

early CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT INTERCULTURAL
PARTNERSHIPS
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Indigenous Fatherhood

TEAM

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Terrace Park Centre Dad's Group

Esketemc Aboriginal Head Start Program

Prince George Native Friendship Centre, B.C. - Aboriginal Head Start

Project Background

Indigenous fathers have been under-represented in demographic, social, educational and health surveys. Yet they are an important stakeholder group and untapped resource for Aboriginal children and youth. Low participation of Indigenous fathers in infant and early childhood care has common across First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities and early childhood programs in Canada. B.C. First Nations Summit Grand Chief Ed John has called attention to the need to support and involve Aboriginal fathers, stating that: "Aboriginal fathers are probably the greatest untapped resource for improving the quality of life for Aboriginal children." Requests from practitioners in Indigenous community-agencies, especially in early childhood programs such as Aboriginal Head Start, provided impetus for a series of initiatives within the Early Childhood Development Partnerships Program to explore Indigenous fathers' experiences. The Partnerships Programs office continued to receive calls from Indigenous fathers volunteering to be involved in studies

of their experiences as fathers, explaining, in the words of one father: “Just to be able to tell our stories. To shine some light on the struggle that some of us Aboriginal men have to learn what it means to be fathers and how to stay connected with our children.”

Project Goal

The main purpose of this project was to open up Indigenous fatherhood as a new area of inquiry, community action, and policy reform.

A Networked Approach

From 2004 to 2009, SSHRC-CURA provided funding for the first national study of father involvement in Canada. It was a nationally networked study conducted by a group called the Father’s Involvement Research Alliance (FIRA), led by Dr. Kerry Daly at the Centre for Families, Work, and Well-being at the University of Guelph, Ontario. This national study involved over 50 community agencies and many hundreds of fathers in exploring fatherhood in seven populations in Canada: Indigenous Fathers, New Fathers, Young Fathers, Immigrant and Refugee Fathers, Gay Fathers, Divorced Fathers, Fathers of Children with Special Needs. This national study provided the means for the first research study in Canada about Indigenous fathers.

Project Outcomes

Findings of the national study and related studies about father involvement in Canada have been captured in an edited volume (Ball & Daly) noted below. With regards to Indigenous fathers, findings of this ground-breaking project highlighted challenges for many Indigenous fathers to maintain connections to their children and to feel confident in a fathering role. Demographic analyses completed for the study showed that Indigenous men, as a population, are probably the most socially excluded population in Canada with regards to key variables that are known to affect fathers’ involvement, including being unmarried, low education, high unemployment, poverty, and high mobility.

Many Indigenous fathers report a desire for more involvement with their children, but identified several barriers, including: work-scheduling conflicts; perceived role ambiguity; perceived “bias” toward mothers’ involvement in infant, child care, and parenting programs and services; interruptions in contact with children due to fathers’ participation in work on trap lines or fishing boats far from home; residential treatment programs or incarceration; and their own doubts about being suitable role models for their children. Residential school attendance, and secondary residential school effects, figure prominently in many Indigenous men’s accounts of their experiences of being fathers.

This study increased the visibility of Aboriginal fathers in the partnering communities and in the fields of early childhood education and child and youth care in Canada and internationally. Visibility was achieved through the community-university partnerships

developed for this project, through presentations, workshops, and reports, and through the inclusion of this study in the first national study of fatherhood in Canada.

As work in this project area within ECDIP continues, research and knowledge mobilization activities will:

- ✚ Create a research-based understanding of the diversity, goals and needs of fathers in Canada and in other countries;
- ✚ Provide guidelines for outreach, support, and education for fathers, particularly those whose marginalization has been manufactured by dominant cultural policies and mothercentric service orientations;
- ✚ Identify steps that practitioners can take to create spaces and opportunities in community-based programs for fathers to be involved in meaningful and rewarding ways with their children.
- ✚ Produce training resources, advocacy materials, and recommendations for service providers.
- ✚ Inform community policies as well as recommend reform of regional and national policies.

By increasing understanding of fathers' involvement and potentially positive contributions to child care and development, this research reflects the program mission of the Early Childhood Development Intercultural Partnerships to contribute to effect social change and increase equitable opportunities for all children's development, education and wellness.

Funding

- Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada: Community-University Research Alliance Program
- British Columbia Ministry for Children and Family Development through the Human Early Learning Partnership

KEY RESOURCES

ECDIP Publications, Presentations and Reports

Moselle, S. & Ball, J. (2013). *Aboriginal father involvement programs: Canadian national scan of promising practices*. National study conducted for the Public Health Agency of Canada. (965 KB)

Ball, J. (2013). Indigenous men's journeys to become meaningfully involved fathers in Canada. In J. Pattnaik (Ed.), *Father/male involvement in young children's lives: An international analysis. Education the Young Child: Advances in Theory and Research, Implications for Practice* (pp. 201-224). New York: Springer. (10.8 MB)

Ball, J., & Daly, K. (2012). *Father involvement in Canada: Diversity, Renewal, and Transformation*. Vancouver: UBC Press (13.1 MB)

>> Book flyer and order info (755 KB)

Ball, J. (2012). 'This could be the turn-around generation': Harnessing Aboriginal fathers' contributions to children's well-being. *Journal of the Canadian Paediatric Society*, 17(7), 373-375. (2.3 MB)

Ball, J. (2011). Father involvement in Canada: Diversity and inclusion. *Childhood Education*, 87(2), 113-118. (3.8 MB)

Ball, J. & Wahedi, M.O.K. (2010). Exploring Fatherhood in Bangladesh. *Childhood Education: International Focus Issue*, 366-370. (245 KB)

>> Click here for a list of articles in this issue of Childhood Education.

