

Building Upon Community Strengths: Combating Youth Violence in Lac Courte Orielles

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Foreword

The Robert M. La Follette School of Public Affairs at the University of Wisconsin–Madison is pleased to be able to apply part of its efforts to improving health in Wisconsin communities. Each year, in one of its graduate courses, the La Follette School randomly selects several communities from around the state and conducts research to identify important health issues and to work with community leaders to design ways of addressing those issues.

The Wisconsin legislature established the Robert M. La Follette School of Public Affairs in 1984 with a multifaceted mission—to engage in instruction, research, and outreach. The La Follette School fulfills this mission by offering a master's degree in public policy; by encouraging scholarly research on numerous issues that have public policy implications; and by offering numerous enrichment and training opportunities to policy makers at all levels of government.

The School's Center for State, Local and Tribal Governance has contributed to that commitment by establishing an annual program geared toward assisting Wisconsin communities in addressing community health issues. The program is the centerpiece of the Skornicka Seminars at the La Follette School, initiated with support from Joel Skornicka to improve local governance in the state. Joel Skornicka is a former mayor of Madison and assistant to UW chancellors.

The format of these seminars is that students at the La Follette School enroll in a course that provides them with an opportunity to conduct field research and to learn facilitation skills in community development. The students in the course form teams, and each team focuses on a specific community. Students complete an analysis and present it in a case study, like the one that follows. Then community leaders meet to discuss the findings of the case study and to formulate a way of resolving issues raised in the analysis. The La Follette School is happy to assist in any way it can with the implementation of plans designed at these meetings.

Initially, the focus of these seminars was on the issue of gangs and youth violence. We treated this concern as a health and safety issue. We have broadened the scope of the seminar this year to include other community health issues. This expansion is not because gangs and youth violence are no longer matters of concern, but rather to recognize that communities face a variety of health issues. We want to be responsive to the needs and priorities of the people of Wisconsin.

On behalf of the students, faculty and staff at La Follette, I would like to acknowledge and thank the many individuals who have made these studies possible. We appreciate the time and the information that you have contributed. Our hope is that you find our work useful in enhancing the health of the people in our state.

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May 7, 2003

Executive Summary

The recent rise in gang memberships and youth violence among the Lac Court Oreilles in northern Wisconsin has startled many in the community, and they have been searching for solutions. This report provides a brief history of the LCO tribe and reservation, possible causes of the rise in youth violence, strengths of the LCO community, and a list of community services that can be used to minimize this problem.

Meetings with area service providers and other community members provided much of the information outlined in this report. Opinions on why youth are joining gangs and committing acts of violence were solicited from these individuals. The most common reasons cited for the rise in youth violence are the relocation of tribal members from large cities, historical oppression, the breakdown of community and family structure, and a decrease in cultural awareness. Community members interviewed were also asked what they believe would be most effective methods for combating gangs and youth violence. These individuals alluded to four main ideas: increasing cultural awareness, including families in service delivery, establishing a mentoring program, and coordinating community resources more effectively.

The strengths of the community were also sought during these meetings. These strengths can be utilized while attempting to reduce youth violence. Although the LCO community has many strengths, four in particular were mentioned in the majority of our meetings. The traditional tribal culture, strength of extended families in the community, the increased awareness of the violence problem and willingness to act against it, and the wide availability of services in the area can all be used to reverse the recent trends. This report also provides a list of services in the community that we compiled during the time we spent in the area. This section can assist in the coordination of services throughout the community,

We intend for this report to serve as the basis for a community meeting of service providers and community leaders. The entire report will be discussed at this meeting, but the focus will be on what each individual can do to help implement the four main suggestions for change. Each suggestion will be discussed, followed by ample time for each person to suggest ways in which he or she can help make these suggestions a reality. A final section in this report will summarize what people think they can do in order to act on the recommendations that they have provided.

Building Upon Community Strengths: Combating Youth Violence in Lac Courte Oreilles

by Laura Breu, Anna Niles, and Trevor Pelot

Gangs and youth violence have long been a social problem in this country. The Lac Courte Oreilles reservation located near Hayward in northern Wisconsin has not been immune to this phenomenon. The recent rise in gang memberships and youth violence has startled many in the community, and they have been searching for solutions. Although this report cannot provide answers to the community's questions, we hope it can help to steer the community in the right direction. This report provides a brief history of the LCO tribe and reservation, possible causes of the rise in youth violence, strengths of the LCO community, and a list of community services that can be used to minimize this problem.

