

Youth survey indicates both problems and needs



By Tony Pearson

Not surprisingly, a majority of respondents agreed with statements that they would hit back if attacked, and that it was normal, that young people prove themselves through fighting. (Interestingly in this regard, about two thirds of respondents were female). Nonetheless, only about a quarter felt that 'a bit of violence is part of the fun' or that a person has to use force to gain respect.

In terms of social harassment, about one in five said they have sent bullying messages over the internet, while about one in 10 have transmitted inappropriate pictures.

In contrary findings, only about 10 per cent identified violence as a school problem, while even less saw bullying as an issue.

Community perceptions were fairly positive. The great majority liked their neighbourhood, and very few thought there was a lot of crime in their area. The majority rated their neighbours as helpful and trustful, and felt their neighbour was close-knit. (Somewhat to the contrary, a majority also felt their neighbours didn't notice their own behaviour, or let them know when they're not behaving.)

As far as solutions are concerned, more activities for youth were seen as needed. For many, the need was for more safe places for youth to 'hang out', while others felt that schools should organize more things to do. In addition, about one in five respondents believed that more drug searches should be done.

The project, along with other YAB activities like the youth talent show and the Christmas family art project, was funded by an Ontario government grant through the 'Safer and Vital Communities' program. Although NHCS was the lead agency, the local OPP, the HPE school board, county social services, and the municipalities of Bancroft and Hastings Highlands also partnered in the grant.

Further survey work is projected with the new members of the Youth Advisory Board. This group will complete a study with grade 8 students at York River Public School; they will also attempt to survey youth 13-18 who are not enrolled at school.

The YAB was thanked for its project work by members of Council and CAO Hazel Lambe.