

# IDENTIFIERS

Gang members use graffiti, hand signs, tattoos and colours to signify their membership in a gang and to communicate their affiliation to others. Each gang has its own unique signal, sign, and dress. These serve not only to identify gang members, but also to promote group solidarity. Below are the primary identifiers and their useful purpose.

**GRAFFITI** - One of the first indicators of gang activity in an area. Graffiti is a clear marking of territorial boundaries and serves as a warning or even a challenge to a rival gang. You can find graffiti on almost any available space, be it a building, bus bench, wall, street sign, book or even on a private residence. Graffiti glorifies the gang and makes its existence well known.

**HAND SIGNS** - The use of hand signs is multipurpose. It is a means of communicating gang affiliations to both rival and allied gang members.

**TATTOOS** - The tattoo can be used to identify the member's gang, set and nickname. Tattoos may appear on any part of the member's body. They are more commonly placed on the arms, legs, chest and neck.

**COLOURS** - Matching clothing such as shoes, shirts, caps and bandanas are common group identifiers. They not only serve to identify members, but also promote group solidarity.

# PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION

Law enforcement is only a part of the solution. Prevention programs and education are all necessary elements of the solution. It is easier to prevent a young person from joining a gang than it is to get that person out of the gang.

Parents must get involved in their children's lives. They must give their children a sense of belonging and build self-esteem by praising them for their accomplishments. Parents must be there for their children, especially in times of need.

If we are to prevent our children from entering into a lifestyle which often brings disastrous results, we must keep them busy in activities such as school, community, church and talks with Elders. By keeping them busy in such activities, young people will not have time to get involved in gangs.

**Contact:  
Saskatoon Police Service  
Street Crime Section  
306-975-8300**

Saskatoon Police Service  
76 – 25th Street East Saskatoon, SK  
S7K 3P9

**saskatoonpolice.ca**



**1-800-222-8477**

# YOUTH & CRIMINAL STREET GANGS





*Street gang tools*

Every parent should be aware of the behaviours and characteristics associated with youth and criminal street gang involvement. Pictured above are just some of the weapons and tools used by gang members on the streets of Saskatoon. A Criminal Organization is defined as a group comprised of 3 or more persons, that has as one of its main purposes or activities the facilitation or commission of one or more serious offences, which if committed would result in and be a benefit to the group or any persons who constitute the group.

### Membership Characteristics

In determining whether an accused participates or contributes to a criminal organization, the court may consider whether the accused:

- Uses a name, work, symbol or other representation that identifies or is associated with the Criminal Organization.
- Frequently associates with any persons who constitute the Criminal Organization.
- Receives any benefit from the Criminal Organization.
- Repeatedly engages in activities at the instruction of any of the persons who constitute the Criminal Organization.

## WARNINGS OF GANG MEMBERSHIP

Young people in trouble cry out for help in different ways. Some of these pleas for help are dangerous such as running away, becoming involved with drugs or becoming sexually promiscuous. Some youths are tough, others commit suicide. Generally, a crisis doesn't happen, it develops gradually. Recognizing these warning signs may help a youth resist serious trouble, including joining a gang. These warnings include:

- Rumours or reliable information that a youth has not been home for several nights.
- Evidence of substance abuse or an increase in substance abuse.
- Abrupt changes in personality.
- Changes in friends and refusing to bring them home.
- Use of nicknames, matching nickname with graffiti lists.
- A dress code that applies to a few such as wearing a particular colour exclusively, a style or item of clothing, a particular hair style or clandestine tattoos.
- A change in attitude to include violent reactions, disruptive behaviour, dislike and refusal to submit to authority (parents, school and police).
- Becomes secretive regarding whereabouts and activities.



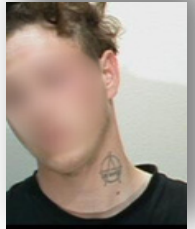
**SPS**  
BE THE DIFFERENCE

## STREET GANG MEMBERSHIP

Members are traditionally males who join gangs by either committing crimes or undergoing an initiation procedure. Females are also becoming more accepted as gang members. Motivation for joining a gang is varied, but usually falls within one of the following categories:

- Identity or recognition
- Protection
- Fellowship and brotherhood
- Intimidation

The type of youth who may be attracted to a gang is someone who does not receive the recognition one would usually get from their family, athletics or employment.



### At Risk Youth

- Youth living in areas of high gang activity.
- Youth from broken or troubled homes.
- Youth from homes where they are left alone to fend for themselves most of the time.
- Youth who are looking for a sense of belonging which they are not getting at home.
- Youth with low self-esteem.
- Youth who are not given proper praise at home or school.

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