



**CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE  
FOR CHILDREN & ADOLESCENTS  
WITH SPECIAL NEEDS**

# **ANNUAL REPORT**

## **April 2002 to March 2003**

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**Health  
Canada**    **Santé  
Canada**

**Lakehead**  
UNIVERSITY

The Centre of Excellence for Special Needs is one of five Centres of Excellence for Children's Well-Being funded by Health Canada. The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the official policies of Health Canada.

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## **I. INTRODUCTION / DIRECTIONS OF THE CENTRE**

### *About Our Centre*

- Established in October 2000, our Centre is focused on the distinct challenges faced by children and adolescents with special needs living in rural and northern Canada.
- Sponsored and administered by Lakehead University, our Centre's national partners are the Government of Nunavut, Memorial University of Newfoundland, Mount St. Vincent University, and the University of Northern British Columbia.

### *Mission/Vision/Mandate*

- Our mandate is to produce knowledge about children and adolescents with special needs in rural and northern Canada and transfer it effectively to those who can use it to make a difference in the lives of these children.
- We document and describe the opportunities and challenges for children with special needs in rural and northern communities highlighting best policies, practices and principles for prevention, early intervention and supports.
- We draw on our networks to communicate our work to parents, teachers, service providers, researchers, and policy makers through reports, conferences, on-line service directories, posters, pamphlets, and the media.
- Our vision is to be known nationally and internationally for the production and transfer of knowledge about children with special needs in rural and remote communities; to establish Canada as a world leader in research, policy and service delivery in this area; and, to establish our Centre as a "policy community" for special needs in northern and rural Canada.

### *Principles Guiding Our Research*

- "Needs" refer to the things necessary for quality of life. They represent an interaction between the child and the contexts in which the child develops (family, school, community, culture).
- Children and adolescents with special needs have the same types of needs as others, but their needs vary in amount, quality and intensity.
- All children who require additional public or private resources beyond what are normally required for healthy development have special needs.

- Each child and adolescent with special needs is an exceptional individual, with a unique pattern of needs.
- Children and adolescents with special needs living in rural and northern Canada face unique challenges because of where they live.
- Access to effective, culturally and linguistically appropriate services should be available to children within their rural and remote communities.
- Emerging technology offers a brighter future for children with special needs living in rural and northern communities.

### *Objectives*

- Improve access to useful information on prevention, early intervention, and supports.
- Improve access to appropriate prevention, early intervention, and support service delivery.
- Augment community capacity to influence policy.

### *National Partner Organizations*

- Government of Nunavut
- Lakehead University
- Memorial University of Newfoundland
- Mount St. Vincent University in Nova Scotia
- University of Northern British Columbia

Over 200 other organizations are involved in Centre's network.

## II. CONSOLIDATION OF RESEARCH

### Our Strategic Goal

- Document the unique challenges and opportunities faced by children and adolescents with special needs in rural and northern Canada; identify unanswered questions and promising practices and policies for prevention and early intervention.

### Results

Our results demonstrate the complex interplay between the determinants of health for children and adolescents with special needs in rural and northern Canada. They highlight how factors outside of the health care system can impact on the health and well-being of children and adolescents with special needs and how prevention and early intervention in one sector, such as education, can have generalized positive effects on their development. Major challenges for rural and northern children and adolescents include the cultural inappropriateness of definitions and services for special needs and the insufficient concordance between policy and services (both within and across sectors), exacerbated by a vast geographic and culturally diverse service region. Prevention and early intervention policy and programs that preserve evidence-based best principles, while allowing for their translation into appropriate local practices, seem promising. A national research agenda that will build on these results is called for, to support a comprehensive health promotion model for children and adolescents with special needs.

### Examples

Bowd, A. (2003). *Identification and Assessment of Gifted and Talented Youth Particularly in Northern, Rural and Isolated Communities.*

This report deals with cross-cultural aspects of definition, identification and assessment of under-achieving intellectually gifted and talented children and adolescents. It also includes an analysis of the behavioural and mental health consequences of failure to identify and serve this population. The major findings are: 1) Current definitions and identification methods for gifted and talented children are not culturally appropriate for children in northern and isolated communities; 2) Few children in these communities are identified or provided with enrichment to meet their needs; 3) The consequence is often underachievement, boredom and frustration and it may be because of these outcomes that these youngsters are miss-identified as having attention disorders and behaviour problems; 4) There is some evidence that these children are at increased risk for aggression, substance abuse and suicide; and, 5) Dynamic assessment is a positive alternative for the identification of these children and is particularly promising for the identification and enrichment of rural Francophone students with special talents.