Meetings with area service providers and community members provided much of the information outlined in this report. The most common reasons cited for the rise in youth violence are the relocation of tribal members from large cities, historical oppression, the breakdown of community and family structure, and a decrease in cultural awareness. Community members also suggested what they believe would be effective methods for combating gangs and youth violence. Four main ideas were increasing cultural awareness, including families in service delivery, establishing a mentoring program, and coordinating community resources more effectively.

Community strengths can also aid in reducing youth violence. Although the LCO community has many strengths, four in particular were mentioned in the majority of our meetings. They are: the traditional tribal culture, strength of extended families in the community, the increased awareness of the violence problem and willingness to act against it, and the wide availability of services in the area.

Background

The Lac Courte Oreilles Band (LCO) of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians is one of 22 federally recognized Chippewa groups. The name "Chippewa" is interchangeable with the "Ojibwe" name for the tribe. In the United States, Chippewa is the official name used in all treaties. The two names are derived from the same word. The Ojibwe, who settled on the west fork of the Chippewa River, named their settlement *Pahquahwong*, meaning "where the river is wide." When the French came in the 1600s, they called the area Lac Courte Oreilles, meaning "lake of the short ears," referring to the early inhabitants of Ottawa who did not wear heavy earrings that stretched their ears as was the custom of the Ojibwe.

The Ojibwe came to the area of Lake Superior and Wisconsin's Apostle Islands from the Hudson Bay area around 1500. Most Ojibwe settled in the northern Great Lakes. In 1854 the Mud Lake, Old Post, and Yellow River bands of the Ojibwe joined to form

the Lac Courte Oreilles. They were primarily hunters and gatherers who harvested wild rice. These rice beds were a major resource for the Lac Courte Oreilles. With the coming of the French, and later the Americans, rice beds fell victim to competing interests like logging, flood control, and hydroelectric power.

The Lac Courte Oreilles, like most Native Americans, survived many trials forced upon them by policies of the United States government. A prime example of this occurred in 1912 when the Wisconsin-Minnesota Light & Power Company began planning an enormous dam that was to flood 5,600 acres of the reservation. The LCO objected to this because their wild rice beds would be inundated, as would cemeteries and their village. The company's promise to move the graves and village upland and to replant the rice beds was not fulfilled. In 1923 the dam began operating. The LCO were left with a flooded village, remains of the deceased washed onto the shore, and the inability to harvest wild rice.

In 1934 the LCO was one of two tribes that did not draw up a constitution and form a tribal government in order to be eligible to acquire the provisions offered under the Indian Reorganization Act (IRA). This act gave more power to tribal society, promoted Indian civil service and training programs, and made credit available to communities through a revolving government fund. The IRA, however, was set up to favor "progressives" over traditionalists. At LCO there was resistance from traditionalists in drawing up a constitution and establishing a tribal government. They feared losing power and wanted to maintain the hierarchal chief system. The provisions offered under the IRA did eventually reach the LCO people through the Business Committee, which served as a de facto tribal government.

The LCO reservation today is located in Sawyer County and covers approximately 69,000 acres of land. Twenty-three community villages dot the reservation with a combined population of over 5,500. The LCO community continues to practice traditional subsistence through hunting, fishing, and gathering throughout the four seasons. The tribe is the largest employer in Sawyer County.

One of the main focuses of the tribe is promoting economic development. The LCO Casino, Lodge, and Convention Center is the prime source of economic development in the community. It has more than 400 slot machines, 12 blackjack tables, and a 300-seat bingo facility. The casino generates a great amount of revenue for the tribe. Some community members expressed feelings that the focus on economic development is not what the tribe needs most right now. One community leader stated that while funds go to the casino to encourage growth, tribal social programs lack the funds they need to function at their fullest potential.

Limitations and Barriers

Many reasons were suggested for why young people are becoming involved in gangs and violence: historical oppression, lack of societal and family structure, parental denial, and lack of financial resources and staff. The leadership within the community has already begun to think creatively on how to address these challenges. This section lists the causes in the rise of youth violence and possible programs that would minimize this

problem that were ascertained through meetings with service providers and other members of the community.

