organized crime from the perspective of rural and remote detachments.
2. Establish a training program (preferably on-line) that will address the specifics of organized crime from the perspective of rural and remote communities.
3. Since organized crime is a major priority for the Canadian government, law enforcement agencies and the RCMP, we suggest a follow-up study focusing on the social impact of organized crime in rural and remote communities.
4. Finally, acknowledge the challenges of new information technology for members as a daily challenge for processing and using information.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Awareness  
Competence  
Confidence  
Priorities

### Resources

### Recommendations

*Special attention should be given to information technology as a daily challenge for processing and using information*

# INTRODUCTION

This study focuses on organized crime in Canadian rural and remote communities. Its objective was to document and analyze the views of RCMP regular members regarding organized crime in remote and rural communities, and to solicit their ideas for strategies to fight this type of crime.

## Previous Research

Although many Canadians live in these communities, researchers have paid very little attention to rural crime and none at all to rural organized crime. A study conducted by Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Canada (PSEPC) in 2002 did not even consider the theme. There is little documentation about organized crime in rural communities and small towns.

This study addresses that shortfall. We realized that discussions about organized crime need to incorporate the broader perspective of policing and crime in general. See [Policing and Crime in Rural and Remote Communities](#), which helps us understand front-line duty officers and managers' knowledge, perceptions and concerns about organized crime.

For Potter (2004), a researcher on rural crime, rural organized crime has been typified by disorganized bands of fences, con artists, strip-clubs owners and auto thieves. Although research in the field is relatively sparse, it appears that rural areas do have their share of drug dealers, bootleggers, prostitutes, gamblers, fraudsters and auto thieves. Potter's work illustrates the considerable concern about the growth of the wholesale drug market and the criminal organizations that feed the market. He notes that illicit goods and services revolve around the basic human vices of liquor, sex and gambling and drugs as ancillary product. Potter concludes that the overwhelming majority of rural criminal enterprises involve relatively small numbers of participants.

We were interested to see if we would come to similar conclusions in this study. Interviewees were asked to talk about "organized crime" in their respective locations, recognizing that there are various definitions of this concept which may be legal, statistical, or sociological, among others (See [What Is Organized Crime?](#) for details.)

## INTRODUCTION

### Previous Research

Methodology

Summary of Results

Research Objectives

*It is important to strike a balance between the RCMP national priorities, and local and regional priorities*

## Methodology

In consultation with Criminal Operations officers we selected five divisions (for details see [Understanding Rural and Remote Communities](#)). A letter from the Assistant Commissioner Community, Contract Aboriginal Policing Services to the Officers in Charge Criminal Operations in the selected Divisions requested their support. In each division, we chose at least three representative detachments – 16 in all. Between September 2004 and February 2005, the researcher conducted in-depth interviews, field observations and ride-alongs with 54 front-line officers and middle managers. Both interviews and ride-alongs were documented in writing.

There were five general research questions:

- n What do general duty police officers know about organized crime?
- n How do they learn about it?
- n Do they see any impact of organized crime on their community?
- n Are general duty police officers equipped to fight organized crime efficiently?
- n What are the best tactics to fight organized crime in small, remote communities?

## INTRODUCTION

Previous Research

**Methodology**

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Research Objectives

### Our Research Objectives

#### ***Document Local Conditions***

This project aimed to document organized crime from a local and police officer's perspective, including RCMP police officers':

- n knowledge and perceptions of organized crime
- n concerns about organized crime
- n stated needs
- n information tools used in fighting organized crime (e.g. CPIC, PIRS, PROS, newsletters, media, etc.)

#### ***Gap Analysis***

With this information, we planned to suggest what resources and training were required to improve local effectiveness in combating organized crime.

#### ***Recommendations for Communication and Implementation***

Based on our findings, we could highlight best practices now in use and suggest strategies for communicating with police officers in rural and remote communities. The communications objective was to increase police officers' awareness of local organized crime and its negative impact on citizens.

## BACKGROUND:

# WHAT IS ORGANIZED CRIME?

It is widely recognized that there are problems in capturing what constitutes organized crime. There is no simple definition of organized crime that distinguishes it from other major offences in the Criminal Code of Canada (CCC). Organized crime is subject to interpretation and can be applied to many criminal situations.

## Ask a Judge

According to CCC, a criminal organization is three or more persons formally or informally organized for the purpose of committing a criminal offence for direct or indirect benefit (section 467.1). Section 423.1 (intimidation of justice system participant) can also be identified as a criminal organization offence. However, many criminal code offences such as homicide, fraud, motor vehicle theft and drug trafficking have possible links to organized crime; Do street gangs, for example, meet the criteria to be organized crime according to this definition?

