



# Prince George's “Pat’s for Paws Program”

## A Discussion Paper to Explore Building a Local Canine-Assisted Community Transformation Hub

### **Credits**

*This Project was supported by The Canadian Foundation for Animal-Assisted Support Services (CFAS) so as to acknowledge the value of Prince George's Canine-Assisted Intervention Youth Program. By cross-pollinating local programs we were able to foster a interdisciplinary collaborative culture. The participants shared commitment toward their clients and zeal for building synergistic relationships glistened like a diamond in the rough. Meeting in person made it even more evident that this is much more than a program; it is a community of caring citizens going above and beyond the call of duty in order to make Prince George a healthier and safer place to live, work and play.*

*On behalf of the Foundation I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of the participants for contributing to this rich dialogue and for expressing your shared aspirations of forming a local cohort and hub. In the words of Henry Ford; “Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success.”*

*With appreciation, Joanne Moss, National Director, CFAS*

# Canine-Assisted Community Transformation (CACT)

Prince George has a population of approximately 71,973 (Statistics Canada census 2011), it is the largest city in northern British Columbia, Canada contributing to the province's economy and culture as a service and supply hub. Like other major cities it is plagued by high crime rates and recidivism.

Canine-Assisted Intervention (CAI) programs are growing in popularity throughout Canada due to the versatility of and the impact they are making to address crime and recidivism.

Roadblocks to reintegrating offenders and reducing recidivism may very well become a thing of the past if CAI programs like 'Pat's for Paws' make their way into Prince Georges justice, corrections, healthcare, and social services sectors.

Consequently; a pilot project is underway to ascertain the feasibility of building and growing a local *CAI Emergency Preparedness Hub* to address crime and recidivism issues.

## Paws with Purpose

CAI Hubs could eventually be expanded to include other local Animal-Assisted Activities. Animals don't impose subjective expectations on the program participants, therefore a bond of trust begins to take root along with being grounded in the present.



Dogs don't label, pressure, or make assumptions about people. Instead, their mere presence fosters a safe space in which to be real. Dogs touch our innermost being because they accept us warts and all. Change is hard. Therefore; CAI programs unfold organically to improve the well being of the

participants and to ensure the welfare of the dogs.

Program participants are often unable to control many of the determinants of health (things that make people healthy or not— in their troubled state). CAI Programs build bridges between hurting people and the road to discovering their self-worth and value as citizens, neighbors', family members, and friends.

Meet Thunder



As caring community partners in justice we believe that positive change is not only possible, but probable based on the successful outcomes witnessed and experienced with this program. Not only does the program benefit the target population, it helps to ease emotional stressors of the support workers.

## Who We Reach

The Pat's for Paws Program extends its hand and paws in order to reach parolees, persons struggling with addictions, support corrections staff and case management teams, as well as transitional housing staff, volunteers, family members and friends.

## External Factors

A number of external factors must also be taken into consideration when developing a CAI Program such as:

- Concurrent services such as psychiatric interventions
- Legal proceedings
- Ancestry, cultural, relational patterns and hereditary influences
- Custody environment and cross cultural peer motivations
- Economic elements within their respective communities
- Lack of education and limited opportunities
- Department of Justice and Corrections policies, legislation and regulations
- The personal beliefs and lived experience of program participants
- The emotional state, physical health, diagnosed or undiagnosed disabilities of individuals

Assumptions about the participants and potential outcomes must be managed so as not to impose expectations, or try to produce certain results. CAI is a natural process whereby those facilitating the program must allow things to unfold naturally rather than trying to force solutions. The dogs foster positive outcomes simply by being themselves – an important lesson for all to grasp.

### What We Invest

Partners invest their knowledge and expertise, paid support staff and case management, volunteers, time and talents.

### Activities

CAI Teams (handler and dog) provide a safe informal space in which to foster learning and the human-animal bond experience through listening and conversation.

These interactions introduce and reinforce the importance and benefits of healthy boundaries which eventually lead to increased motivation to attend sessions even when the participants are no longer required to do so. Activities may also include specific goals articulated by the participants. Interactions with a dog, its handler and multidisciplinary team members provide opportunities to give objective feedback with the person's wellbeing and the dogs welfare in mind.

Staff and volunteer debrief sessions offer mutual support along with an enhanced ability to assess and manage the process in order to make adjustments as needed. Moreover, these sessions are instrumental in evaluating outcomes to monitor progress and document the impact of the program.

### Short-Term Outcomes (Three to Six Months)

Between three to six months the testimonials of the participants range from experiencing a greater sense of overall wellbeing to showing interest in helping their peers.



