



Prince George's “Train Walk Track Program”

A Discussion Paper to Explore Building Local Canine Assisted Intervention (CAI) Emergency Preparedness Hubs

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 collaborative culture, while celebrating unity in diversity. 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 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 each and every one of you for persevering and contributing to this rich dialogue and 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 their versatility and the positive impact they are making to address crime and recidivism.

As such, Pawsitive Horizons, Corrections, John Howard Society and The Canadian Foundation for Animal-Assisted Support Services (CFAS) began a dialogue in the Fall of 2015 to discuss increasing the success rate of community re-integration, reduction of recidivism, and parole infractions.

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

Consequently; a pilot project was launched late last Fall (2015) to explore the feasibility of building and developing a local *CAI Emergency Preparedness Hub* model with the potential of replicating the model in other communities.

Paws with Purpose



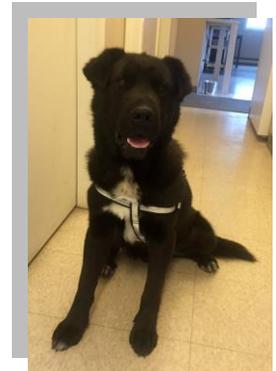
CAI Hubs could eventually be expanded to include other local Animal-Assisted Activities.

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.

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 Train Walk Track Program extends its hands and paws in order to reach parolees, support corrections staff and case management teams, transitional housing staff, volunteers, family members and friends.

The nature of Parolee populations and Community Residential Facilities (CRF's or half way houses) is that while the CRF can accept up to 15 people at St. Patrick's House at any given time, the number of clients continually fluctuates. For example, over a six month period there may only be five to eight people living in residence at the same time. Other times CRF reach capacity, therefore, Parolees are put on a waiting list. It is not uncommon for clients to move from one CRF to another. Some are eventually able to transition into living on their own. Some come for three months for the program at St. Pat's and then move onto another community.

Because of the transient nature of this population it is difficult to track how many people participate in the canine program.

Tracking who is involved, for how long and how their interactions with the dogs impacts them is therefore not without its challenges. Some clients become heavily involved in the dog program, while others choose to opt-out. Discussions have begun to emerge with the University of Northern British Columbia to potentially develop a strategy for ongoing impact evaluation.

It may be more reasonable to conclude, at least for now, that measuring short-term outcomes may be the most realistic way to approach measuring success. Defining 'success' may also be in order, as it means different things to different people.

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

For this reason, along with many others, forming interdisciplinary multi-stakeholder local hubs makes good sense.

Program assumptions are managed with candor and care so as not to impose unreasonable 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

CAI 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 to foster learning and the human-animal bond experience through listening and conversation. Controversy concerning whether national CAI dog trainer certification should be a prerequisite for program delivery is brewing behind the scenes.

On The Ground Running

We mustn't lose site of why we are in this together. These interactions introduce and reinforce the importance and benefits of nurturing 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. Involvement 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. A win/win combination!

Team debrief sessions offer mutual support along with an enhanced ability to assess and manage the process making room for adjustments as needed. Moreover, these sessions are instrumental in setting the stage for ongoing program evaluation.

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. However, tracking these observations is vital to developing service excellence.

Mid-Term Outcomes (Six Months - One Year)

Partnering with the University of Northern BC would enhance the Team's ability to track progress. Success, however, should not only be defined by statistics pertaining to financial independence, improved relationships and building bridges to rekindle appropriate relationships, but the testimonials of the participants. Qualitative outcomes along with quantitative data would provide a more complete picture of how lives are being changed and how these changed lives build healthier and safer communities.

Improving mental health, attitudes, and fostering healthier choices is a lifelong pursuit. The dogs provide a channel in which to stop and smell the roses along the way. Living in the present is not only a precious gift that canines impart, it is a catalyst for reflection to help prevent slipping back into familiar dysfunctional patterns of thinking and behavior.

As a result, it is important that the resources be freed up to work with the participants to form healthy support networks 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 the service providers 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)

A collective strategic approach toward cultivating the necessary resources to develop and sustain CAI programs is in order. Research would also strengthen claims and provide the evidence needed to officially recognize the programs within key sectors such as justice, corrections, healthcare and social services.

Further, factoring in the cost benefit of programs would help to provide the necessary data to establish benchmarks for planning, delivering, evaluating and improving program delivery. One thing is certain; the short and mid-term outcomes are good indicators that CAI programs are creating value. Defining that value is a work in progress.