## Ask the Police

The Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics (CCJS) (Ogrodnick, 2002:19) consulted major Canadian police departments about organized crime. CCJS reported that information pertaining to organized crime is not housed solely in the organized crime intelligence units but can be found in many other units. Furthermore, it is often difficult to connect a particular offence to organized crime. Front-line officers may be unaware of the linkages until further investigation confirms them. (p. 22).

Criminal Intelligence Service Canada (CISC) uses five broad categories in its annual reports:

- n Aboriginal-based organized crime
- n Asian-based organized crime
- n Eastern European-based organized crime
- n Outlaw motorcycle gangs
- n Traditional (Italian-based) organized crime

CISC (2003:2) identifies its intelligence priorities as:

- n Organized crime at marine ports
- n The sexual exploitation of children
- n The illegal movement of firearms and technology

## BACKGROUND

### What is Organized Crime?

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Information Tools

*It is often difficult to connect a particular offence to organized crime.*

Definitions of organized crime according to police organizations typically include a mix of ethnic origins and commodities (Ogrodnick, 2002). This approach matches the definition of criminal organization in the Canadian Criminal Code.

Similarly, the Ministry of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Canada (PSEPC, 2004) has identified eight national priorities:

- n Illegal drugs
- n Outlaw motorcycle gangs
- n Economic crime
- n High-tech crime
- n Money laundering
- n Illegal immigration and trafficking in human beings
- n Corruption
- n Street gangs

The Ministry also notes the following emerging or pressing concerns:

- n Intimidation of criminal justice actors
- n Gaming
- n Auto theft
- n Diamond mining
- n Presence of organized crime in ports

Some concerns such as auto theft are crimes *per se*, whereas other priorities such as economic crime refer more to a category of crime. Both, however, involve complex criminal actions as well as complex police investigations.

## Ask a Statistician

A study conducted by Statistics Canada in 2002 showed that traditional approaches to collecting crime statistics would not work well in the area of organized crime. There is not yet a category called “organized crime” in official Canadian police statistics. Apart from the nature of the legal definition (which is itself complex), many factors come into play in explaining this situation.

- n **The nature of the offence:** how do we know whether a vice offence such as prostitution, gambling or drugs is related to organized crime if there is no information or further investigation on a case?

## BACKGROUND

### What is Organized Crime?

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*There is not yet a category called “organized crime” in official Canadian police statistics.*

- n **The number of offences:** to count offences would be to undercount the volume of organized crime activity related to a case. For example, drug production and drug sales may be seen as unrelated.
- n Information about organized crime is housed in different units such as major crimes units, auto theft units, fraud units or intelligence units. They do not necessarily share information. They are not necessarily linked to the front-line officers.

Organized crime groups are not the same as organized crime activities. Organized crime groups may be involved in many different criminal activities such as marijuana grow operations, money laundering and motor vehicle theft. Different police units may investigate each activity without necessarily being aware of hidden criminal linkages. It may also be that some group activities are not visible enough to raise police suspicion.

One way to circumvent the difficulty of measuring organized crime would be to focus on offences committed rather than on offenders. For example, police would investigate an auto theft ring, not the individuals involved. This recognizes the fluidity of groups and participants involved in a series of criminal activities.

## Ask a Criminologist

The question here is whether and how organized crime activities have an impact on communities. There are very few studies on the societal impacts of organized crime activities. If, as some suggest, the socio-political, economic-commercial, health and safety impacts are numerous and difficult to measure, precise data about its impact would also be difficult to provide.

Organized crime reaches into every community, ruining lives, spawning other criminal activity and creating fear (Home Office, 2004; RCMP, 2004). It is a major problem in all sizes and types of communities across Canada according to a document from Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Canada (PSEPC, 2004). Many social problems such as drug-related burglaries, smuggled cigarettes, telemarketing scams, juvenile prostitution or other illegally financed activities are linked to organized crime. These crimes translate into higher costs, unmet human potential and compromised public safety. While the cost can only be estimated, the PSEPC document recognizes the heavy impact of acts of violence, threats to quality of life, compromised personal security, increasing health-care costs linked to drug abuse and related illness, and the risks of unknowingly acquiring contraband goods of inferior quality (PSEPC, 2004). At another level there are large costs incurred by complex and lengthy criminal investigations. These criminal activities also result in major tax losses for government (RCMP, 2004).

## BACKGROUND

### What is Organized Crime?

Understanding Rural and Remote Communities  
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*Organized crime reaches into every community, ruining lives, spawning other criminal activity and creating fear. It is a major problem in all sizes and types of communities.*

## Ask a Sociologist

Sociologists, special commissions, international organizations (von Lampe, 2002) and police officers all draw on their knowledge and experience to define organized crime. The definitions from the last group are important because they emanate from the day-to-day activities of police officers and put police priorities into perspective.