Other shifts include improved empathy, relational skills and self worth. As the multi-disciplinary team rally's around the participants to cheer them on with their canine interveners participants gain a keener

awareness of and appreciation for their growing support network.

Interactive activities help track improvements and areas that still need to be worked on. It's also noteworthy to report that a pattern of reduced parole violations begins to emerge along with better community reintegration results.

### Mid-Term Outcomes (Six Months - One Year)

It is reasonable to see the majority of participants successfully reintegrating into the community between six months to a year. Financial independence, improved relationships and building bridges to rekindle appropriate relationships begins to emerge.

Improving mental health, attitudes, and fostering healthier choices is a lifelong journey so taking for granted the progress made during this period could lead to backsliding. As a result, it is important that the support network remain in place for at least another year to ensure stability is well established. Participants are encouraged to form an ongoing trustworthy support network once they are no longer involved in the program. Building and maintaining their networks requires education and an open-door policy should they need to reach out to us during a particularly difficult time. Some people may require ongoing support due to disability related issues, unemployment and constraints imposed by external factors.

### Long-Term Outcomes (One Year and Beyond)

Development dollars are needed to monitor, evaluate and report the long-term outcomes and corresponding impact so as to create best practices.

Research is also in order to track and articulate how CAI programs reduce the burden on the justice system, corrections, social services and healthcare.

Factoring in the cost benefit of programs would help to provide benchmarks for planning, delivering, evaluating and improving this emerging sector. One thing for certain; the short and mid-term outcomes are good indicators that CAI programs build healthier communities and mend fences opening up a world of possibilities.

Successful role modeling along with giving back to the community are two good examples of emerging trends, not to mention the positive impact canines have on staff and volunteers within the justice, corrections, healthcare and social service sectors.

## Research and Development

In order to build a credibility chain to augment recognition within other sectors it is critical that CAI organizations and practitioners collaborate.

Coordinated efforts would grow a local knowledge network with the potential of expanding provincially and nationally. Shared knowledge could further develop a framework for best practices and bench marks to increase confidence in both clinical and non-clinical applications. With these mechanisms in place there could eventually be a revenue stream and referral based system in place serving everyone's best interest. Additionally, working together could pave the way to job creation for both the participants and the general public, while co-creating a seamless continuum of CAI Programs so they can be easily accessed when needed.

A referral based system would protect vulnerable people and the welfare of the animals involved in programs.

## Filling Gaps and Connecting the Dots

In order to address these gaps and connect the dots *The Canadian Foundation for Animal-Assisted Support Services (CFAS)* is working with Prince George stakeholders and the surrounding area to explore developing a local hub model that could eventually be replicated in other communities. Over time the hub model could expand to include equine programs, Animal-Assisted Activities and barnyard animal programs.

This pilot project is part of a national initiative known as the Victors Program. The program includes a nationwide environmental scan funded by Justice Canada. As the study unfolds this initiative is helping to build a the local hub model and a toolkit with the prospect of moving forward as a caring community. [Read more...](#)



*Living in the present  
is a gift.*

## Working Together for Mutual Success

### **Prince George Federal Corrections**

As Parole Officers we strive to ensure public safety by supervising and helping individuals to successfully reintegrate into their respective communities. As part of their support network we hold each person accountable in order to help them stay on track enhancing their ability to follow-through as they learn to manage and cope with change.



**Pawsitive Horizons** strives to promote responsible pet ownership and caring. The majority of our therapy dogs are rescued. While responsible ownership does not solely involve rescues, Pawsitive Horizons strongly supports giving canines a second chance and providing them with the opportunity to realize their full potential.



## Prince George HUMANE SOCIETY

**The Prince George Humane Society** is a community-based registered non-profit that promotes humane-education and sterilization programs, while providing a safe haven for abused, neglected and abandoned animals in northern BC.

**St. Pat's House** is a supportive recovery house for men helping them to lead a clean and sober lifestyle with...humour, hard work, and healing.



**The Canadian Foundation for Animal-Assisted Support Services (CFAS)** invests in the human-animal bond, one of Canada's most precious natural resources, so as to build healthier and safer communities for both people and animals.

## PG Canine-Assisted Community Transformation Hub



There are many advantages to building local hubs with partnering organizations and service providers. To name a few; local groups could create nuances that resonate within and meet the unique needs of their respective communities. Working as a

hub member would mean sharing knowledge, lived experience, and dialogue around best practices that shape meaningful programs to suit and meet the needs of the community. Moreover, hubs provide the opportunity to share resources and opportunities to build mutual capacity. Rather than competing with one another they can function as a cohort, while focusing on service excellence.