Relocation and Protection

According to many observers, gangs infiltrated LCO when tribal members came back from urban centers where they had moved for employment. People moved back to the reservation when the casino opened and jobs were created. Some gang members with an LCO background may even have returned to the reservation to hide from the authorities. The major gang association that was brought back from the cities when job availability improved was the Latin Kings. After the Latin Kings shot an LCO tribe member on the reservation whom they felt “disrespected” their gang, the Players formed within LCO as a security network against the Latin Kings. The trend of violence appears to be spurred from these associations, which attract young people, led by middle-aged and young adults.

Rise in Juvenile Crime

Data collected from a local deputy sheriff shows a steady rise in juvenile crime in Sawyer County. The increase in native juvenile arrests, however, is more pronounced than the rise in arrests for all juveniles. From 2000 to 2001 the total number of juvenile arrests went up by one—from 85 to 86. The percentage of arrests that were of native juveniles went from 48 percent in 2000 to 62 percent in 2001. Table 1 illustrates the rise in arrests for all juveniles and for Native American juveniles in Sawyer County. From 1999 to 2002, the percent native of total arrests, not dependent on age, has remained relatively constant. The percentage of native total arrests remained between 50 and 53 percent during this time period. The most common types of juvenile crime in Sawyer County are burglary and vandalism.

Table 1. Juvenile and Native Juvenile Arrests in Sawyer County, Wisconsin 1999–2003

	Total Juvenile Arrests	Native Juvenile Arrests	Percent Native
1999	73	39	53
2000	85	41	48
2001	86	53	62
2002	97	69	71
YTD 2003	22	17	77

Historical Oppression

Multigenerational trauma, also called a “soul wound,” is regarded to have strong societal and developmental implications. The historic stripping of native identity continues to produce a tension and oppression among youth and their parents. New trends out-weigh traditions, and the media are connecting kids with a different culture than their

elders knew. This produces confusion and lack of orientation to symbols or traditions that young people can identify with.

Community and Family Structure

The community lacks structure, which youth need to develop in a healthy manner. One community leader explained that the LCO history shows a systemic breakdown of male authority in society by the government taking away authority through treaties and wars. A different power structure was imposed, leaving a vacuum of purposelessness that influenced the family structure. Every leader and youth worker with whom we spoke mentioned that family breakdown or dysfunction spurs young people toward gangs. Young people find structure and a sense of safety within the familiar connections, which hold a gang together. Youth also find strong leadership and direction, along with true authority figures, in the older and established leaders of the gangs. This spirals into a dangerous sense of belonging within a destructive community rather than a healthy community and family structure.

Parental Denial

Several community leaders also mentioned that the parents are denying the issue of family breakdown and youth violence. In some cases the parents are involved in drugs or gangs themselves, which has a strong negative effect on their children. This denial makes it difficult to organize dialogue around central issues and preventive measures. It tends to take a tragedy for families to come together to discuss what needs to change. Community circles have been successful outlets for families, youth, and community organizers to come together in dialogue. However, such positive programs seem to lack consistency and die out.

School workers mentioned that most parents have minimal involvement and support in their child's life after school. This shows the need for after-school programs that promote positive youth development and provide healthy adult-youth relationships. These programs must be sustained, however, and led by highly motivated adults though. Several leaders also said that quality mentors are lacking, especially those who would volunteer their time.

Staff and Financial Resources

Financial resources and staff are in short supply. Several people mentioned that social services, including LCO Social Services, are extremely understaffed and/or underfunded. Most of the youth and health programs are funded by grants with an ending period, so the programs die at the end of the funding period. The lack of consistent programs plays a role in the lack of social structure. Continuity in an environment is needed in order to feel safe and for community to be built.

Suggestions

Several ideas for overcoming barriers came up in our discussions. Various observers suggested that youth need to learn about their own culture, that programs should involve the families of and mentors for the youth, and that program managers can improve their efforts to coordinate services.

Cultural Awareness

Youth programs should focus on teaching the rich and unique history of the tribe, increasing cultural awareness. Research shows that “how a community interprets its history may influence its willingness to become involved in a change process and may also influence its views of the future.”¹ Tapping into the creative resources of the community’s rich culture can address soul wounds that cannot be ignored. At the same time, youth can become engaged by creating something unique that expresses a part of their identity.

Family Orientation

Some of those we interviewed suggested that programs and activities be more family- oriented, which could motivate parents to take an active and healthy role in their children’s lives. Family-based programs will lead to early intervention, promoting a family and community connectedness for the kids rather than being estranged and isolated from their families. One service provider noted that many of the children involved in gangs come from unhealthy families. A focus on entire families rather than individual children would work toward providing these children with the support that they need.