Generally, one can say that the sociological attributes of organized crime groups (Lyman & Potter, 2000:6) are the following:

- n non-ideological ( no political goals)
- n hierarchical structure
- n limited or exclusive membership
- n self-perpetuating (continuing over time)
- n use illegal violence (or the threat of it) and bribery
- n demonstrate a specific division of labour
- n monopolistic
- n governed by explicit rules and regulations (which include a code of secrecy)

Albanese (2002) focuses instead on the specific types of illegal activities:

- n provision of illicit goods
- n provision of illicit services
- n filtration or abuse of legitimate business

Organized crime groups range over a vast area, from drugs and organized illegal immigration, to crime through evasion of taxes and excise duties, financial and business fraud, to intellectual property theft and counterfeiting. Criminals frequently resort to extreme violence, intimidation and corruption (Home Office, 2004:7). While there is evidence that crime groups vary widely in ethnicity, cohesiveness, continuity and sophistication, these factors do not affect whether or not these groups are part of organized crime. They affect only the types of criminal activity the group is able to be involve in (Albanese, 2002).

## BACKGROUND

### What is Organized Crime?

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*Organized crime groups range over a vast area, from drugs and organized illegal immigration, to crime through evasion of taxes and excise duties, financial and business fraud, to intellectual property theft and counterfeiting.*



## BACKGROUND:

# UNDERSTANDING RURAL AND REMOTE COMMUNITIES

As a concept, “rural” defies simple definition. The term has been used to describe villages, small towns, townships, counties, coastal areas and hinterland. Generally, the term describes a geographic location or a culture or way of living, and social representation (du Plessis et al., 2002).

Rural and remote communities are incredibly diverse. Each have their own unique profile, characteristics and geographic location. Generally, the local economy is based on agriculture, mining, logging or seasonal tourism. A large percentage of the Canadian population lives in rural and remote communities across Canada. Up to one third of Canada’s population, approximately nine million people, lives in rural regions (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, 2003). In the Northwest Territories, Newfoundland and Labrador and Saskatchewan, over 50 per cent live in rural areas; in Manitoba and British Columbia, 40 per cent (Bollman, 2001:6).

Lawton (2004) created a typology of rural locations. This typology guided selection of field visit sites, and is classified here.

1. Remote rural areas dominated by traditional values of agrarian society which are characterized by single dwellings, isolated farms and scattered settlements
2. Villages, often self designating, may be located close to urban areas and may be expanding or contracting as economic and social units
3. Market towns identified by their historic character and their importance as the hub of the local social and economic community
4. Collapsed industrial areas experiencing severe economic decline – for example former coal mining areas
5. Coastal areas and hinterland which may be separated into locations that are visited and those less visited

Rural areas are also culturally distinctive according to a study done in England and Wales (Lawton, 2004, U.K., 2003a). They also tend to be small-scale and closely knit (high density of acquaintances). (Weisheit & Donnermeyer 2000).

## BACKGROUND

What is Organized Crime?

### Understanding Rural and Remote Communities

Policing and Crime in Rural and Remote Communities  
Information Tools

*Up to one third of Canada’s population, approximately nine million people, lives in rural regions.*

## BACKGROUND:

# POLICING AND CRIME IN RURAL AND REMOTE COMMUNITIES

The issue of organized crime is intrinsically connected with rural policing and rural crime as a law enforcement priority. However, one must understand the daily demands on the police to understand the strategy developed to fight organized crime.

## Policing Rural and Remote Communities

Rural policing is different from city policing in many important respects. Small town/rural policing requires that members drive long distances to cover the territory, show an active daily presence in the community, and maintain social relations with the community outside police duties. It requires being closer to the community, handling a wide range of community and social problems not necessarily related to law enforcement, and responding to what communities perceive as major local issues.

Police practices are influenced not only by police officers' capacity to integrate with their community but also by their ability to understand the citizens' contribution to community well-being.

Being an effective police officer in a rural or remote community requires adaptation and integration before one can understand the needs of the community and be able to act and react accordingly. These complex processes can take a long time. They involve mutual understanding and acceptance on the part of both the officer and the community. Even after almost a decade in some communities, many local residents may still consider police officers outsiders.

Is the adjustment easier for a police officer who comes originally from the community where he/she works? Relationships with citizens will be facilitated because the police officer is familiar with the habits and customs of the area. However, being known in the community may limit some "covert" police options. In addition, prior social or family relationships can have a negative impact on professional activity.

## BACKGROUND

What is Organized Crime?