MacDonald, M. (2003). *A Review of British Columbian and Federal Law and Policy Direction: Children and Adolescents with Special Needs*.

The legislation and regulation of the Federal and British Columbia Governments that relate to, or impact upon, children and adolescents with special needs are reviewed. Findings highlight the relatively de-centralized and fragmented nature of social policy between and within the provincial and federal levels of government, for example, between British Columbia's Ministry of Education and Ministry of Children and Family Development, and between the National Children's Agenda policy vision and its implementation within British Columbia. Gaps identified include the limited non-lateral mandates of government ministries and programs; incongruence in age criteria for eligibility to various child and youth programs; differing definitions of the concept of 'special needs'; relative lack of awareness by some senior level government employees about other associated programming areas; and a relative lack of coordination in some areas in developing policy and delivering services. Ten recommendations are included for further research and action.

Minore, B. & Hopkins, H. (2003). *Suicide Response Plans: A Comparative Cross-Jurisdictional Analysis*.

The suicide response plans existing in each province and territory are examined, based on a review of policy documents, relevant literature and key-informant interviews. A number of discrete components that contribute to comprehensive suicide response planning are discussed. Several are concrete, for example, limiting access to firearms and drugs or other common means of committing suicide. Others are more amorphous, but vital, like establishing system-wide protocols between the network of agencies serving a given geographic area, to ensure that crisis events are met with a coordinated and timely response. The findings indicate that for purposes of a national strategy, the barriers to effective response planning include the following: 1) Shifting political agendas; 2) Governments' willingness to spend on short-term "quick fix" crisis management, but not invest in long-term solutions; 3) The lack of unity among stakeholders; and, 4) Competition between advocates of various social causes for attention and scarce resources. Canada's research and policy community interested in suicide issues is debating the need for a national intervention strategy. This comprehensive, systematic policy document will inform that debate and, more important, provide for policy formulation specific to children and youth.

### **III. FOCUSED RESEARCH**

#### **Our Strategic Goal**

- Conduct research projects designed to evaluate new and existing prevention, early intervention and support services and policies.

## Results

Our results highlight the vital role of community in the planning and delivery of prevention and early intervention programs for children and adolescents with special needs. Our findings consistently demonstrate that rural and northern communities want to be involved in planning and development of services for special needs and are currently delivering some appropriate prevention and early intervention programs. The contribution of local expertise and volunteers is significant and effective programs can be found even in communities with apparent “low capacity”. Policy and programs that recognize, include and build on community strengths and local practices can support capacity in prevention and early intervention and enhance the health and well-being of children with special needs. Considerable focused research is needed to expand on these results and provide a sufficient evidence-base to guide the development and evaluation of comprehensive prevention and early intervention policy and programs for children with special needs.

## Examples

Canning, P., Courage, M., Frizzell, L., Rideout, T. (2003). *A Community-based Volunteer Model of Delivery for School Food Programs in Rural and Remote Areas*.

The appropriateness of a community-based volunteer model of service delivery for school food programs in rural and remote communities was determined. Using the Community Accounts database of the Newfoundland Government, comparisons were made at the school-community level between 309 communities with and without school food programs on a number of social, economic and demographic variables. The main findings were: 1) Overall there are few differences in the economic and population characteristics of the school communities that do and do not have access to programs; 2) Access to school food programs in rural and urban regions of the province is equivalent; and, 3) The observed difference in delivery models between the two regions with relatively higher numbers of school food programs, and other regions was the presence of a paid coordinator for the program. It is encouraging that school food programs are being delivered in a volunteer capacity in communities considered to be at social and economic risk, communities where apparent capacity is low. Further research is under way to identify other critical components, in addition to a paid coordinator, that are associated with expansion of school food programs.

de Leeuw, S. & Greenwood, M. (2003). *Recognizing Strength, Building Capacity: Addressing Substance Abuse Related Special Needs in First Nations Communities of British Columbia's Hinterlands.*