Strategic Actions Inspired through Research



In order to build a credibility chain within other sectors it is critical that CAI organizations and practitioners have

the opportunity to collaborate with one another.

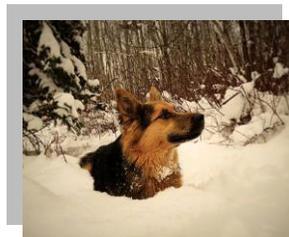
Coordinated efforts could grow a knowledge network across our nation and a collective ability to develop a transparent framework and/or Community of Practice (CofP) to establish national best practice, bench marks and referral-based programs in the best interest of vulnerable populations. In some instances, the development of national standards of Canada may also materialize. Additionally, working together could pave the way for job creation strategies and the development of National Occupation Classifications.

Filling Gaps and Connecting the Dots

The Canadian Foundation for Animal-Assisted Support Services (CFAS) is working with Prince George stakeholders and the surrounding area to address the feasibility of developing a local hub model that could eventually be replicated in other communities to facilitate the opportunities cited above. Over time, the hub model could be expanded to include equine programs and other Animal-Assisted Activities.

This dialogue was inspired by the Foundation's vision to develop a national justice and public safety initiative called the Victors Program (VP). Justice Canada funded a year-long study which commenced in January 2016 to scan the CAI environment to better understand the current situation and potential for innovation. [Read more...](#)

The City of Prince George's Bylaw Services Division enforces a variety of City Bylaws such as Animal Control. We would like to acknowledge and thank Bylaw Services Manager Fred Crittenden for his interest in and willingness to collaborate with the CAI Programs stakeholders to improve the quality of living in Prince George.



Living in the present is a gift.

Working Together for Mutual Success

John Howard

The Northern John Howard Society of BC

risk of) conflict with the law, offering prevention and intervention services as well as advocacy and public education.

The John Howard Society of Northern BC assists individuals and families who have come into (or are at

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.

Pawsitive Horizons



Prince George Federal Corrections
Prince George Parole Division



Canada

Prince George Humane Society



The Prince George Humane Society is a community-based, registered non-profit that provides a safe haven for

abused neglected and abandoned animals in the north.

St. Pat's House is a Supportive Recovery House for Men supporting a clean and sober lifestyle with...humour, hard work, and healing!



St. Patrick's House Society
Est. 1978



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



Communities of Practice: a strategy for more effective collaboration

Steve Dale
Director
Collabor@now Ltd
23 June 2011

PG CAI Emergency Preparedness Hub



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

hub member means sharing knowledge, lived experiences, and knowledge to name a few. Moreover, hubs typically provide the opportunity to share resources and opportunities to build mutual capacity. Rather than competing with one another they can function as a spring board to nurture a cohort, while focusing on and helping one another to achieve service excellence.

Local hubs can also make it easier for donors and volunteers to get involved.

Ask What's Possible not What's Wrong

Among other things, CFAS has been working diligently over the last 18 years to create a single-entry point for the public and service providers to access and share information and resources. While there is still a need to invest in this project on a grander scale, current efforts are opening doors to have the human-animal bond recognized as one of Canada's most precious natural resources, says Joanne Moss, the Foundation's National Director. Moss defines the bond as "love just for being."

Rather than dwelling on problematic issues and gaps, the CFAS's approach from the onset has been to ask the stakeholders to consider what's possible. Answering this question is empowering 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 trail events in November 2015. Trail events are being introduced to unite and engage stakeholders to build awareness and much needed resources to sustain and develop Animal-Assisted Support Services across Canada. There is also the potential of connecting people, pets, and partners on trails across Canada by July 1st - Canada's 150th birthday.

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. This national initiative is CFAS's strategic response.

In addition to the trail events, highlights of the One Health for People Pets and Partners Initiative and vision is the development of a national One Health Fund and Annual Grants Program, a One Health Magazine, and a national One Health Mascot. To learn more about this opportunity please click the enclosed [One Health for People, Pets and Partners Initiative](#) link.

In summation, what this would mean for the Prince George CAI community is that building a local hub would not only be possible, but a hub would link organizations and service providers to a national initiative along with countless emerging opportunities that would make their community a safer and healthier place to live, work and play.

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 and to explore 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 'judgmental,' 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, better 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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