Understanding Rural and Remote Communities

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Information Tools

*Being an effective police officer in a rural or remote community requires adaptation and integration before one can understand the needs of the community and be able to act and react accordingly.*

What effect do transfers have on the community and the work of the police officers? As they work their way up the career ladder, police officers may reside in a community for a limited period of time. Citizens of remote and rural communities tend to be long-term residents. Long-term stability is really in the hands of the community and some potential instability may come from the police themselves. People that belong to a community for a long time (often several generations), tend to settle their problems informally among themselves, especially if there is no major criminal element involved. Even criminal behaviours such as physical violence may not be reported.

Finally, in contract provinces the detachment commanders and front line officers are expected to be accountable to the municipality, the community and the town council as well as maintaining their loyalty to the RCMP. This means that they are asked legitimate questions about their work, and are expected to respond to what the town council defines as a priority for the citizens.

## Crime in Rural and Remote Communities

According to experts on rural communities, the social forces that shape the character of rural and urban communities are similar, although the actual nature of crime and police calls may vary. For example, a study on rural police officers' duties noted that vehicle lockouts, giving directions and responding to commercial alarms were rare in rural areas. (Frank & Liederbach, 2003:55). However, they frequently deal with drug use, drinking and driving, juvenile crime, drug trafficking and production, and spousal abuse. (Hawkins & Weisheit, 2003; Potter & Gaines, 1992).

A study by Statistics Canada examined personal incidents and household incidents in rural areas. Personal incidents are crimes committed against an individual and include sexual assault, robbery, attempted robbery, assault, personal theft and attempted personal theft. Household incidents include break and enter, attempted break and enter, theft of motor vehicles, vehicle parts or household property, attempted theft and vandalism. Personal victimization is 30 per cent lower and household victimization is 40 per cent lower in rural areas than in urban ones. Rural residents are half as likely to feel unsafe when walking alone in their neighbourhoods after dark as are urban residents. (Fellegi 1996:15). The most serious crime problems facing rural and small town police are the same as those facing urban police (Hawkins and Weisheit 2003:26).

However, there are important differences in the scope and nature of crime and other social problems in rural communities. Informal social relationships and controls remain relatively more important than policing for influencing the behaviour in rural communities. (Donnermeyer 1994:1).

## BACKGROUND

What is Organized Crime?

Understanding Rural and Remote Communities

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*Rural residents are half as likely to feel unsafe when walking alone in their neighbourhoods after dark as are urban residents.*

Many residents, including the local police officers, know each other socially, meet routinely as part of their daily life and are part of social networks that are overlapping rather than segmented (Weisheit & Donnermeyer, 2000:328). Generally, people living in rural areas have more positive attitudes about crime levels and lower perceptions of the risk of victimization (U.K., 2003a; Aust & Simmons, 2002).

The interaction between the police and the community appears to be less constrained and more natural. Police officers and citizens have the daily opportunity to meet in different social roles that may shape the interaction when a problem occurs (Hawkins & Weisheit, 2003:27). Rural and small town police officers are more likely to engage in non-adversarial exchanges with citizens (Frank & Liedebach, 2003).

Another major difference is that the economic, social and cultural forces associated with rising levels of crime, violence, delinquency and gang activity appear first in urban areas and then spread to the remote areas. Rural crime is the product of the interaction of these factors and consequently takes a different perspective (Weisheit & Wells, 1999:3) .

Some observations about major crime in rural and remote communities that emerged from the interviews with police officers:

- n Crimes reflect what defines a community; for example more theft of boats in a fishing community.
- n Crimes seem closely connected to the economy of the region and to the possibilities provided by infrastructures, location and geography.
- n Being either a wealthy or an economically deprived community seems to have an impact on crime. Each generates crimes with a different scale or perspective.
- n Police officers from larger municipalities or cities may have difficulty understanding that in rural and remote communities, access to food or alcohol may be limited. Therefore, these can become commodities in an illegal market supervised by organized crime. In addition, it may never occur to them that expensive tools or farm equipment can be stolen and resold as part of an organized crime ring.
- n Illegal drugs were probably the most important concern identified in all the regions visited.
- n Rural crime can have its own specifics. For example, stealing and reselling farm chemicals requires expertise analogous to stealing and reselling stolen art. This demands that the police officer/investigator have the special knowledge required to fully understand the extent of the problem. This should be incorporated in training and policy development.

## BACKGROUND

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### Policing and Crime in Rural and Remote Communities

Information Tools

*Police officers and citizens have the daily opportunity to meet in different social roles that may shape the interaction when a problem occurs.*

## BACKGROUND:

# INFORMATION TOOLS

The value of gathering, reporting and sharing information is immediately apparent when detachments address local crime, organized or not. Our data show that information can be divided into four levels, although these are not mutually exclusive.

