



JOHN LUCAS, THE JOURNAL

Young actors with the Inner City Youth Development Association perform a scene for Westmount junior high students on Friday.

# Students learn ways of coping through inner-city drama program

Program receives added funding to support literacy aid, Web site

DENNIS HRYCIUK  
Journal Staff Writer  
EDMONTON

The seven teens quickly moved into dramatic poses to illustrate war, hate, lost loved ones, disgust.

"This is about the world around us," said Armand Gallinger, the narrator of the "tableau" performed before an audience at Westmount junior high.

"Here are our answers," he continued. Tranquillity, love, kindness, family — as each of the teens spoke the answers, they changed into welcoming open-arm gestures and smiles.

The teens were showing what they have learned from a program that has received added funding from the federal government — part of \$750,000 announced Friday by Justice Minister Anne McLellan to prevent crime.

The seven-member group, all students

## CRIME PREVENTION

Projects funded by National Strategy on Community Safety and Crime Prevention:

- The Aboriginal Youth & Family Well-Being and Education Society: \$49,464
- The Enoch Task Force Strength in Families project: \$34,870
- Community Options — A Society for Children and Families: \$50,000.

at Inner City high school, co-operated to come up with their presentation, Gallinger said. It's part of an arts-based program that helps students analyse their problems and devise alternatives to violence, said Joe Cloutier, director of the Inner City Youth Development Association and principal of Inner City High.

"We use talking circles to help bring about non-violent resolution of conflict," Cloutier told a crowd assembled in Westmount's gymnasium.

These kinds of activities help many of those referred to his program by probation officers, social workers or others who deal with troubled youth, Cloutier said. The entire focus of the program is

aimed at getting the teens through high school — often with methods as simple as providing emergency bus tickets, clothing or referrals to helping agencies.

Cloutier's program received \$14,775 from Ottawa to continue Phase 2 of its projects, which include literacy help and development of a Web site.

McLellan announced that the \$750,000 from the three-year-old National Strategy on Community Safety and Crime Prevention will fund 20 projects across Alberta.

Many of the programs are aimed at dealing with poverty and alcohol or drug abuse, McLellan said. "These 20 projects will help steer people away from crime and victimization by dealing with the roots that cause crime," the minister said.

Such efforts have helped bring down crime rates, said Brent Rathgeber, Edmonton-Calder MLA.

The overall crime rate in Alberta has fallen to its lowest level since 1985, noted Rathgeber, repeating statistics released by the province last summer. The rate of all crimes — 8,822 per 100,000 people — fell three per cent in 2000 from the previous year.