Strengths and capacities regarding children and youth with special needs living in the Gitksan communities of northern British Columbia were identified. This research involved community-based focus groups and interviews with First Nations service providers and community members. Identified strengths include use of holistic and community-wide traditional approaches, such as the language revitalization programs of the Gitksan people and the traditional kin-based child rearing encompassed by the Wilp System. The major findings highlight: 1) The desires of Aboriginal people to have meaningful input into processes that impact, concern, or affect their communities (e.g. health care delivery, educational programs and drug and alcohol abuse prevention strategies); and, 2) The importance of recognizing and including local capacity and strengths when developing solutions or responses to substance abuse (e.g. local Elders' knowledge). The report includes recommendations for implementation of holistic methods of health and social service delivery, inclusion of Elders, investment in local training and education, and infrastructure investment and support.

Canning, P., Courage, M. & Frizzell, L. (2003). *Status of Preschool Children's Body Weights in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.*

This is the first Canadian study of the prevalence of overweight and obesity among preschoolers. In the province of Newfoundland and Labrador the prevalence of overweight and obesity and related diseases, (e.g. Type 2 diabetes and heart disease), in adults are among the highest in Canada and physical activity levels are among the lowest. While reports indicate that Newfoundland and Labrador school children are among the most overweight in Canada, there are no data based on direct measures and none indicating when children begin to become overweight. Filling in these gaps in knowledge is vital to developing effective prevention programs. The incidence and prevalence of overweight and obesity in preschoolers in the Province were determined, and the baseline for monitoring future trends and current and future health promotion initiatives established. In collaboration with the Provincial Department of Health and Community Services and regional health boards, Body Mass Indices (BMIs) were calculated for 3-4 year-old children. Preliminary analysis indicates few differences in BMIs between boys and girls or rural and urban children. This research will stimulate the development of nutrition and physical activity policy and programming aimed at prevention, inform Canadian policy-makers of the need for obesity-prevention policy and programming, assist in identifying the appropriate target age, and provide baseline for future evaluation of these policies and programs within Canada.



## **IV. POLICY ADVICE**

### **Our Strategic Goal**

- Establish our Centre as the nucleus of a developing policy community for special needs in rural and northern Canada.

### **Results**

- Our Centre provided policy advice on special needs at local, regional, provincial, territorial and national levels.
- We organized events to bring policy makers together to discuss and plan special needs policy issues, including policy relevant research.
- We participated directly in policy planning roundtables and meetings and worked in partnership with governments and community organizations on policy-relevant research projects.
- We contributed to increased emphasis in policy discussions on the context for prevention and early intervention of special needs in rural and northern communities.

### **Examples**

#### ***The First National Symposium on Early Intervention: Present Policies and Practices and Future Directions, November 2002, Halifax.***

Our Centre provided a neutral forum on Early Intervention for policy planners and program developers from provincial and territorial ministries. Participants discussed current policy and services, identified common issues and began planning for a national research agenda. The Centre, in response to the Symposium, will create a national early intervention network of policy planners, practitioners and professionals supported by a clearinghouse on early intervention. (The Symposium was sponsored in part by a grant from the Canadian Institute of Health Research.)

#### ***1<sup>st</sup> National Policy Roundtable on Children with Disabilities: National Children's Alliance, December 2002, Ottawa.***

Our Centre contributed to the background research paper used to organize the Roundtable, resulting in children with disabilities in rural and remote communities being selected as a theme for focused discussions during this important event. Plans are underway to hold this event annually.

***Roundtable on Potential Federal/Provincial/Territorial Early Child Development Indicators of Child Well-Being: Human Resources Development Canada***

Dr. Mary Lyon represents our Centre and the Nova Scotia Government as an expert consultant to this advisory committee. The Committee will determine a common set of indicators of child well-being.

***Northwestern Ontario Forum on Aboriginal Student Achievement, October 2002, Thunder Bay.***

Educators and community leaders reviewed children's achievement and developed plans to strengthen educational capacity in the region. A report with policy recommendations was forwarded to the Federal Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs and the Ontario Minister of Education who sponsored the conference.

***Early Reading Strategy: Ontario Ministry of Education***

Our National Director represents our Centre on Ontario's Early Reading Expert Panel. The Panel's report, released in February, includes a review of research on prevention, early identification and intervention for children with reading difficulties, and the potential of emerging technology for building capacity in rural and remote school communities.

***Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP): Recruitment of Inuit Officers***

The Centre's research revealed that disproportionate numbers of Inuit children experience otitis media and permanent mild hearing loss. The Centre has been advising the RCMP in Iqaluit that the existing national standard for acceptable hearing loss for RCMP officers is inappropriate to their objective of recruiting Inuit officers. Use of the national standard will be associated with under representation of Inuit officers in the Nunavut RCMP.

***Aboriginal Head Start Urban and Northern and On-reserve Programs***

As participants on the national and provincial committees, we integrate results of our research and community activities into policy and programming discussions with representatives from the Aboriginal Head Start Urban and Northern and On-reserve Programs.

***Department of Health and Community Services: Government of Newfoundland and Labrador***

Our Centre is represented on the advisory committee monitoring and evaluating the new home-based service provision for preschool-aged children with autism in Newfoundland and Labrador. The effectiveness of the program (delivered by parents or para-professionals) in rural communities is a major focus.

***Department of Education: Government of Newfoundland and Labrador***

Our Centre participated in the development of a preschool readiness program for Newfoundland and Labrador schools. That program, “KinderStart” was introduced for four-year olds Province wide in September 2002.

***Newfoundland and Labrador Centre for Health Information***

Our Centre is represented on the Advisory Board for National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth and similar health and education surveys with large databases.

***Ministerial Briefing Meetings***

Our Centre had the opportunity to brief Ministers, for example, the Honorable Linda Reid, Minister of State for Early Childhood Development (B.C.) and Honorable Lynn Stephens, Minister of State for Women's Equality (B.C.) on our work and its policy implications.

**V. COMMUNICATIONS**

**Our Strategic Goal**

- Ensure that our products are available in multi-media and reach those who can use them to make a difference in the lives of children with special needs.

**Results**

- Our findings have been communicated through presentations at international, national and regional conferences, through our hosting national and regional conferences and workshops, through our products such as on-line service directories, research reports, power point presentations, posters and pamphlets.
- Our products are designed for, and reach, different targeted audiences including researchers, service providers, parents, teachers and policy makers.

**Presentations Made and Events Attended**

40 conferences, workshops and symposia attended, 53 presentations including:

**Presentations At International Conferences**

Dunn, M., Maguire, G. & O’Sullivan, J. (2002). *Leading Children to Literacy Competence*. World Congress on Reading, Edinburgh, Scotland, July.

Greenwood, M. (2002). *Substance Abuse Related Special Needs for Children in Northern Communities*. Nordic Network on Disability Research, 6th Annual Research Conference, Reykjavik, Iceland, August.

### **Presentations At National Conferences**

O'Sullivan, J., Bowd, A., Frizzell, L., Greenwood, M., Joyce, M., McSorley, A. & Tagalik, S. (2002). *Successes and Challenges in Northern and Health Research*. Symposium at the 3<sup>rd</sup> national conference of the Canadian Rural Health Research Society, Halifax, October.

Joyce, M. & Tagalik, S. (2002). *Developing Community Support to Prepare for the Aftermath*. Canadian Association for Suicide Prevention, Fredericton, New Brunswick, October.

### **Presentations At Provincial/Territorial/Regional Conferences**

Bowd, A. (2003). *Health and educational implications of chronic otitis media for children in northern and isolated communities*, Manitoba Speech and Hearing Association Annual Convention, Winnipeg, January.

Bowd, A. (2002). *Middle Ear Disease and Learning Difficulties Among Aboriginal Canadian Children*. Council for Exceptional Children, Provincial Conference, Oakville, November.

Greenwood, M. & de Leeuw, S. (2002). *North of 51: Rural Communities Respond to Substance Abuse Related Special Needs*. Enhancing Health and Well-being: 2002 Children, Families, Communities Conference, Prince George, June.

Greenwood, M. & de Leeuw, S. (2002). *Presenting the Centre of Excellence for Children & Adolescents with Special Needs*. Developing Strategies and Proposals for Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Research in Canada: sponsored by the Institute of Aboriginal Peoples' Health and the Institute for Human Development, Child and Youth Health, Saskatoon, March.

### **Workshops Presented**

Joyce, M. (2002). *Bullying: What Schools Can Do*. A workshop presented at the Educational Leadership Program, Rankin Inlet, July.