1. Information in the form of rumours and word of mouth messages— information that is not confirmed and often is not in data banks.
2. Official information as recorded in data banks.
3. Information obtained through exchanges with other law enforcement agencies.
4. Information from open sources.

### **Level One: unofficial information**

This information is based on rumours and word of mouth messages offered by concerned citizens and obtained by talking to specific people. Such information has limited value. To make use of it for search warrants etc., police officers face the challenge of confirming it, which is sometimes impossible.

### **Level Two: official information**

This is official information recorded in source debriefing reports and in data banks, such as NCDB. This information can provide a legitimate basis for search warrants, and is used as current information for an investigation or a case of concern. It requires police to have coded informants so that the information provided can be used during investigations. Officers told us, “If you don’t have informants in this community you are not doing your job; it is as simple as that.”

At this level, not only must the information collected be processed but also used as reference for future investigations. As stated by interviewees, however, many officers neither contribute to nor use the NCDB.

## BACKGROUND

What is Organized Crime?

Understanding Rural and Remote Communities

Policing and Crime in Rural and Remote Communities

**Information Tools**

*Many officers neither contribute to nor use the NCDB.*

***Level Three: shared official information***

This information is exchanged with or obtained from other law enforcement agencies. Officers did not see this as a priority, but rather than as something that could be pursued if required.

***Level Four: public information***

This information comes from open sources such as newspapers, government documents, research papers and studies. It is a necessary source for information on commodities such as diamonds, for example.

**BACKGROUND**

What is Organized Crime?

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Policing and Crime in Rural and Remote Communities

**Information Tools**

# ANALYSIS OF THE FIELD WORK

## Rural Realities

Regardless of the division, remote and rural detachments share similarities that set them apart from many other detachments:

- n Most citizens in the detachment area are either born in Canada or are long-time immigrants
- n Traditional communities are undergoing major social changes, e.g. increasing numbers of transient workers
- n The business sectors are based on natural resources such as fishing, forestry, oil, diamond mines, etc.

These factors are linked to local and regional social and business activities and pose potential difficulties for police interventions:

- n The geography itself becomes an impediment for surveillance and search, while providing potential hiding places for criminals (i.e. chances of detection are low)
- n Communities are isolated by distance and often serviced by poor roads or none at all
- n In small detachments, the expertise needed for an investigation may be lacking and not easy to get from other centres
- n It may be impossible to patrol the territory as effectively as one would wish

Data gathered during our field studies suggest that detachment and individual effectiveness in recognizing and fighting organized crime depends on five factors:

- n Awareness
- n Competence
- n Confidence
- n Priorities
- n Resources

Each factor affects and reinforces the other. The first three are functions of training and experience. The last two relate to organizational capacity and strategy.

## ANALYSIS OF THE FIELD WORK

Awareness

Competence

Confidence

Priorities and Resources

*The fight against organized crimes is affected by:*

- *regional disparities*
- *the tools available and actually used, including information sharing*
- *work contingencies*

*They each affect the fight against organized crime.*

## Awareness

### Findings: Recognizing Organized Crime

When prompted, interviewees easily referred to organized crime as defined by Criminal Intelligence Service Canada. They also described local criminal activities that could be categorized as such but are not. Police officers did not make the connection between the two.

- n Organized crime is understood and described according to the five broad categories reported in CISC annual reports. However, and paradoxically, organized crime as defined by CISC standards appears faceless in these communities. Members said they either do not deal with organized crime on a daily basis or (if they do), define it as isolated unrelated incidents and not organized crime.
- n Most of the police officers interviewed did not make a clear connection between the definition of organized crime in the Criminal Code and the crimes they identified in their communities. They see the crimes as local because they do not resemble stereotypical organized crime images or groups (e.g., Mafia).
- n Officers' organized crime definitions, or lack of them, reflect their focus on daily front-line activities and what they hear about it from the streets.
- n Organized crime as a national issue is not seen an operational priority and may be incompatible with concerns and priorities at the detachment level. The challenge for supervisors is not only to understand the complexities of organized crime and its impact but also to take the next step: define organized crime as an operational priority and fight it.
- n One Division measured organized crime activities on the basis of two or more involved individuals, rather than three as specified in the Criminal Code.

## Competence

### Findings: Intelligence Gathering

As one police officer said, information is the bread and butter of the police. Information by virtue of its specificity is not intelligence. Intelligence is information that has been analyzed.

- n Collecting information for an investigation may be challenging for detachments. For example, an undercover operation may mean calling for members from other detachments, when and if they are available. This may never be possible as said.

## ANALYSIS OF THE FIELD WORK

### Awareness

### Competence

Confidence

Priorities and Resources

### CISC CATEGORIES

*Aboriginal-based organized crime*

*Asian-based organized crime*

*Eastern European-based organized crime*

*Outlaw motorcycle gangs*

*Traditional (Italian-based) organized crime*



Basic facts about intelligence gathering on organized crime are noted from the officers' perspective.