Mentoring Program

The possibility of establishing a mentoring program is a promising prospect. If the challenges of finding quality mentors and financial resources are successfully addressed, a multi-organizational program could increase the scope of adult influence in young people’s lives. An LCO community health worker mentioned that all programs must have a one-on-one relational base with an older person in order to be successful. Young people need to know that they have a safe place to go, cultivating a sense of belonging.

Service Coordination

Coordination of services will result in better managed and utilized community resources. One idea for promoting coordination is to establish a monthly working committee with representatives from various organizations, including youth representatives. This would bring about an awareness of services and assets available to the community and create a safe place for youth to take part in decision making. This group could establish community values across organizations, promoting social structure and consistency. Considering that most programs in LCO are grant-funded, every program initiative should set long-term goals and develop initiatives for generating income after the grant has ended.

Community Strengths

It is important to identify any community’s strengths when attempting to deal with problems such as gangs and youth violence. Once its strengths are known, the community can use them in confronting issues they face. In our contacts with service providers and tribal members, many strengths of the LCO community were discussed.

¹ Robert Goodman et al. (1998). Identifying and defining the dimensions of community capacity to provide a basis for measurement. *Health Education and Behavior*, vol 25 (June 1998): p. 270.

Also, most of the people we talked to mentioned similar strengths, implying that they are well known and genuine. The following section provides a summary of the LCO community's strengths that arose during our discussions with members of the community.

Tribal Culture

The most common community strength cited by those we have met with is the tribal culture. The consensus is that if the youth were more in touch with their culture and lived their lives by it, then they would not encounter problems such as gangs, violence, and drug and alcohol abuse. It was often stated that the traditional LCO culture, if practiced, would provide the sense of belonging that gangs are currently providing for some of the community's young people. Several aspects of the culture, such as pow-wows, drumming, and the language, could be used to increase cultural awareness among the community's youth. The opinion among community members is that increased awareness of and participation in the culture would provide youth with a source of inner strength that could lead to their protection against negative influences.

Believing that improving cultural awareness can be a useful tool in the fight against youth violence, some in the community have implemented programs that aim to enhance cultural knowledge and understanding among the area youth. For example, Hayward High School has established a native music program that teaches traditional drumming and respect for the drum. The high school also has an Ojibwe language teacher who, in addition to teaching children their native language, has attempted to start a lacrosse team at the school. The SMART Moves program at the Boys & Girls Club is another program that encourages cultural awareness through activities such as drumming and dancing. Despite these attempts to increase cultural awareness, many feel that the youth are still out of touch with their culture. There was unanimous agreement among those we interviewed that doing more to foster cultural consciousness, such as holding more pow-wows, would be an important step in stopping youth violence. One service provider believes that the community in general, and the tribal council in particular, has begun to be more active in this area.

Extended Families

Another widely held view among those we met is that extended families are particularly strong among LCO families. Children often have strong ties to their aunts, uncles, grandparents, and cousins. This aspect of the culture can serve as a safety net for families when they encounter troubles. A counselor stated that extended families in the community usually provide whatever support they can when a family member is in need. Many of the people we encountered believe that the strong family support system can be used to help steer area youth down the right path and away from gangs and violence. For example, many think that a mentorship program involving healthy members of a youth's extended family would be helpful in this respect.

Increased Awareness and Willingness to Act

A majority of those we interviewed mentioned that there has been a recent increase in the awareness of youth violence as a community problem and of the willingness to do something about it. As previously mentioned, one individual stated that

the tribal council has begun to invest more resources in youth programs. Another example of the growing willingness to take action on violence is the North Woods Beach neighborhood watch program. Several people also mentioned that adults in the community are becoming more involved in youth programs and are starting to donate more time to these causes. Those community members who are willing to provide assistance to youth and contribute to the strengthening of the community are important resources and could be used in providing services such as cultural activities and mentorship programs.

Availability of Services

Another community strength that was often mentioned in our discussions is the wide availability of social services. The same people who believe that there is a high level of services available in the community also believe that people do not take full advantage of them—for several reasons. First, a few of those we talked to think that many tribal members are resistant to seeking the services provided by the county. Second, the services offered on the reservation are understaffed and under-funded. Finally, many community members are unaware of the services that are available.