### **Events Attended**

*Aboriginal Early Childhood Development Service Providers' Network*, Ottawa, December 2002. Stakeholders from across Canada with an interest in Aboriginal Early Childhood Development discussed establishing a network of professionals and experts.

## **Events Hosted**

12 conferences, consultations and focus groups hosted including:

***The First National Symposium on Early Intervention: Present Policies and Practices and Future Directions, Halifax, November 2002.***

Policy planners and program developers from provincial and territorial ministries responsible for early intervention services came together to discuss current policy and services and plan a national research agenda on early intervention (sponsored in part by Canadian Institute of Health Research).

***Promising Practices in the North: Leadership, Education, Health and Wellness, Thunder Bay, March 2003.***

Parents and professionals from the vast region of Northwestern Ontario came together for keynote presentations and panel discussions on “promising practices” in prevention and early intervention (including advocacy and traditional healing).

***Research, Policy and Practice for Family Support, Halifax, October 2002.***

Representatives of family resource centres, funders of family support programs, researchers, policy makers and students shared insights and explored issues impacting family support programs. Linking Research to Practice in Family Resource Programs: A conference involving government, university and community participants followed on March 7, 2003.

***Getting Better Together: Second Annual Regional Conference on Early Literacy, Thunder Bay, August 2002.***

Attended by 300 delegates, primarily educators and parents, prevention, early intervention and assessment for children with early reading difficulties in rural and northern schools was the focus (sponsored by the Northern Ontario Education Leaders).

***Teaching and Learning Language and Literacy, Thunder Bay, December 2002.***

Representatives from Anishinaabeg of Kabapikotawangag Resource Council, Inc. & Pegamigaabo (Big Grassy) School reviewed the challenges and opportunities around early school success for children and outlined strategies for capacity building in the teaching of language and literacy.

## Communications Products Developed

28 communication products developed including:

### Research Reports As Downloadable PDF Files From Our Web Site

Bowd, A. (2003). *Identification and Assessment of Gifted and Talented Youth Particularly in Northern, Rural and Isolated Communities.*

MacDonald, M. (2003). *A Review of British Columbian and Federal Law and Policy Direction: Children and Adolescents with Special Needs.*

Minore, B. & Hopkins, H. (2003). *Suicide Response Plans: A Comparative Cross-Jurisdictional Analysis.*

Canning, P., Courage, M., Frizzell, L. & Rideout, T. (2003). *A Community-based Volunteer Model of Delivery for School Food Programs in Rural and Remote Areas.*

de Leeuw, S. & Greenwood, M. (2003). *Recognizing Strength, Building Capacity: Addressing Substance Abuse Related Special Needs in First Nations Communities of British Columbia's Hinterlands.*

Canning, P., Courage, M. & Frizzell, L. (2003). *Status of Preschool Children's Body Weights in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.*

### Information Directories and Services

- *The Special Needs Information Services Directory Online:* A practical directory of services and information for parents of children with special needs in the Provinces of Newfoundland and Labrador and Nova Scotia. For the first time parents and professionals can access a comprehensive listing of services and information available in their own community.
- Website development for promoting and disseminating Centre work and to provide a point of access to selected information services and sources dedicated to special needs issues.
- Searchable databases: over 300 titles concerning questionable practices in special education; inventory of resources (e.g. video and print material) for substance abuse related special needs.

## Other Products

- Template for a bi-annual report in newsletter format.
- PowerPoint presentations for targeted audiences.
- FAS (Fetal Alcohol Syndrome) Prevention Information Poster and an article on FAS prevention in the School District #57 School Newsletter. (In partnership with the Prince George FAS Network and with funding from the Vancouver Foundation.)

## VI. NETWORKING

### Our Strategic Goal

- Develop partnerships with regional, provincial, national, and international organizations to increase our research capacity and our development as a policy community for special needs in rural and northern Canada.

### Results

- We supported our network, conducting several research projects in partnership with government and community-based groups.
- We expanded our network focusing on partnerships that would strengthen our capacity in 4 areas of prevention and early intervention: Aboriginal children with special needs; models of service delivery; overweight and obesity; parenting children with special needs.

