

early CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT INTERCULTURAL PARTNERSHIPS
www.ecdip.org

Father Involvement Research Alliance of Canada
www.fira.ca

Formed in 2002, the Father Involvement Research Alliance (FIRA) of Canada resulted from over 100 community activists, social service practitioners, researchers and policy makers recognizing their common interests and the value of forming a national network. While participating individuals and groups bring a wide range of interests, goals, and perspectives, all share a commitment to the development, exchange and mobilization of knowledge on father involvement.

FIRA goals:

- To create a vital, sustainable network of people interested in enhancing father involvement.
- To increase Canadian research and knowledge on father involvement.
- To inform public decision making, community development, and policy development.
- To develop tools, resources and training to be used in practice.

FIRA activities:

1. Engaging for change with fatherhood research clusters.

For example: A nationally networked investigation used participatory action research with seven populations of fathers who face unique and common issues, and also explored the effectiveness of various tools and resources for supporting involvement by diverse populations of fathers.

2. Creating a Canadian knowledge base on father involvement.

For example: Analysis of census and survey data to generate profiles of Canadian fathers with demographic, economic, and socio-cultural characteristics.

3. Policy analysis.

For example: Overview of policies affecting father involvement in Canada, including international comparisons and exploration of policy options.

Partners:

FIRA involves a large and diverse array of partners who contribute unique and sometimes divergent perspectives, resources, practice experience, and research activity towards achieving FIRA goals. A list of over 100 partners to date is available on the website. This list is growing, as more fathers, policy makers, investigators, and community-based advocates join in. In the recently completed nationally networked research study (number 1 above), each research cluster focused on a different population of fathers, each cultivated new working relationships between research teams and several community partners, and each enhanced capacity for research and knowledge mobilization about fathers in Canada. Thus, the already existing FIRA network grew exponentially over the years of the community-university research project. In this way, FIRA has gathered momentum as a network of networks. FIRA has both grown out of and supported regional alliances that participate in research and community action (such as the Fathers Involvement Initiative-Ontario Network and the Fathers Involvement Network of BC). It has supported and

benefitted from community capacity building projects funded by the Canadian Community Action Program for Children and a project to enhance post-secondary training in community-engagement focused on fathers, through a Father Involvement in Educational Institutions Action Group. It has been increasingly active in bringing forward policy recommendations through provincial and federal roundtables, consultations, and expert advisory committees.

FIRA has begun to extend its international linkages through trans-Atlantic collaboration and knowledge sharing, and networking with fatherhood research groups favouring community-university partnership approaches in Australia, New Zealand, the U.K., and South Africa.