

# Post-Incident Neighbourhood Support

A decade of building  
resilience in Ottawa  
communities



**Centre de ressources communautaires**  
**RIDEAU-ROCKCLIFFE**  
**Community Resource Centre**

Overbrook • Forbes • Carson Grove • Manor Park  
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# Helping the community together

This report showcases the success of the Post-Incident Neighbourhood Support framework (PINS) project. Ten years in the making, the framework focuses on helping marginalized communities deal with traumatic events (shots fired, death by suicide, shootings, fires... ).

This report is designed to tell the story of a coordinated approach for community groups, agencies and residents to prepare for and respond to traumatic events in Ottawa. We want to inspire further growth of these important networks. PINS encourages a team approach between community health and resource centres, social service agencies, Ottawa Community Housing, resident and community associations, community houses, city councillors' offices, City of Ottawa staff, the Ottawa Police Service and other community stakeholders.

The success of the PINS framework is important to the health and wellbeing of people in marginalized communities. This report shares experiences and strategies to help communities in Ottawa and across Canada build healthy, resilient futures.

## THE CHALLENGE

Traumatic or violent incidents can have a lasting impact on communities. Residents may feel fearful and distressed and people may start seeing their community as unsafe.

In the past, help was quick to arrive following a traumatic or violent event. However, there was no coordinated way to engage with partners during the response. Despite good intentions, some crisis response efforts resulted in mistakes that made things worse. Sometimes multiple partners knocked on the same doors. Other times, some residents were missed altogether.

## THE SOLUTION

Following public consultations about street violence in 2012, it became clear that more coordination was needed. With funding from Crime Prevention Ottawa, the Rideau-Rockcliffe Community Resource Centre (RRCRC) worked to address this issue by coordinating the efforts of professionals and residents to help neighbourhoods recover after tragic incidents. This led to the creation of the Post-Incident Neighbourhood Support (PINS) framework.

## PINS ACCOMPLISHMENTS

**10**

years in operation

**12**

networks across Ottawa

**18**

core organizations

**100+**

languages

Hundreds of brochures distributed following incidents



# About PINS

The PINS framework is a community-based post-incident response developed in one Ottawa neighbourhood for major incidents related to street violence. Over the years PINS has expanded city-wide and is funded as part of Crime Prevention Ottawa's strategy to address street violence.

The PINS framework helps reduce distress and restore unity after a traumatic event. Over time, it reduces fear, helps residents recover from trauma and builds community resilience.

To support neighbourhoods following traumatic or violent incidents, PINS networks:

- coordinate support and resources by engaging local leaders
- mobilize local resources to address needs
- facilitate community discussions
- share information

As community leaders and social service organizations saw the value of post-incident support, the number of PINS networks grew. The Rideau-Rockcliffe Community Resource Centre offered training, supported new teams, and worked with community partners across the city to put networks in place.

# Moving forward after a father's tragic loss

Jooris Ndongezi never thought of himself as a community leader. But after his son, Tyson, was murdered outside their house on July 4, 2021, he was moved to action.

*"It was a big shock,"* Jooris says. Members of the PINS team and neighbours came to see him to offer support. When it comes to losing a child to gun violence, he says that each parent's experience is different. For him, the grief is always there. His children were *"asking questions that parents don't have an answer to."*

What is helpful, Jooris notes, can be as simple as to leave the house, go for a walk, go to the park. To breathe. To go for a coffee.

The community and the PINS network organized a vigil for Tyson. Neighbours, friends, sports teams, the local member of Parliament and city councillor, and others attended.

To honour his son, Jooris is working to prevent gun violence in the community. He hopes to spare other parents the grief and loss he and his family have gone through. Today, he volunteers with United for Conscious Integration in Canada, a group that focuses on Burundians living in Canada. One area they highlight is wellness after gun violence.

Jooris has directed his grief and energy to help others. To help his community. In his leadership role, he's advocating and reaching out to leaders to bring about change - both in the post-incident response and in crime prevention.

# PINS partners

PINS networks are led by core organizations. Community Health and Resource Centres usually lead PINS responses in the community at large while Ottawa Community Housing staff lead PINS responses in their neighbourhoods. Members of each network are based on local needs and the incident itself.

## **Current PINS networks include:**

- **Carlington Community Health Centre**
- **Lowertown Community Resource Centre**
- **Rideau-Rockcliffe Community Resource Centre**
- **South-East Ottawa Community Health Centre**
- **Centretown Community Health Centre**
- **Orleans-Cumberland Community Resource Centre**
- **Sandy Hill Community Health Centre**
- **Vanier Community Service Centre**
- **Eastern Ottawa Resource Centre**
- **Pinecrest-Queensway Community Health Centre**
- **Somerset West Community Health Centre**
- **Western Ottawa Community Resource Centre**



# Positive Impact

Since PINS started in 2012, it has grown to include 12 networks and 18 organizations. These networks are helping Ottawa communities overcome the trauma of violent incidents. Since each neighbourhood is unique, the PINS model is flexible. The PINS team comes up with an approach that fits the community's strengths and structures.