### Existing Research Networks, Partnerships and Products Include

- **Newfoundland and Labrador: Provincial Departments of Health, Human Resources and Employment, Education, and Finance; Regional Community Health Services Boards, family resource centres and healthy baby clubs.** Research projects: *Status of Preschool Children's Body Weights in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador;* *Mother Baby Nutrition Supplement Study.*
- **Nova Scotia Department of Community Services.** *Developing evaluation protocol for Early Intervention programs in Nova Scotia.*
- **Centre pour Ressource Prescolaires.** *Compiling library resources for Francophone families, child care staff and other professionals working with children with special needs.*
- **Early Childhood Educators of British Columbia, Caledonia Branch.** *Supported Child Care in Northern British Columbia: An Inquiry into the Successes and Challenges.*

- **BC Aboriginal Child Care Society.** *Special Needs Children (0-6) and Their Care Providers: An Inquiry into 58 On-Reserve Licensed Child Care Centres in British Columbia.*
- **IWK Children's Health Centre.** *Support for Children with Autism in Child Care Settings, Distance Education Strategies.*

### Expanded Research Networks, Partnerships and Projects

- **Atlantic Region CIHR Institute of Aboriginal Peoples' Health Aboriginal Capacity and Developmental Research Environments (ACADRE).** The Centre is discussing proposals for collaborative projects with this research network. (Our focus is projects designed to increase childcare expertise in Aboriginal groups.)
- **Implementation of the Effective Behaviour Support process in schools in Nunavut.** A project and partnership with the Aqsarniit Middle School and the Iqaluit District Educational Authority funded by Federal Crime Prevention. An examination of the University of Oregon's Effective Behaviour Support culturally adapted for and implemented in northern Aboriginal schools.
- **Finding Better Paths: Rural Young Offenders' Access to Mental Health Services.** A project and partnership with the W.W. Creighton Youth Services, funded by a Canadian Institutes for Health Research (CIHR) Development Grant. The W.W. Creighton provides open and secure custody for adolescents (12-16 years of age) for the Districts of Thunder Bay and Kenora. Findings from this northwestern Ontario-based study will be used to inform the development of a larger, multi-jurisdictional research project, which will allow comparisons to be made between rural and northern regions across Canada.
- **Managing Continuity of Care for Children with Special Needs in Rural and Remote Parts of Northern Ontario.** A project and partnership with Integrated Services for Northern Children (ISNC), funded by the Canadian Health Services Research Foundation (CHSRF). ISNC is a provincial program for children with special needs in rural parts of northern Ontario. This study examines how the challenge of providing care in rural northern areas, can be tackled based on service delivery models used by the Integrated Services for Northern Children.
- **Childhood Obesity in Newfoundland and Labrador.** A multidisciplinary team and study (genetics, paediatrics, psychology, education, physiology) to examine genetic and environmental factors at the individual-, school-, and community- levels associated with overweight and obesity. Proposal submitted to CIHR in January 2003. This will expand Centre research on body weight to include school-aged children and allow for the collection of development data leading to identification and analysis of trends in children's bodyweight.



- **Father's Involvement.** Partner with the Fathers' Involvement Research Alliance on an application for a CURA (Community University Research Alliance funded by SSHRC) grant to study father's involvement in their children's lives. The CURA includes a theme dedicated to fathers of children with special needs and would strengthen our contribution to the Centres of Excellence theme on parenting.

## VII. ABORIGINAL CHILDREN

The mandate of our Centre is to produce and transfer knowledge about children with special needs in rural and northern Canada. Most projects include some focus, and several have an exclusive focus, on Aboriginal children. Findings have clear implications for improving the health and well-being of Aboriginal children.

### Knowledge Production

Bowd, A. (2003) *Identification and assessment of gifted and talented youth particularly in northern, rural and isolated communities.*

Results highlight the importance of schooling and school experience as a determinant of children's health and the potential of appropriate early identification and intervention for Aboriginal children with gifts and talents.

Minore, B. & Hopkins, H. (2003). *Suicide Response Plans: A Comparative Cross-Jurisdictional Analysis.*

Nearly one-third of Aboriginal youth who die, do so at their own hand. This comprehensive report includes examination of specific suicide response plans directed to Aboriginal youth, highlighting how best principles in the design of comprehensive response plans should facilitate translation into culturally appropriate local practices.

de Leeuw, S. & Greenwood, M. (2003). *Recognizing Strength, Building Capacity: Addressing Substance Abuse Related Special Needs in First Nations Communities of British Columbia's Hinterlands.*

Strengths and capacities regarding children and youth with substance abuse special needs living in the Gitksan communities of northern British Columbia are documented. Recommendations for implementation of holistic methods of health and social service delivery, inclusion of Elders, investment in local training and education, and infrastructure investment and support are included.

