

The Link Offers Lifeline for Youth Looking to Leave Gang Life

Winnipeg, Manitoba July 26, 2023 –The Link is launching a cutting-edge gang prevention campaign aimed at youth throughout the province, an initiative led and funded by the Manitoba Association of Chiefs of Police (MACP) Organized Crime Committee and Manitoba Justice.

Three short, gritty videos are meant to start a conversation about the myths of gang life when compared to reality. The concept uses a video game look-and-feel to reach viewers aged 13-16 in a way they will relate to and share. A phone number at the end of each video encourages viewers to send a text message to The Link; a potential lifeline for those who want help leaving gang life. The Link will provide around-the-clock responses to texts from youth sent to 204.900.6010.

“We recognize the need for this message to reach youth across the province. It is so important for young people to know there are resources available designed to help them safely leave gang life,” says The Link’s CEO, Kerri Irvin-Ross. “When they’re in it, they feel like there’s no way out. We want to assure youth that there is a way out and we’re here to help,” she adds.

The development of the campaign was a grassroots, authentic approach to provide a pathway out of gang life in a realistic and relatable way. A great deal of time was invested in working with the anti-gang unit as well as reformed gang members to make sure the campaign’s tone, visuals and call to action were real and would resonate with this young audience.

“From the conception of this idea to the launch here today, I can’t think of a more committed group of people focussed on the outcome of giving youth who are most vulnerable to gang recruitment a way out. We believe the video game look will help young viewers see themselves in the creative and relate to the characters and scenarios,” says Gord Schumacher, Executive Director of MACP.

The videos each touch on different aspects of gang life including drugs, sexual exploitation and gun violence. Some parts are uncomfortable to watch but offer a realistic depiction of what youth today are faced with in gang life.

“Our hope is that the messages will resonate with youth and that these efforts will result in texts for help,” adds Assistant Commissioner Rob Hill, Commanding Officer, Manitoba RCMP. “Every day, youth throughout our province are faced with scenarios just like these. But we know the ultimate results of gang life are devastating – and most often lead to victimization, jail time or even death,” he adds.

To reach Manitoba youth, a digital-focused campaign is launched today on several social platforms including Facebook, Instagram, SnapChat and TikTok. The first campaign cycle runs for six weeks starting today and a second cycle will run for seven weeks starting in early October.

To view the videos go to <https://thelinkmb.ca/ganglifeisnolife/>

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