Available Social Services

A variety of programs are available for Lac Courte Oreilles youth and their families. We describe a number of them here.

Tribal Social Services

This agency is the main provider of social services on the reservation and includes the Indian Child Welfare and Family Preservation and Support departments. It functions in much the same way as a typical social service agency on a reservation. The Indian Child Welfare Act stipulates that this agency is responsible for juveniles who commit noncriminal offenses such as truancy. It is also responsible for any cases of child abuse or neglect that are reported on the reservation. The agency receives most of its funding from federal sources. Agency officials view the shortage of financial resources as a major barrier to adequate provision of services and skilled staff.

Community Circles

One manner of bringing the community together that has proven successful is through Community Circles organized by a local service provider. These gatherings bring together representatives of various sectors of the community. The meetings provide members of the community and family units with an opportunity to discuss issues openly that affect them. Attendees typically have dinner together at the meeting, which encourages a more relaxed and informal setting for discussing issues.

Sawyer County Health & Human Services

Sawyer County Health & Human Services (SCHHS) provides a number of services for county residents, including tribal members. They offer mental health services such as individual and family therapy, several forms of alcohol and other drug abuse services, employment assistance, a mentoring program, and various children and family services. All are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. A specific example of the services this agency provides to the area youth is the Sawyer County Prevention

Education Program, which provides supervised activities and educational programs for youth ages 12-18 at the youth center site in Winter. This program is designed to promote healthy decision-making in young people facing the challenges of alcohol and other drug abuse in the community. As mentioned earlier, however, many of those on the reservation resist using county social services.

SCHHS is also the primary provider of juvenile delinquency services in the area. When a child commits a crime, he or she goes to this agency for an assessment. The caseworker recommends a course of action for juvenile court and formulates a case plan. The juvenile court then gives the county service providers a case plan that they are responsible for monitoring and for determining appropriate sanctions. Juveniles may face one of two types of sanctions when they violate a court order. First, court-ordered sanctions include up to ten days in secure detention, 25 hours community service, six-month suspension of the juvenile's driver's license, or 30 days home detention with electronic monitoring. Second, caseworker sanctions can include a variety of informal punishments that depend on the juvenile and the relationship the caseworker has with him or her. The only formal sanction the caseworker can impose on the child is up to 72 hours in detention. One caseworker stated that when a juvenile violates the court order, something will be done to hold him or her accountable, depending on the nature of the case. However, the caseworker alone cannot ensure full compliance and accountability. Only the juvenile's family and community, who can bring violations to the attention of the caseworker, can ensure compliance and accountability. This situation implies that increased involvement in the lives of delinquents by those in the community is needed.

Lac Courte Oreilles Boys & Girls Club

The LCO Boys & Girls Club provides a safe and healthy environment for youth in the community to go to with adult supervision. The club offers several resources for young people, such as the SMART Moves program, cultural arts, a technology center, sports activities, and a gang prevention counselor, who discusses alternatives with children who may be at risk for becoming involved with gangs. The people that we talked with believe that the club is a very important resource in the community, that it offers a concrete alternative to children who do not want to become involved in gangs. The club has also taken steps toward expanding its services, such as proposing to keep it open 24 hours on the weekends and equipping it with showers and beds. This change would allow children to stay at the club on the weekends, when the opportunities for getting into trouble increase. A survey of the youth at the club showed that many of them do not feel safe in their own homes. Allowing these youth to stay at the club over the weekends gives them access to a safe environment. The LCO Boys & Girls Club is also scheduled to build a new club in the Watertower community, an area plagued by gangs and youth violence. One theme that often came up during our talks with community members is that the Boys & Girls Club is a very positive force for the youth who participate. Most of the youth already involved in gangs, however, will not go to the club because it is not "cool." Involving at-risk youth in the club's program development may help to change this situation.

Lac Courte Oreilles Community Health Center

The community health center located on the reservation provides urgent health care, dental care, and several other services, such as mental health and alcohol and other drug abuse (AODA) services. Many of those with whom we met believe that mental health and AODA issues in the community directly cause youth violence. A common belief is that the LCO community health center could have an impact on this problem. One counselor at the center, however, believes that transportation and outreach services are needed in order to ensure that families are aware of and are able to get to the services.

