



# Chasing Away Rain Clouds

## DISCUSSION GUIDE



A Youth Justice Video Produced by Public Legal Education  
and Information Service of New Brunswick

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## **Acknowledgements**

This video was produced by **Public Legal Education and Information Service of New Brunswick**, in collaboration with an advisory committee that included representatives from: Youth Connexions Jeunesse, Youth in Transition, Centre for Research on Youth-at-Risk at St. Thomas University, Atlantic Alliance for Children and Youth, NB Youth Council, Provincial Caring Partnerships Committee, NB Department of Justice, NB Department of Public Safety, Canada/NB Community Mobilization Program, NB Department of Education, and John Howard Society of NB.

Since this is a video for youth and about youth, we made a commitment to film and edit it with the involvement of youth. The New Brunswick Community College - Woodstock provided us with our youth production team from their Video Production Department. We thank the College for their patience and assistance, and our young crewmembers for their hard work and creativity. We extend a very special thanks to all of the youth that shared their candid and insightful thoughts. Finally, we gratefully acknowledge the many youth serving agencies and organizations that assisted in directing us to youth who were willing to speak out.

Research and development of this discussion guide was provided by: Kathy Creaghan Gray (M.Ed), Quality Action Consulting Inc., Brian Bray, (TME, M.Ed.), University of New Brunswick

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*(Cette vidéo est disponible en français)*

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## What's the video about?

This video explores a number of youth justice issues. It presents the open and candid views of youth on such issues as boredom, peer pressure, drugs and alcohol, lack of skills, dropping out of school and poverty. The youth offer insights into why some kids get into trouble; how to make punishments more meaningful; and, the kinds of support that might help kids stay out of trouble.

## Who should view this video?

This video is intended for two audiences:

- **Youth Audiences (12 to 17 years)**
  - Youth in school (middle school and high school)
  - Youth in alternative learning environments
  - Youth in clubs, organizations, etc.
  - Youth in custody/group homes
- **General Public**
  - Anyone participating in a youth justice community dialogue
  - Parents, educators/school administrators
  - Professionals who work with youth including Police/Probation workers
  - Youth serving agencies, service clubs, community organizations

## Reasons for viewing the video in schools include:

- Educate/raise awareness of youth justice issues
- Promote discussion of local issues and solutions
- Provide support for youth who are experiencing problems
- Increase opportunities for prevention

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## Reasons for viewing the video generally:

- Springboard for discussion of youth justice issues
- Provide adults with a “youth” perspective on youth justice issues and solutions
- Encourage involvement in youth justice system

## Tips for facilitators on using the video and discussion guide

□ Preview the video and read the guide. The guide sets out discussion questions relating to many of the key issues raised in the video. Choose discussion topics of greatest interest to your audience.

□ The video is not a stand-alone tool. To supplement the follow-up discussion, be sure to contact PLEIS-NB and order the **Youth Justice Information Kit**, fact sheets on youth justice topics, pamphlets, articles and poster. Teachers may also wish to order a more comprehensive **Youth Justice Lesson Plan Guide**.

□ Screen the video for your audience in a workshop or classroom setting that provides lots of opportunity for discussion. If your audience is large, consider breaking into small groups so participants can share personal thoughts and experiences. Ask someone from each group to report back to the larger group afterwards.

□ Be sure that your discussion includes a search for solutions to youth justice issues in your community!

□ Evaluate the audience’s reaction to the video and discussion using the enclosed evaluation form. Please share your findings with Public Legal Education and Information Service of New Brunswick.



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## Discussion Topics and Questions

### TOPIC 1: Reality - Stereotyping Youth

***"I feel stereotyped as a youth. Because some kids have made bad decisions...that we're all bad kids."***

*Chasing Away Rain Clouds*

#### OBJECTIVES:

To explore society's unrealistic fear of youth and youth crime. To discuss ways in which youth are stereotyped by adults, and sometimes, by other youth.



#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

In what ways does society stereotype youth? Does the media play a role? Give examples. What can be done to change society's perception of youth? Do people in your community have a fear of youth crime?