Bowd, A. et al. (2003). *Young Mothers Project: Prevention of otitis media through breastfeeding and second-hand smoke abatement.*

Development and evaluation of an intervention program designed to reduce the occurrence of otitis media and upper respiratory disease among Aboriginal infants. Interventions and materials are culturally sensitive. Findings from this project will have significant implications for policy relating to culturally sensitive prenatal and infant health promotion strategies, preschool screening programs, and classroom interventions for children affected by otitis media. (Funded by a grant from CIHR).

### Knowledge Transfer

- The Government of Nunavut, one of the 5 national partners that make up our Centre, plays a vital role in our knowledge transfer to Aboriginal communities.
- We conduct many projects with First Nations communities ensuring that knowledge transfer is direct and immediate to the community and partners involved. For example: *Recognizing Strength, Building Capacity: Addressing Substance Abuse Related Special Needs in First Nations Communities of British Columbia's Hinterland is a collaborative community-based project with the Gixtan people.*
- We host workshops and roundtables to communicate our work to Aboriginal peoples and communities. For example, Teaching and Learning Language and Literacy, December 2002, Thunder Bay: A roundtable with Anishinaabeg of Kabapikotawangag Resource Council, Inc. & Pegamigaabo (Big Grassy) School.
- Centre findings and products are widely disseminated in print, on-line, and through conferences and workshops that include representatives from Aboriginal communities.

## VIII. OFFICIAL LANGUAGES MINORITY COMMUNITIES (OLMCs)

Our Centre produces and transfers knowledge about children with special needs in rural and northern Canada. Most projects include some focus and others include an exclusive focus on children in Official Language Minority communities. Findings have clear implications for improving the health and well-being of these children.

### Knowledge Production

Bowd, A. (2003). *Identification and assessment of gifted and talented youth particularly in northern, rural and isolated communities.*

Dynamic assessment is highlighted particularly promising for the identification and enrichment of rural Francophone students with special talents.

O'Sullivan, J. (2004). *Teaching and Learning of Early Reading in Rural and Northern Canada*.

This is the first review to describe the status of teaching and learning of early reading in rural and northern Canada. Findings will have significant implications for policy and practice relating to prevention and early intervention for OFLM children with reading difficulties.

*In partnership with the Centre pour Ressource Prescolaires*

We are compiling library resources (e.g. books, journals, manuals, training opportunities) for Francophone families, child care staff and other professionals working with children with special needs.

*In partnership with the Centre pour Ressource Prescolaires*

We have applied to Heritage Canada for funding to translate the Early Intervention workshops we are developing for early childhood educators (workshop development funded out of ECDI) into French.

### **Knowledge Transfer**

- Work conducted in partnership with organizations such as the Centre pour Ressource Prescolaires ensures that knowledge transfer is direct and immediate to that organization, from where it is disseminated through libraries and networks to the wider community.
- All Centre products are disseminated in print, on-line, and through conferences and workshops that include representatives from OLM communities (eg. *Promising Practices in the North: Leadership, Education, Health and Wellness*).

## **IX. CROSS-CENTRES COLLABORATION**

Our goal is to link our work on prevention and early intervention of special needs in rural and northern Canada with relevant research in the other Centres.

- Centre of Excellence for Early Childhood Development, Colloquium on Bullying, *Early Childhood and Violence*, Montreal, August, 2002. Our Centre's Nunavut-based research on Bullying and Effective School-Based Behaviour Systems was linked to the work on violence in early childhood being conducted at the Centre for Early Childhood Development.
- Centre of Excellence for Early Childhood Development and the Banff International Conference on Behavioural Science, *Effective Programs for Early Child Development: Linking Research to Policy and Practice*, Banff, March 2003. Our work on early intervention in rural and northern Canada was linked with the work and network of the Early Childhood Development Centre.

- Centre of Excellence for Youth Engagement, *Head, Heart, Feet, 2003*, Cornwall, Ontario, March. Youth and Adult Partnerships in Research: Social Inclusion and Reciprocal Knowledge. Adult-youth research partners from rural and northern communities in our network, strengthened links between their work and adult-youth research from the other Centres.