Schools

Most tribal youth attend one of three area schools, the LCO, Hayward, or Winter school. The schools are an important resource in the community because they arguably have the most contact with the young people and therefore have the greatest ability to provide and coordinate services with other providers in the community. Examples of programs that the schools offer that may have a positive impact on the lives of area youth are the Testing Reality and Investigating Lifestyles (TRAILS) youth program at the LCO school and the language class and native music program at Hayward High School.

A few of the people we talked to suggested that the Hayward school is too quick to suspend and expel students for relatively minor occurrences. One service provider stated that this problem would occur less frequently if communication between community members, service agencies, and the schools were improved. By communicating more, at-risk students could be identified before they start getting into serious trouble. It is widely believed that the schools, being in the most contact with the youth, could be the most effective at identifying at-risk children and communicating this to others in the community who could intervene in the child's life.

Parents and Children's Learning Center

Located in the LCO school's Family Learning Center, this program offers three general types of services. First, it provides families that are expecting a baby or have a child 0-3 years old with information on their child's social, physical, and psychological development. Group meetings are held for parents to meet each other and provide mutual aid. Second, the center's early childhood component offers a culture-based curriculum for children ages 3-5, parent-child interaction in the classroom, and parent-teacher cooperation. Third, it offers a center and home-based adult education component that provides adults with the opportunity to increase their knowledge and skills in the area of personal growth and parenting. The center also provides transportation and meals for participants.

Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwa Community College

The college has great potential for expanding its resources into the community. In the recent past, they have offered summer language courses, playing a role in the increase of cultural awareness. Students and teachers may become more involved within the LCO community in the future through service learning projects. The college may also be an important asset to tap into for quality mentors.

21st Century Community Learning Center Program

This program provides activities that support the educational, health, and recreational needs of the community. The program provides tutoring and Saturday

school; health, wellness, recreational programs; and community education programs, such as parent workshops and employment seminars. The center lists several other groups and agencies as community partners, including tribal groups such as the LCO Boys & Girls Club and Indian Child Welfare.

IMPACT Day Treatment Center

This day treatment center located in Hayward is one of several related centers to which tribal social services refers at-risk youth and those expelled from school. The IMPACT treatment program is a community-based program designed to meet the emotional, developmental, cognitive, and behavioral needs of children, adolescents, and their families. The program provides therapeutic interventions for acute emotional, behavioral, and AODA problems. The program lasts three to nine months and is typically conducted through psychological, education, individual, group, and family therapy. Many of the service providers whom we talked to believe that day treatment has a large, positive effect on its students. Many children, however, are sent to centers at least an hour away from their homes causing a disconnect between school and family community. Many of our contacts argued that the tribe would benefit greatly by establishing its own day treatment center.

Conclusion

The trend of gang and youth violence on the Lac Courte Oreilles Reservation has a great potential to decrease, increasing the overall health of the community. As this report shows, community assets are ample to effect positive change. The traditional tribal culture, strength of extended families in the community, the increased awareness of violence and motivation to act against it, and the many services available in the county and on the reservation must all be seen as building blocks requiring coordination. These strengths have the capacity to affect the limitations of relocation of tribal members from large cities, historical oppression, the breakdown of community and family structure, and a decrease in cultural awareness. The four main suggestions alluded to by community leaders are: increasing cultural awareness, including families in service delivery, establishing a mentoring program, and coordinating community resources more effectively. It is our hope that dialogue among service providers and community leaders will form around these promising suggestions and that present resources will be shared through creative initiatives.

Summary of Community Meeting

A meeting of community members and service providers in the LCO community was held on May 7, 2003 to discuss our findings and to come to a consensus on a future course of action. This section provides a list of attendees and summarizes the ideas that were generated and the next step that was agreed upon at the meeting.

A total of eight people attended this meeting. Attendees ranged from LCO tribal council members and service providers to other interested individuals from other American Indian communities. The following is a list of those who attended and the agency they represent if applicable.

- Jenny Stuerke-Family Preservation and Support Program

- Sarah Ross-Indian Child Welfare
- Daidre Bartz-Sawyer County Health and Human Services
- Carol Smith-LCO Health Center
- Don Smith-LCO Health Director
- Marie Kuykendall -Transportation Planning
- David Innerebner-Discoveries (YWAM)
- John Ostroske-Asbury Theological Seminary

At the meeting, the nominal group process was used to elicit ideas related to how the attendees and the community could work toward implementing the suggestions outlined in the paper. These suggestions were provided through interviews with community members and service providers over the past few months. Briefly, it was suggested that increasing cultural awareness, emphasizing family-oriented services, establishing a mentoring program on the reservation, and increased coordination of services would be effective in reducing the problem of youth violence in the area. Attendees were asked what they could do, specifically, to help implement these suggestions. A community service program was also mentioned as an area that should be explored. The following section summarizes this discussion.