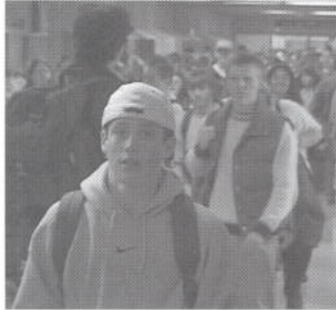
Did you know that of a total of 581 homicides in Canada in 1997, only 56 of those charged were youth? In fact, 80% of crimes committed by young people are for non-violent offences. So why do so many people believe that youths are more likely than adults to commit violent crimes? Did you know that Canada has the highest rate of incarcerating youth in the industrialized world and that it costs approximately \$100,000 per year to jail a youth? Do you feel that this high rate of jailing youth is justified by our crime rate? What can we do to keep more youth out of the criminal justice system? What are some alternatives to incarceration?

## TOPIC 2: Getting in Trouble

***"I was always allowed to go out. I wasn't given a structure and I got used to doing everything on my own time."***

***"I used to hang out at the mall, and that's where I first got into trouble"***

*Chasing Away Rain Clouds*



### **OBJECTIVES:**

To identify some of the factors that put youth at risk of getting into trouble and participating in criminal activities.

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

Although "hanging out" at the mall is not necessarily a bad thing, activities such as this are generally unstructured and unsupervised. This is just one of many factors that may put youth at greater risk of participating in criminal activities.

Can you think of other risk factors? (Examples: poverty, boredom, drug and alcohol abuse, family violence, lack of family support, no access to recreational or leisure activities, few social services, peer pressure and poor academic performance.)

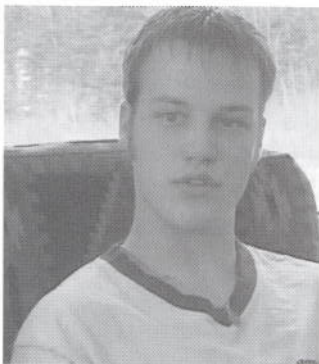
What are some of the risk factors that confront youth in your area? What could be done to counteract these risk factors and prevent youth from becoming involved in criminal activities?

## TOPIC 3: Wanting to Belong

***“When you start to have a low self-esteem you do almost anything to be accepted, you do almost anything to be liked.”***

***“It’s like this big denial, this big game of looking good.”***

*Chasing Away Rain Clouds*



### **OBJECTIVES:**

To explore the ways that low-esteem may play a role in youth crime.

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

The youth interviewed in the video discuss the concept of youth “wanting to belong”.

In what ways could wanting to belong impact on youth crime? When can wanting to belong have positive outcomes?

What do you think the youth in the video meant when she said that youth get caught up in “this big denial”?

What does a person’s self-esteem have to do with the choices he or she makes? What are the reasons that some kids have low self-esteem?

What can we do as a community to help youth that have low self-esteem?



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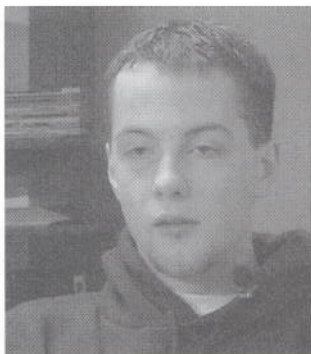
## Topic 4 Getting an Education

***"Boy do I wish I stayed in school. I wish I coulda got my diploma."***

*Chasing Away Rain Clouds*

### **OBJECTIVES:**

To discuss why supporting youth in obtaining an education and life skills is important for youth crime prevention. To explore ways to support youth to attain an education, life skills and job training.



### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

A youth in the video says that when you're out of school and you don't have the chance to go back, you'll look back and wish you could.

Are youth in your community at risk of dropping out of school? Why might this contribute to youth crime?

What alternatives are there to the formal education system? Who benefits when we offer youth educational support outside the regular classroom?

What can we do as a community to help youth get the academic, life skills training and work experience they need to find employment?

What could be done to help the at-risk youth in your area?

## Topic 5 People to Look Up To

### Supportive Caring Families and Friends

*“Peer helpers are kind of like guidance counsellors and if students don’t feel comfortable talking to an adult, they come to us.”*



*“Sometimes you feel really alone in the world and you just want somebody there to listen, not to tell you what to do or what not to do, just listen to what you have to say”*

*Chasing Away Rain Clouds*

#### **OBJECTIVES:**

To discuss the importance of positive role models in a child’s life. To identify people who can reach out to youth.

#### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

Many of the youth in the video talked about the frustration of having nobody to talk to. How might this contribute to youth crime?

What role does positive peer support play in helping youth reflect on their actions before they make decisions?

How can family, teachers, coaches and other adults who come into contact with youth support and foster their healthy growth? Are there people in your community who have the time to listen to youth?

## Topic 6 Being Involved

***"I think that it is very important to do things that keep you busy instead of doing bad things. It's important."***

***"If I didn't have the clubs, I don't know where I'd be right now"***

*Chasing Away  
Rain Clouds*



### **OBJECTIVES:**

To explore the importance of providing opportunities for youth to be involved in positive peer relationships, recreational, volunteer and sporting activities.

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

The youth in the video speak about the importance of being involved in positive and meaningful activities. How does lack of involvement relate to youth crime prevention?

Are there activities for youth in your community? Are these activities affordable and inclusive? List the other pro-social ways that youth can participate in your community?

What could be done to help families who are unable to pay membership fees, purchase sports equipment for their children or find transportation to an after-school activity? Are there plans to develop activities for youth in your community? Are youth involved in the planning? How can youth and the community work together in your area?

## Topic 7 What Goes Around Comes Around

### The Consequences of Youth Crime

***“Once you get in trouble, its just like a bad shadow...a rain cloud that will not go away.”***

***“The consequences suck by all means, you know what I mean? They’re not good.”***

*Chasing Away Rain Clouds*



#### **OBJECTIVES:**

To identify the different kinds of consequences that youth might face when they come into conflict with the law. To discuss ways of dealing with youth crime that are most meaningful to youth, victims and society?

#### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

What do you think the youth in the video meant when he said getting into trouble feels like “a rain cloud that will not go away”? Can we as a community do anything to prevent these clouds from forming? Youth who do come into conflict with the law face personal and criminal law consequences. What legal sanctions does the video mention (probation, jail, group homes and foster homes)? Can you think of others - like having a criminal record? The youth also talk about personal/emotional consequences of their actions (kicked out of school, kicked out of home, losing friends, not being trusted, psychiatric wards, and being labelled). Are the social consequences as serious as legal ones? Are courts always the best place to deal with youth? How can families, victims and communities play a greater role in the youth justice system?

## Topic 8 Silver Linings

### Creating Positive Environments for Youth

***“You’ve got to open kids’ eyes to the right options in life.”***

***“Put him in a program where he can learn stuff, learn life skills, learn ways to deal with the problems he has.***

***Put him in a positive environment, don’t send him to a negative environment”.***

*Chasing Away Rain Clouds*



#### **OBJECTIVES:**

To discuss positive ways to help kids who have been in trouble.

To identify protective factors that best support kids as they are reintegrated back into their communities.

#### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

What do you think the youth meant by “a positive environment”? Are there positive environments for youth in your community? Do you think that putting a youth in conflict with the law into a job-skills course or a sports activity would be a good idea? Would this be a positive way to reintegrate such a youth? Explain why. Do you think that sanctions such as restitution, public service tied to repairing the harm caused by the youth, or personal service to the victim, are as meaningful as jail, probation or paying fines? If youth return to the same circumstances that led to their criminal activity in the first place, what are the chances they will reoffend? How can we reintegrate youth into their families and communities in ways that foster prosocial skills and positive peer association?



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## Topic 9

### Chasing Away Rain Clouds

#### Filling Gaps and Strengthening Services to Prevent Crime

***"It takes people who have gone through the experience to help the people that are going through it ...to bring them to the other side"***

Chasing Away Rain Clouds



#### **OBJECTIVES:**

To discuss ways to support youth that have been in conflict with the law.

#### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

Efforts to develop and maintain rehabilitation and reintegration programs can be more effective when the community responds together. Take a good look at programs, services and people who can support youth in your community. Are programs and services accessible? Are youth able to get job training programs, education support services, therapeutic services, and life skills training?

Are there gaps in your community? What do we need to do to strengthen services and fill existing gaps? Who in your community do you see fulfilling this role?

What can be done to give youth a stronger voice in identifying and responding to gaps? In what ways would filling these gaps contribute to the prevention of youth crime?