- n Intelligence must be gathered and recorded by submitting intelligence reports.
- n Police officers must be encouraged to submit intelligence reports.
- n Some police officers just don't submit intelligence reports.

These "basic facts" may not ring true from a day-to-day operational viewpoint where "intelligence" takes on other meanings. If this is the case and police officers do not write intelligence reports, the supervisor must address the issue. He or she must teach officers the importance of gathering intelligence and how to be effective in doing so.

### **Findings: Contributing Information to the NCDB**

The process of recording information in the National Crime Data Bank (NCDB) is not uniform across divisions.

- n In one division, police officers themselves record the information in the data bank.
- n In another division, an intelligence coordinator supervises and records the information provided.
- n In a third division, police officers send all the information to the division HQ, where it is evaluated and recorded.
- n Information is recorded if it is significant from a local perspective.
- n Information is recorded if it is seen as having sufficient quality to be disseminated (in other words if it has value for an investigation).
- n Information is recorded if members know how to use the process
- n Only information considered relevant is recorded.

### **Findings: Using or Querying the NCDB**

The other important facet of the NCDB is whether officers use it as an information source. Many factors play a role in determining how or whether it is used. Those police officers who advised us they do not use the NCDB said this was because:

- n they are too busy doing something else
- n they don't see how useful the information can be for the police
- n they don't need to query NCDB for their daily activities
- n they don't see how beneficial the information can be for their work;
- n they were not trained to use it and therefore don't know how to use it

## **ANALYSIS OF THE FIELD WORK**

Awareness

**Competence**

Confidence

Priorities and Resources

*It is up to the supervisor to teach officers the importance of gathering intelligence and how to be effective in doing so.*

One supervisor's solution to this challenge was to "appoint a detachment intelligence coordinator who will make sure that he is on top of things...."

Supervisors and front-line officers preferred to use data banks other than the NCDB because of:

- n user-friendly access
- n the rapid and immediate response they receive from the data bank
- n the ease of disseminating the information
- n the relevance of information provided

## Confidence

### Findings: Community-based Tools

Detachment location can have an impact on police officers' ability to work on organized crime. It can also play a major role in officers' understanding of organized crime. With this in mind, we looked at what investigative tools these police officers select to fight organized crime.

Geography and regional peculiarities seem to determine the selection and use of tools, according to both supervisors and general duty officers. The following tools were among those discussed.

#### **Information and sources**

Information gathered from concerned citizens and informants goes hand in hand, and is described by interviewees as their primary tool. Theoretically, this is the most efficient way to discover community goings-on and to plan appropriate actions. However, cultivating sources is a challenge. Learning how to cultivate sources effectively is also seen as a prerequisite for specialized units, promotion and career development.

Police officers are also expected to know the community and be known in the community, understand its needs and act accordingly.

This complex, time-consuming process may be rendered difficult by the limited informal contact between police and citizens. Officers' time is consumed by motorized patrols, followed by administrative duties such as report writing, automobile maintenance and driving to and from specific destinations. Travel time can be significant in some remote detachments. Non-police tasks are attending to personal business, breaks and meals. The time for attending to such activities as criminal matters, service-related functions and order maintenance is surprisingly limited. (Frank & Liederbach, 2003:52).

## ANALYSIS OF THE FIELD WORK

Awareness

**Competence**

**Confidence**

Priorities and Resources

*Officers' time is consumed by motorized patrol, followed by administrative duties such as report writing, automobile maintenance and driving to and from specific destinations.*

## ANALYSIS OF THE FIELD WORK

Awareness

Competence

**Confidence**

**Priorities and Resources**

### **Crime prevention programs**

Crime prevention programs were neither developed nor adapted for the unique challenges of organized crime. Most focus on crime in general and community priorities such as speeding, vandalism and violence. They respond to local conditions and quality of life issues.

### **Setting up special operations**

Surveillance and information gathering can be difficult due to geography, distance and access to informants. When successful, the detachment members may set up a special project for what appears to be a crime in progress. However this usually requires staffing and budget assistance from specialized units in big cities (divisional headquarters). Such requests do not always elicit a positive response.

### **The Pipeline/Convoy/Jetway Program**

This program aims to intercept potential criminals in transit. Police officers will stop a vehicle and ask for driver consent for a search. To be successful, police officers must be trained and able to implement the techniques learned. Access to such training may be limited by available time and detachment priorities.