**The PINS model is widely recognized for these strengths:**

- Residents identify the community's needs and responses are tailored to those needs
- PINS networks have evolved to respond to violent incidents, major police interventions, suicides and traumatic events like fires
- The program provides better support to residents affected by crime and trauma
- Response times following an incident are fast
- Youth are leading the creation of a Youth Action Plan
- The communities report that the PINS response builds trust and connection
- Partners and residents are equipped to respond to traumatic events quickly and effectively

2012

- The first PINS contract for Rideau-Rockcliffe Community Resource Centre (RRCRC) grew from public consultations about street violence.

2013

- Working with the Ottawa Gang Strategy, RRCRC received funding to develop a workplan to create a Post-Incident Neighbourhood Support Protocol.
- RRCRC led an exercise with 50 community stakeholders to identify current practices, gaps and opportunities. Participants named and prioritized more than 40 recommendations to improve communications and community engagement within 72 hours of a serious incident.

2014

- Based on outcomes and recommendations from 2013, a community-based post-incident protocol was developed for major incidents that may be gang related in one Ottawa neighbourhood.

2015

**Number of PINS networks: 1**

- Tested the first PINS model in Overbrook, bringing response resources to where the data showed incidents were happening.

2016

**Number of PINS networks: 1**

- RRCRC piloted a PINS network and engaged four more community health and resource centres.
- Incidents around the city highlighted the need for training for staff and residents to become a part of a PINS network.
- Expanded the scope of PINS from violent incidents to major police interventions (such as SWAT) and disasters like fires. Responses were tailored to specific needs of each community.

2017

**Number of PINS networks: 5**

- Welcomed an additional 7 community health and resource centres to the PINS networks.
- Developed training materials and held 2 training sessions for community health and resource centres, Ottawa Police Service (OPS) members.



2018

Number of PINS networks: 10

- RRCRC partnered with the Trauma Project at the South-East Ottawa Community Health Centre to provide 8 training sessions to PINS partners to improve trauma-informed practices.

2019

Number of PINS networks: 11

- Provided workshops about PINS and trauma-informed practices to 1 community resource centre, 20 OPS community officers and city councillors' assistants.
- Offered workshops to Community Development Framework members, Ottawa Neighbourhood Social Capital Forum members and 26 Ottawa-Carleton District School Board principals.
- The scope of traumatic or critical incidents grew. PINS networks responded to fires, suicides and the tragic Westboro bus crash.
- Provided training to residents in trauma-informed care practices to support their neighbours, friends and family after an incident.

2020

Number of PINS networks: 12

- Delivered training on PINS and trauma-informed practices to Community Development Framework resident leaders in Overbrook and a community health centre.
- Presented a PINS information session to a potential new PINS network member.
- PINS staff presented community responses to homicide during the Victims and Survivors of Crime Week event hosted by Algonquin College.

2021

Number of PINS networks: 12

- Formed the PINS Network Leads Committee to create better coordination and collaboration between PINS networks and partners.
- The Trauma and Neighbourhood Committee joined the PINS Network Leads Committee to form the PINS Network and Trauma and Neighbourhood Committee. Their goal is to minimize the impact of neighbourhood trauma and to ensure that service providers can help individuals and communities become resilient, improve well-being and stay connected.
- Held training for the Integrated Neighbourhood Service Team on PINS and trauma-informed practices.

# PINS response leads to youth-led Youth Action Plan in Lowertown

Lowertown is a little oasis that is a stone's throw from downtown. The area boasts plenty of green space, has water on three sides, and is walkable and bikeable. There are good schools and school councils. Lowertown is home to residents from different cultural backgrounds who speak many languages. Most will tell you "It's a good place to live."

But Lowertown has faced many struggles. In July 2021, a young man was shot and killed in the community. He did not live in the area, but he had strong social and cultural ties to residents. A month later, another youth was killed in a related shooting while playing in front of a house in the heart of the neighbourhood.

During the door-to-door PINS outreach after the second shooting, partner agencies worked together to coordinate efforts. This collaboration sparked ideas to empower youth.

***"Neighbourhood responses can uncover different needs or be a catalyst for broader actions,"*** explained Matt Beutel, executive director of Lowertown Community Resource Centre.

***"In Lowertown, we have long recognized a need for more youth support,"*** Matt says. ***"Because of funding cuts, some activities needed to stop a couple of years ago. This reduced the number of positive relationships with youth in the community."***

## PINS IN ACTION

**Following a traumatic incident, it can be helpful to bring a community together. The gathering could be a debrief, vigil, memorial or resource fair.**

**At resource fairs, organizations set up tables in a community room to help residents learn what supports are available. Depending on the audience, what has happened and what's needed, available resources could include homework clubs and support for victims of gender-based violence.**

**During a debrief, organizers can set up chairs in a circle to allow residents to talk over coffee, tea and food, which is often provided by the community. Sometimes there is a keynote speaker, like a community resident, who speaks about their hopes for the community.**



# Looking Forward

Ten years of experience has provided information on what works and what's missing. As PINS continues to evolve and expand, our priorities will be to **encourage participation, fill gaps** and **develop strong networks**. Specifically, we will work to:

## REMOVE BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION

Community feedback has identified the following obstacles to participation in the PINS framework. This is valuable insight into what PINS can do to ensure continued growth and success.