A local hub also makes it easier for donors and volunteers to get involved to support a number of organizations and activities through one engagement channel.



### Ask What's Possible not What's Wrong

CFAS has worked diligently over the last 18 years to create a single-entry point for the public and concerned stakeholders to access and share information and resources cultivating greater recognition of the human-animal bond within Canada's social fabric as one of its most precious natural resources. "The human-animal bond produces love just for being "(Source: Joanne Moss). *Why is this important? Because love changes everything.*

Rather than dwelling on problematic issues and gaps, the Foundation's approach from its conception was to ask the stakeholders to consider what's possible.

Answering this question is empowering and igniting people by enabling them to address weaknesses, fears, gaps, and threats through a pro-active capacity-based lens.

### Sharing Capacity – The One Health for People, Pets, and Partners Initiative

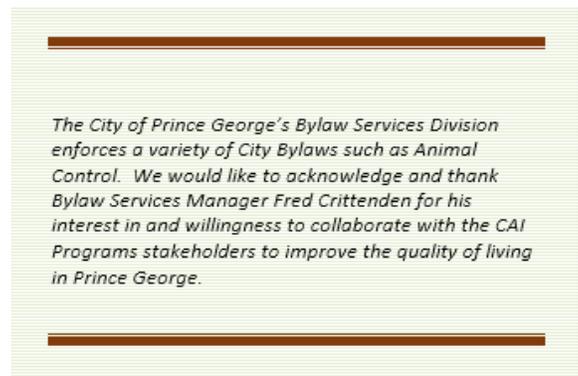
CFAS launched its One Health for People, Pets and Partners Initiative to unite and engage stakeholders so as to build and sustain healthier and safer communities for both people and animals.

Featured aspects of this undertaking are the One Health Fund, One Health Trail Events, One Health Magazine, and a national One Health Mascot.

The One Health worldwide movement promotes the advancement of healthcare in the 21st century and a strategy for expanding interdisciplinary collaborations and communications in all aspects of healthcare for humans, animals and the environment.

Rather than simply endorsing the movement CFAS created this Call to Action. [Read more...](#)

What this would mean for the Prince George CAI Community Hub is that CFAS has resources and opportunities it's willing to contribute in order to build and sustain their local hub model. Why; because love changes everything.



### Dialogue Disclaimer

This program overview is the culmination of a dialogue that emerged as the contributors developed a program logic model. The logic model was a tool that was used to flesh out the program for the purpose of exploring the feasibility of program development and becoming part of a local CAI community hub. As such, the content is not a comprehensive review of all aspects of the program. Rather, this paper is a byproduct of conversations among key stakeholders.

## Research References

The following set of assumptions form the theoretical platform for Animal-Assisted Interventions with canines.

Literature suggests the human-canine relationship has a greater chance of successful establishment (Geist, 2011; Hines, 2003; Turner, 2011) and provides qualitatively different features (non-evaluative, reduces anxiety, reduces barriers to intervention; Banks & Banks, 2002; Cirulli et al., 2011; Dimitrijević, 2009; Geist, 2011; Sockalingham et al., 2008) compared to human-human relationships.

### Strong research.

These differences may be more facilitative to effective intervention, particularly with populations that are resistant to intervention, such as youth populations who have experienced trauma (Cirulli et al., 2011; Dimitrijević, 2009; Parish-Plass, 2008).

### Developing research.

The human-canine relationship is anecdotally reported to be 'simpler,' less 'judgemental,' and 'unconditional' relative to human human relationships (Allen, Blascovich, Tomaka, & Kelsey, 1991; Bardill & Hutchinson, 1997; Jorgenson, 2007; Turner, 2011) and therefore may be a more effective therapeutic relationship amongst populations who commonly experience difficulty establishing healthy relationships (Lange et al., 2006). Developing research.

Clients will experience positive cognitive, behavioural, and emotional changes (promotes prosocial behaviour, reduces stress and anxiety, facilitates communication, betters emotional wellbeing, improves self-efficacy, increases motivation; Banks & Banks, 2002; Dimitrijević, 2009; Sockalingham et al., 2008; strong research) as a result of the therapeutic human-dog relationship in addition to achieving intervention goals (Banks & Banks, 2002; Bardill & Hutchinson, 1997; Cirulli et al., 2011; Fournier, Geller, & Fortney, 2007; developing research).

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