The Pipeline/Convoy/Jetway Program Programs is based on the hypothesis that people are increasingly mobile and that this mobility could create new patterns of crime. However, research on criminal travel in the United Kingdom found that most offenders operate close to where they live or spend their leisure time. They travel short distances and their crimes tend to be opportunistic rather than premeditated (Wiles & Costello, 2000). (This research did not address organized crime activities or problems.) More research should address this issue.

### **Meetings and partnerships**

Meetings and partnerships are a very good way to instill confidence and work practices with law enforcement partners, especially when done on a regular basis.

### **Strategic planning**

Is strategic planning an operational tool? Strategic planning from an operational detachment perspective means working on daily cases and emergencies within the global picture of crime, of crime trends, of specific crime issues in one location and of emerging problems. According to the data, it seems that this tool is rarely used for operations.

### **Food for thought**

*With regard to the time available and the work done on organized crime, the question is, are police officers too busy at all times or it is that there is no time left to them to see, observe and address organized crime in their community?*

## Priorities and Resources

### Findings: Work Contingencies and the Fight against Organized Crime

Policing in a rural or remote setting is general duty work at its best. Officers are expected to be available to meet the needs of communities. Activities range from answering calls for service (from barking dogs and taking a statement about a stolen bicycle, to vandalism, break and enters and traffic violations), patrolling the streets and showing a presence in communities' activities. Interviewees identified several factors that can impede police officers in dealing with organized crime.

Any of these factors singly or in combination can play a major role in whether or how police officers focus on organized crime. Among the most significant are:

#### **Available human resources**

Supervisors and constables alike regarded staffing as a major challenge. Detachments suffer a chronic shortage of trained personnel for front line duty work, let alone for unexpected events. Causes ranged from holidays and sickness to unfilled positions. In addition, specialized expertise is sometimes absent. Detachments may lack the ability to prepare a search warrant correctly, the skills to conduct good interviews and so on.

In most cases, police officers need to be trained for these skills and become accustomed to using them. Finally, it appeared that members have difficulties in problem identification, either because they lack the experience or training, or simply because they are not motivated to do so.

#### **Available senior and experienced officers**

Apart from the shortage of human resources, detachments often lack expertise. Seasoned officers who may act as mentors for junior members leave and are replaced by inexperienced or junior members; every remote and rural detachment and division visited for the study had a large percentage of junior members. It remains to be seen how this situation influences daily work related to organized crime.

#### **Funding**

Detachments require (but cannot always obtain) funding for both daily operations and special interventions.

#### **Information**

The importance of collecting information, contributing to data banks and information sharing has already been discussed.

#### **Schedule**

The daily schedule of work and the regular case load files for any police officer may leave no time for addressing issues of organized crime.

### ANALYSIS OF THE FIELD WORK

Awareness

Competence

Confidence

### Priorities and Resources

*Every remote and rural detachment and division visited for the study had a large percentage of junior members. It remains to be seen how this situation influences daily work related to organized crime.*



## Tips for Success in Rural and Remote Areas

In the project, a number of important issues and activities were identified that contribute to successful policing in general and to dealing with the impact of organized crime in particular. These are not necessarily new but can be overlooked, given workloads.

The spectrum of tools and methods used and developed shows the dynamism of the detachments and reflects how local problems are addressed. No one method or approach fits all detachments, and tools are not necessarily transferable – even to similar problems.

### Building Awareness

- n Know your community.
- n Identify crimes and criminals in the context of the detachment and communities it serves.
- n Make sure employees are well and currently trained with respect to the rapidly evolving nature of organized crime.
- n Create a booklet with details of potentially dangerous people in the community for officers' information.
- n Recognize that criminal activities are a direct reflection of the community that produces them. Police actions must therefore be specifically adapted to fight them efficiently in the community context.

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### Building Competence

- n Hold formal, organized meetings to discuss current, ongoing and new information related to organized crime.
- n Assign an intelligence coordinator to make sure the intelligence is downloaded into NCDB.
- n Hold workshops and lectures on organized crime in general, on NCDB and on the linkages between organized crime and local criminal activity.
- n Develop expertise on potential crime related to the local industry or community (casino exploitation, for example).
- n Constantly monitor and document any developments in the community (loss of industry, new housing developments, etc.).

## Building Confidence

- n To be successful, police officers must learn to enjoy life in their community.
- n One supervisor suggested having pictures and photos of the community and people in the office “as a reminder is that good people are out there”.
- n Know the community and be known in the community through participation in community activities, schools, community groups, volunteer organizations and so on.
- n Develop partnerships with the community (business, volunteer, social groups) and get to know the community leaders, formally and informally.
- n Encourage direct communication between police officers and members of the community.
- n Establish partnerships with other law enforcement agencies. This can be encouraged by putting on workshops on common themes of interest, such as information sharing, collection of intelligence, etc.
- n Promote, improve or help to establish inter-agency groups and participate actively in them. These can include education, the business community, social services or hospital boards in which partners can meet and to discuss community issues and try to solve problems.