### Obstacles for residents

- Lack of handouts about available supports in their language
- Lack of trust of the Ottawa Police Service
- Being at risk but not being connected to support
- Lack of longer-term mental health resources and long wait times for people without employer benefits
- Worry about “snitching” if they talk at the door
- Not knowing how to activate PINS after an incident
- Not knowing how to find out if a risk has passed and they are safe

### Obstacles for organizations, PINS staff and volunteers

- Not enough support for the trauma that responders face
- Not knowing how the PINS model is activated in their community
- Lack of resources for PINS members who get behind in their paid work when they are engaged in a PINS response
- Lack of knowledge of culturally sensitive services
- Lack of understanding about how to develop relationships with diverse service providers



## ADD TRAUMA SUPPORT

Both PINS network staff and residents experience shock and trauma. This may look different for everyone:

### Staff

PINS networks are made up of caring staff and volunteers who hear repeatedly about trauma. Responders don't know what they'll hear at the door - from trauma to thoughts of suicide. Sometimes a mental health counsellor joins the response team. Other times, the responders may include a community developer and a youth worker who don't have counselling skills. Some responders say that trauma adds up over time.

### Residents

The goal of the PINS response after an incident is to make sure residents can access resources. Unfortunately, there are not enough mental health services, and many services have long waitlists. Residents may also have their own trauma from the past, including having fled a country with violence. These experiences may make the new trauma more intense. The shock and trauma are real. PINS responders see the need to be better equipped to support residents.

**This signals a need to deepen trauma debriefs, support people beyond doorway conversations and find other ways to gather and create safe spaces.**

# Post-incident support helps communities: safety bag drops

**Post-incident responses can involve a response team that goes door to door to speak with residents and drop off bags with information.**

These are called “bag drops.” Bags could include how to contact community health and resource centres for mental health support, social and recreational programming calendars, and Ottawa Police contact information. They include the Neighbourhood Trauma handout, which has information about mental health support, signs and symptoms of trauma, and more.

Bag drops are a good way to reach new residents and let them know about area resources, such as food banks, homework clubs, and COVID testing and vaccination clinics.

***“At the door, staff and volunteers often do not mention the incident,” says Mohamed Sofa, former executive director of Britannia Woods Community House. “They don’t spread the word about a tragic incident if a resident hasn’t already heard about it. But if a resident mentions it, the outreach staff can connect them to resources. These can include information on trauma counselling, letting residents know about community conversations or vigils, and more.”***

PINS network members use a trauma-informed approach to decide whether a bag drop is helpful. They have their fingers on the pulse of the neighbourhood.

# Supporting senior residents after a suicide in Centretown

**When someone dies by suicide, there is a ripple effect. Those touched by it can find it traumatic. Community partners in Centretown came together to respond after a resident died by suicide in a seniors' building operated by Ottawa Community Housing (OCH).**

At the time, Centretown did not have a PINS network, but it did have ties to partners who had experience with PINS responses in other neighbourhoods. With that knowledge, they coordinated a response to this tragic incident.

The response team spoke with the tenant group and residents; they reviewed security reports and partner feedback. This helped them learn who the witnesses and first responders were, understand what happened, and identify how residents were coping.

The Aging in Place staff, OCH community developers and Centretown Community Health Centre mental health counsellors provided support in many languages.

Based on feedback from residents, a memorial gathering was held a few days later. This lessened the social isolation that people may have been feeling. It was a time to come together to observe a moment of silence, share memories and learn more about available supports.

The response team didn't start out as a PINS network, but it eventually became one. The group's ability to respond was strengthened through trauma-informed and PINS training and suicide post-vention training from Suicide Prevention Ottawa.

Creating a PINS network helped this community be better prepared to respond in the future.

# Develop and maintain strong partnerships

PINS networks work best when relationships are built and maintained in the community. ***“Community developers and health promoters from partner organizations are recognized, known and often trusted in the communities they support,”*** says Robynn Collins, health promoter at the Pinecrest-Queensway Community Health Centre. ***“This helps residents to feel more comfortable opening their doors and having conversations.”***

In the Pinecrest-Queensway area, for example, responses are often organized with community house coordinators and Ottawa Community Housing community developers.

## GET INVOLVED

When an incident happens, community members look to senior officials and community leaders for support. Having a PINS network and training is your best preparation.

Every neighbourhood needs a crisis response. If you're a service provider, your services and community connections would make you a valuable addition to a PINS network in the communities you serve.

## CONTACT US

If your organization or neighbourhood would like to learn more about forming or becoming part of a PINS network, contact the Rideau-Rockcliffe Community Resource Centre at **613-745-0073** or by email at **[info@crccr.org](mailto:info@crccr.org)**. The PINS contact can share information, connect you to PINS training and more.



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