## **X. FUTURE DIRECTIONS AND UPCOMING ACTIVITIES**

### **Implementation Of Our Operational Plan For 2003-2006**

- An increased focus on knowledge synthesis within our Centre.
- Incorporation of knowledge about technology in our synthesis, drawing on the expertise of our Emerging Technology Consulting Group.
- Strategies to understand and strengthen our development as a policy community.

### **Research Highlights**

Canning, C., Courage, M. & Frizzell, L. *Mother Baby Nutrition Supplement Study*.

In collaboration with the Newfoundland and Labrador Provincial Departments of Health and Community Services, Human Resources and Employment, and Finance, Regional Health Boards, child and family community agencies and the Government of Manitoba, we are examining the direct and indirect effects of: 1) A financial supplement to improve nutrition available to low-income families from confirmation of pregnancy through to the child's first birthday; and, 2) The information provided to the mothers at the time of the phone-in application. Findings will have significant implications for policy and practice to help agencies to improve maternal and child health and nutrition, and increase the use of effective community services by mothers and children regardless of geographic location and/or family income.

Lyon, M. & Smith, I. *Support for Children with Autism in Child Care Settings: Distance Education Strategies*.

In conjunction with the IWK Children's Health Centre, a pilot project to identify the most effective distance education strategies for child care workers is in progress. The project is providing research based curriculum to those most closely involved in providing services to children with autism on a daily basis. The results will assist in determining future training methods for a variety of topics of critical importance to children with special needs (supported by a grant from Human Resource Development Canada).

*Special Needs Children (0-6) and Their Care Providers: An Inquiry into 58 On-Reserve Licensed Child Care Centres in British Columbia.*

In partnership with the BC Aboriginal Child Care Society, this project involves a needs assessment of special needs children (0-6 years of age) and their care providers in 58 on-reserve licensed child-care centres throughout British Columbia. The goal of this project is to understand the nature and particulars of early childhood special needs that exist within the 58 childcare centres, to report on the needs facing these children, and to access and document the needs and perspectives of the childcare service providers working with them.

*Supported Child Care in Northern British Columbia: An Inquiry into the Successes and Challenges.*

In partnership with the Early Childhood Educators of British Columbia, Caledonia Branch, a research overview of inclusive childcare (supported childcare) within childcare centres and settings in Northern British Columbia (100 Mile House to Fort St. John approximately) is underway. A research report and a 'user friendly' brochure/booklet detailing possible strategies for child care providers looking to integrate special needs children into their facility will be produced.

### **Policy Advice Highlights**

- *Development of national survey for Early Intervention Policy and Services.* The survey will be based on the results of our first National Symposium on Early Intervention.
- A follow-up workshop for participants in the First National Symposium on Early Intervention to review progress on the research agenda. The workshop will be held in conjunction with the Infant Development Programs of BC Early Child Development Conference.

### **Communications Highlights**

*3<sup>rd</sup> World Congress on Child & Youth Health, Vancouver, May 2003.* Our Centre is presenting 3 papers, one on Special Needs Information Services On-line and two on Prevention and Early Intervention for Substance Abuse in Northern Communities.

O'Sullivan, J. & Epp, J. (2003). *School Improvement in Early Literacy: Coordinating Research Policy and Practice in Northern Canada.* Submitted for presentation at the 10<sup>th</sup> International Literacy and Education Research Network Conference on Learning, London, July 2003.

Canning, P. & Courage, M. (2003). *A Study of Overweight and Obesity in a Preschool Population in Newfoundland and Labrador.* Submitted for presentation at the 12<sup>th</sup> European Congress on Obesity, May 29- June 1, 2003, Helsinki, Finland.

*A bi-annual report in newsletter format.* This will highlight our research findings, advertise our outputs and how to access them, and publicize upcoming events.

### **Networking Expansion Highlights**

- *Northern Ontario Medical School (NOMS).* Collaboration with the newly established NOMS, which is specially focused on undergraduate and graduate medical education for rural and northern physicians. We will explore joint initiatives in research and curriculum development.
- *Developmental Disabilities.* Early Intervention Research Team/Network (Queen's University, University of Alberta, Concordia University, St. Amant Centre, and University of Manitoba). Members of the Early Intervention Research Team/Network are appointees on our International Experts Panel and we will participate in their initiative to develop a research "stream" on early intervention for children at risk.