Ball, J. (2010). Indigenous fathers reconstituting circles of care. *American Journal of Community Psychology: Special Issue on Men, Masculinity, Wellness, Health and Social Justice – Community-based Approaches*, (45), 124-138. DOI 10.1007/s10464-009-9293-1

Ball, J. (2009). Fathering in the shadows: Indigenous fathers and Canada's colonial legacies. Fathering across diversity and adversity: International perspectives and policy interventions. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 642, 29-48. (10.3 MB)

>> Working copy (328 KB)

>> Also available at: UVicDSpace website

Ball, J. (2008). Policies and practice reforms to promote positive transitions to fatherhood among Aboriginal young men. *Horizons*, 10(1), 52-56. (2.2 MB)

National Aboriginal Health Organization Bulletin article on Aboriginal Fathers Research Project, Winter 2008 [HTML]

Ball, J., & Moselle, K. (2007). Fathers' contributions to children's well-being. Commissioned brief overview of research for the Public Health Agency of Canada. (686 KB)

Ball, J., Moselle, K., & Pedersen, S. (2007). Father's involvement as a determinant of child health. Commissioned review of research for the Public Health Agency of Canada. (768 KB)

Ball, J., Roberge, C., Joe, L., & George, R. (2007). Fatherhood: Indigenous Men's Journeys. Short report of research findings. (160 KB)

Ball, J., & George, R. (2006). Policies and Practices Affecting Aboriginal Fathers' Involvement with their Children. Report presented at Second Tri-Annual Aboriginal Policy Research Conference Relationships: Policy, Research, and Results. (194 KB)

Father's Involvement Research Alliance of Canada: Overview [PowerPoint slides in PDF] (134 KB)

Aboriginal Fathers Learning Fathering: Overview of project in progress [PowerPoint slides in PDF] (322 KB)

The Effects of Father Involvement: A Summary of the Research Evidence (98 KB)

Documenting the Journey: First Nations fathers share their experiences in a new DVD (Monday Magazine article, March 8-14, 2007) (2.8 MB)

Study aims to salvage image of fatherhood (National Post article on Fatherhood Study, December 4, 2003) [HTML]

DVD

Fatherhood: Indigenous Men's Journeys: 6 interviews with First Nations fathers of young children.

To order, download and complete this order form. (36 KB)

Or visit the Order page by clicking here.

Resource Kit

For more information on the resource kit, download the flyer. [PDF] (718 KB)

To order, download and complete this order form. [Word] (378 KB)

Indigenous Fathers Involvement Resources Kit (produced by Jessica Ball)

Available upon request. jball@uvic.ca

Beginning the Journey: A Guide for Aboriginal Fathers. (60 pp.) Plain language guide based on findings of Indigenous fatherhood research.

Aboriginal Fathers: A Guide for Community Programs. (56 pp.) Plain language guide based on findings of Indigenous fatherhood research.

DVD *Fatherhood: Indigenous Men's Journeys.* (16 pp.) Guide for screening DVD documentary about Indigenous Fathers.

The kit includes Posters, Articles, Flyers, and Staff Worksheets.

Poster

[Ball, J. \(2010\). *Understanding and Supporting Indigenous Fathers' Journeys*. Victoria: University of Victoria, School of Child and Youth Care. \(1 MB\)](#)
(designed for full colour 11 X 17 but can also be printed bl/wh 8 X 11)

Pamphlet

A motivational, informational pamphlet for Aboriginal Fathers is available to order, upon request: jball@uvic.ca

Websites

Dad Central/Papa Centrale: <http://dadcentral.ca/>

Daddies and Pappas 2B: LGBTQ Parenting Network:
<http://www.lgbtqparentingconnection.ca/programs.cfm?fuseaction=events.PublicProgramDetails&eventID=d6b0d97a-e82e-9a7f-9c11-f7ab30c3ec07>

Fathers Involvement Research Alliance: www.fira.uoguelph.ca

Centre for Families Work and Well-being: www.worklifecanada.ca

Fathers Involvement Network of British Columbia: email: bccf@bccf.bc.ca

Fatherhood Institute: UK's fatherhood think-and-do tank:
<http://www.fatherhoodinstitute.org/>

National Fatherhood Initiative (USA): <http://www.fatherhood.org/>