

## **Measuring Social Support in Aboriginal Early Childhood Programs**

### **TEAM**

#### **Principal Investigator:**

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

#### **Research Coordinator:**

Enid Elliot (Ph.D. Education, Early Years Specialization)

#### **Community-Agency Participants:**

Nutsumaat Lelum Child Care Centre, Chemainus First Nation, B.C.  
Smun'een Aboriginal Head Start, Penelakut Tribe, Kuper Island, B.C.

### **Project Background**

Research indicates that early childhood programs can support parents. When parents feel supported in their role, they tend to be more positive and responsive in their care-giving. Early childhood programs have potential to generate communities by connecting parents with each other and with staff, and facilitating reciprocal exchange of knowledge and resources. With this in mind, Aboriginal Head Start and other programs that use a family-centred model target parent involvement and enhanced social support as an indicator of program effectiveness. Current research-based tools for measuring social support are long, intrusive, and often assume certain lifestyles and choices for parents. A tool is needed that is practical, non-intrusive, and culturally sensitive for use in Aboriginal early childhood programs.

### **Project Goal**

The goal is to develop a valid tool for assessing the social support impacts on parents when their young children attend an Aboriginal early childhood care program.

### **Project Objectives**

- To obtain both staff and parents' perceptions of how parents may be affected when their children attend child care or other children's programs, and how various impacts could be measured.
- To develop a tool for measuring social support that is practical, supportive, and culturally safe.

## **Anticipated Project Outcomes**

- This project will generate insights about how parents are affected by their involvement in child care programs via their children, with particular focus on the quality, quantity and accessibility of social support that they perceive and receive.
- The project will provide a tool for measuring social support as one indicator of success in programs that take a family-centred approach.
- Understanding how the impact of child care and development programs on parents social support can inform program delivery.

## **Funding**

B. C. Ministry of Children and Family Development: Human Early Learning Partnership,  
[www.earlylearning.ubc.ca](http://www.earlylearning.ubc.ca)

## **Contact Us**

Jessica Ball, Early Childhood Development Intercultural Partnerships  
University of Victoria, School of Child and Youth Care  
Box 1700, STN CSC, Victoria, B.C. Canada V8W 2Y2  
Tel: (250) 472-4128 Fax: (250) 721-7218 E-mail: [jball@uvic.ca](mailto:jball@uvic.ca)