

## **Indigenous Child Assessment**

### **TEAM**

#### **Principal Investigator:**

Jessica Ball (Faculty, School of Child and Youth Care, U. Victoria)

#### **Research Coordinator:**

Pauline Janyst (M.A., Leadership, Royal Roads U.)

#### **Research Assistant:**

John Price (Doctoral Candidate, Psychology, U. Victoria)

#### **Community-based Collaborators:**

Caroline Daniels, Kermode Friendship Society  
Pauline Janyst (M.A., Leadership, Royal Roads U.), Laichwiltach Family Life Society  
Brenda Pielle (B.S.W.), Sliammon First Nation  
Connie Wilson, Lil'wat Nation

#### **Community Agency Partners:**

Kermode Friendship Society, Terrace, B.C.  
Laichwiltach Family Life Society, Campbell River, B.C.  
Pqusnalhew Child Care Centre (Lil'wat Nation), Mount Currie, B.C.  
Tla'Amin Community Health Services (Sliammon First Nation), Powell River, B.C.

### **Project Background**

Inspiration for this project came from ongoing university-community collaborations involving Jessica Ball and Aboriginal ECD program managers in First Nations communities and in the provincial and national offices of Aboriginal Head Start. These groups are asking questions that recognize the cultural nature of development such as: 'What are developmental milestones for Aboriginal children?' 'How can we evaluate effects of Aboriginal ECD programs in culturally appropriate ways?' 'How can we prevent over-diagnosis of Aboriginal children as a result of experts using standardized tools?' 'How could population-based studies of Aboriginal children be done that recognize our cultural-specific goals for our children?' The project addresses the need to consider Indigenous and local knowledge in conceptualizations of the goals and trajectories of early childhood development in Indigenous communities, and to reflect aspects of this knowledge in the ways we define and measure constructs such as

developmental milestones, school readiness, self concept, cultural identity, and various special needs.

### **Project Goal**

The project seeks to increase understandings of First Nations goals for community development that supports children's development, and to innovate culturally relevant assessment and intervention meeting the needs of Aboriginal young children and families.

### **Project Objectives**

- To explore and demonstrate processes of community-university research partnerships and post-colonial research ethics involving Aboriginal communities.
- To explore opportunities for engagement in social inquiry, reciprocal learning and mutual capacity building among members of the academy and members of Indigenous communities.
- To explore possibilities for mutually informing, re-constructing, or combining European-heritage concepts and methods for assessing child development with Indigenous knowledges' of child development in order to achieve culturally relevant, useful approaches to characterizing Indigenous children's development.

### **Community Partners**

All participating communities place a high priority on achieving optimal support for families with young children and promoting positive development outcomes. They became project partners because of exemplary systems of service delivery promoting ECD and their emphasis on Indigenous culture in child care and goals for children. They shared their stories of program and community development with other First Nations, via planned research activities to characterize child development environments. They also saw the project as a way to hold a mirror to their community by gathering reports from parents, Elders, and children themselves, as a useful process for community planning. The project enabled the communities to take stock of the extent to which their First Nations culture currently influences child-rearing in their community, including parenting, goals for children's development, and family life.

[Click here to view profiles of the Community Partners.](#)

### **Project Outcomes**

Indigenous Child Project Policy Brief: Protocols for Developmental Monitoring, Screening and Assessment of Aboriginal Young Children [PDF] (185 KB)

Research ethics involving Indigenous communities

This study offered an example of negotiating and enacting ethical principles for research involving a marginalized population in a changing political landscape.

Community-University Partnerships

This study offered some learning points on how to forge mutually respectful partnerships that work creatively in the unclaimed space between constituencies and produce research findings from which all stakeholders can benefit.

#### Characterizing Indigenous child development

The project identified dimensions of child development and indicators of well-being that are important to Aboriginal parents and ECD practitioners. These dimensions may be used to inform the development or adaptation of tools for developmental assessment and impacts of Aboriginal ECD programs.

#### Child environment-impact statements

The project contributes to informed theory development and constructive discourse about the meaning of childhood, environments for childhood, and developmental assessment from an ecologically comprehensive perspective. This perspective includes the socio-historical conditioning of child development and present-day goals for children and families within the broad agenda of Aboriginal peoples' recovery from the Residential School era and a desire for post-colonial / anti-oppressive relations with non-Aboriginal peoples and agencies.

#### **Funding**

Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada: Major Collaborative Research Initiatives

#### **A Networked Approach**

This project was one of 10 component projects in a national study of early childhood. Each of the 10 projects focused on a different aspect of how infants' and young children's environments impact their biological, psychological, and social development. Each project involved collaborations across academic and professional disciplines and between universities and community agencies in British Columbia. Visit [www.earlylearning.ubc.ca/CHILD](http://www.earlylearning.ubc.ca/CHILD).

#### **Contact Us**

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