Increasing Cultural Awareness

The group provided several suggestions regarding how cultural awareness can be raised among LCO youth. First, the community should provide more services that focus on culture as an individual and community strength. For example, community feasts and drumming groups could be formed or expanded. This would provide a safe environment based on relationship for dialogue to form. Second, the older LCO generations should be more involved in service provision. One attendee noted that grandparents are an underutilized resource in the community. The older generations are more knowledgeable of and attached to the native culture and can pass this on to the youth. Third, symbols of the culture, such as the Ojibwe language and native-inspired architecture, should be used more often. A more visible use of cultural symbols would increase cultural identity in the community. Fourth, the Community Circles program could be expanded. The attendees believe that this program has been a success in bringing people together and raising awareness of issues within the community and of the culture. Finally, outside agencies should be made more aware of the LCO culture in order to provide more effective services. For example, one tribal service provider stated that the State stresses the immediate family rather than the extended family. One of the major strengths in the LCO community is the extended family. The State's emphasis on the immediate family misses out on this resource.

Family-Oriented Services

This discussion focused mainly on encouraging families to take more initiative in creating safe activities for the youth. For example, one service provider suggested that families should work toward creating a safe playground for children in each community on the reservation. It was often noted that many children do not have enough safe things to do in their free time. A community-based playground would provide an activity that could be supervised by the neighborhood adults. Community leaders should also

encourage families to organize neighborhood events such as feasts. This process would raise cultural awareness and encourage a neighborhood identity. This identity could be used as a resource to protect the neighborhood against the influence of gangs. Attendees also suggested that service providers formally and informally stress family involvement in the service provision process. For example, the families of at-risk youth could be invited to participate early in the intake process. In addition, service providers could more informally encourage families to become involved in the services provided to the youth.

Mentoring Program

The group unanimously supported establishing a mentoring program on the reservation. A mentoring program that emphasized the extended family and the native culture was mentioned as a desirable and attainable goal. One service provider suggested that a future program include a paid manager who would be responsible for locating mentors, training them, and matching them with youth. This suggestion was made in response to the trouble the community has had in the past in operating a mentoring program for an extended period of time. It was also noted that outreach would be needed to make the community aware of a mentoring program once it is created.

Service Coordination

While the group thinks that service coordination is a worthwhile goal and an effective strategy, they also believe that local social service agencies generally lack the staff or resources needed to take time to get together to discuss individual cases. Nonetheless, suggestions were made regarding how coordination of services could be improved. One idea that was mentioned is to form regular meetings of service providers that are focused on one issue at a time. Many attendees stated that meetings between providers often lose their focus and nothing gets done as a result. One attendee from another American Indian community in the Midwest noted that they have regular meetings of service providers in order to discuss individual cases. Everyone at these meetings signs a confidentiality agreement to alleviate these concerns. This community believes that these meetings lead to a more comprehensive and efficient provision of services. One attendee suggested that a position be created to facilitate communication between service agencies, the schools, and other organizations.

Community Service

An attendee from a Midwestern reservation shared his experiences with a program which involved youth in service learning. The program provided a valuable opportunity for youth adult partnerships in the reparation process for a juvenile crime. Once the youth admits to vandalism or some other crime, an agreement is made with the victim as to the appropriate project. The youth then serves in such a way as to create something in the community that he or she is proud of and can take ownership of, discouraging further vandalism. It was also discussed that opportunities for all youth to serve the community is a possibility to work within trusting, multi-generational relationships while providing the community a platform to engage youth in a positive manner.

Finally, the group discussed a concrete plan of action that can be used to improve the implementation and provision of services in the community. This discussion focused

on expanding youth involvement in program development. One idea that was mentioned is to set up a meeting with a youth council to get them involved and own the programs they are to participate in. A suggestion was made that the Youth Development Coordinator at the LCO Community College may be able to organize this council and regular meetings between it and community leaders and service providers. The youth council would be able to provide the community with input regarding which programs are likely to work given their preferences. In addition, the process of involving the youth in program implementation would give them an increased sense of ownership of and belonging to the programs that are developed.