*Develop partnerships with the community (business, volunteer, social groups) and get to know the community leaders, formally and informally.*

## Setting Priorities

- n Learn now how to establish priorities that are relevant to the daily operations of the detachment .
- n Make one officer responsible for revising, managing and processing intelligence for the detachment..
- n To make organized crime a working priority like traffic and youth, for example, a detachment could assign it as a priority to a particular police officer.
- n Assign a member with responsibility for each community policed who will make formal contacts and be known by the town council, set up a file for each community, etc.

## Building Resources

- n Adapt tools to police officers' needs in these detachments.
- n Develop sufficient and trained resources (for example, staff trained to query and use data banks such as ACIIS, NCDB and PROS efficiently).
- n Commit sufficient funding to stage large police operations when necessary.

## Training Notes

The value of training and the need for training were recurring themes in this field research. However, training cannot be implemented at the further cost of staff resources. Though it should be structured and supervised, the ideal forum for training in rural and remote communities is self-paced courses – either online or (where Internet access is poor) on compact disc. This theoretical training should be supplemented with practical training to ensure that members have the confidence to expand into the complexities of organized crime.

## Building Awareness

Organized crime in Canada has many appearances depending on whether it is defined by police officers, by academics or by the Criminal Code.

Sometimes these definitions appear to exist independently and sometimes they complement each other.

Police officers in rural and remote areas don't see organized crime as a priority because they define it as motorcycle gangs and drugs. In remote areas they would seldom (if ever) see active motorcycle gangs, for example. Training must address the paradox that information is not properly disseminated and therefore police officers do not have accurate or complete information (and consequently view organized crime very narrowly).

These anomalies also demonstrate the importance of establishing work priorities and relating these to the broader official definitions of organized crime. Increased awareness depends on having relevant information *and* the knowledge to classify it accurately.

## TIPS FOR SUCCESS

### Training Notes

*Rural and remote police officers don't see organized crime as a priority because they define it as motorcycle gangs and drugs. In remote areas they would seldom (if ever) see active motorcycle gangs, for example.*



## Building Competence

Information sharing is the foundation for intelligence and competence. Our data show that a larger than expected percentage of front-line officers and supervisors do not use the NCDB daily, either to query information or to contribute information. Possible explanations include the lack of an approachable user interface, inadequate training and requirement to analyze information before inputting it all mitigate to decrease usage. Members who do not set aside time in their schedule to work with NCDB rarely do so. Many said they were too busy. Others preferred using PROS, PERS, CPIC or ACIIS because they know how to use these databanks and can access them easily on the road (for an intervention).

## Building Resources

How members deal with organized crime work depends on whether it is “in the picture” day to day. One suggestion is to develop a realistic organized crime awareness program. It should reflect regional situations and needs – what are the issues, what to be watching for, what action to take, etc. A “one size fits all” training approach cannot accomplish this.

Members understood and agreed with the need to identify the causes of crime. This can be addressed through teaching the OPS model and developing workshops to talk about important related issues. Organized crime is but one of many criminal problems they are aware of and that they may face in their work environment. Officers would like to focus resources and energy but can’t work on it every day. Significant factors preventing them from doing so include the work set-up, time required for front-line responsibilities, work location and time required for strategic exercises.

## TIPS FOR SUCCESS

### Training Notes

*Members understood and agreed with the need to identify the causes of crime. This can be addressed through teaching the OPS model and developing workshops to talk about important related issues.*

## Conclusion

This report highlights major barriers to fighting organized crime efficiently. It is a valuable reference document for what works and doesn't from a rural and remote community perspective. It also highlights the value and need for intelligence gathering and sharing across Canada.

It is clear that rural and remote detachments require further support in the form of training and resources to both carry out routine policing and fight organized crime.

## Recommendations for Action

1. In order to educate supervisors as well as front-line duty officers to the importance of fighting organized crime, we suggest the dissemination of this report as part of a larger communications strategy aimed at documenting organized crime from the perspective of rural and remote detachments.
2. Establish a training program (preferably on-line) that will address the specifics of organized crime from the perspective of rural and remote communities.
3. Since organized crime is a major priority for the Canadian government, law enforcement agencies and the RCMP, we suggest a follow-up study focusing on the social impacts of organized crime in rural and remote communities.
4. Finally, we suggest that special attention be given to information technology as a daily challenge for processing and using information.

## CONCLUSION

### Recommendations for Action

*It is clear that rural and remote detachments require further support in the form of training and resources to both carry out routine policing and fight organized crime.*

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<u>Date</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Author</u>
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2005	First Nations and Organized Crime	Colin Goff, Ph.D.
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