

Calgary police join kids at school

"Really, there are two approaches you can take in dealing with kids in schools. An officer can go into the classroom with lecture-type material. Or you can do what we've opted for here — have a policeman available to communicate with kids whenever they want it."

Inspector Al Menzies, the officer in charge of Calgary's Youth Detail, was referring to that city's very successful school counsellor program, through which police officers are now assigned full time to six senior high schools.

The Calgary program, now four years old, came about as a conscious effort on the part of the Police Department to become more involved with the public. "We used to be a paramilitary organization working in platoons," notes Howard Leary, Assistant Chief of Police. "When we did have contact with the public, it was usually because the public was a violator or needed assistance. And because our officers worked only two to four weeks in any part of the city, they didn't get to know people very well."

The team-policing approach, whereby teams of officers remain in an area, has resulted not only in much closer liaison with the community, but also in more involvement by the public in helping police. Each zone has one constable who is a crime-prevention officer, working in the schools counselling young people and talking about police work and the law.

Students suspicious at first

"It took a while for kids to accept the idea," Menzies admits. "They looked at us with a rather jaundiced eye for the first year. But slowly and surely, our fellows earned their respect. Now they're coming to the counsellors with all kinds of problems. For school-oriented problems, they go to the guidance counsellor, but they discuss things like, for instance, a drunken father or alcoholism in the home." Once within the school, officers have made a definite point of leaving discipline and/or punishment to the school, whose prerogative they feel it is.

Each school involved in the program provides a private office where students know they can talk in confidence with the police counsellor. And when he isn't talking to someone in his office, the officer spends his time in the cafeteria or out on the school grounds taking part in



Al Menzies and Constable Bosniak talk to students at St. Mary's School, Calgary.

the sports program. "We consciously shop for men who are excellent athletes," Menzies declares, "because kids relate best to them when they participate in the sports program."

Fewer drugs

Neither Al Menzies nor the schools fool themselves that all their problems will disappear. They know, for instance, that there are still drugs around — but less of them. "Most of the peddlers are not students in the schools," says Menzies, "and where there are resource officers the kids come in as a matter of fact when some-

one they don't know starts hanging around. A lot of them don't want the pushers around either, and they'll say, 'Hey, there's someone on the parking lot with a trunk full of grass.'"

Police say also that they've noticed quite a difference in the way young people relate to them, not only at the schools but outside. "There's less tension now when officers stop a car," notes Menzies. "They don't seem to feel the need to say something smart or create a scene. Now the officer gets reasonable answers and nobody is mad."

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Money for multiculturalism

Additional resources next year of \$2.5 million will enable the federal multicultural program to provide support to a wide range of activities. The Government will set aside over \$50 million to provide equal opportunities to cultural groups over the next five years to share their traditions with all Canadians.

Financial assistance will be available towards the costs of national ethno-cultural organizations and special consideration can now be given to projects promoting the cultural integration of immigrants particularly in group development.

Programs currently under way will be

expanded. Through a Canada-wide network, the federal department will provide increased aid to groups seeking funds for such projects as conferences or seminars discussing current issues of concern; language workshops and teacher-training.

Canadian histories have been or are being commissioned to encourage an awareness of the integral part played by various minority groups in Canadian history. A series of anthologies in the official languages is also being planned to promote the creative literary contribution of Canada's many cultures. Other ongoing activities in the performing arts area include multicultural theatre and choir festivals, workshops and involvement in major national events.