

Projects and Funded Research 2016-2017



Policy Wise
for Children & Families

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Working Provincially - Our 2016-2017 Team

PolicyWise works provincially to implement core functions and manage projects and initiatives that are tied to the four strategic directions. Our two teams in Calgary and Edmonton collaborate on projects to share data, information, evidence, and knowledge. We are proud of this unique approach and continue to find new ways to share our staff's diverse competencies across all the work that we do.

If you are interested in learning more about any of the projects described in the following sections, please contact:

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Supporting our Strategic Directions: PolicyWise Projects and Initiatives

Introduction

PolicyWise manages projects and initiatives that support its four strategic directions. These strategic directions reinforce our core functions and are PolicyWise's focus over the next four years.

Strategic Directions

1. Lead in the management, linkage, and analysis of administrative data and research to identify opportunities for improvement.
2. Build capacity for the generation and use of policy relevant, interdisciplinary research in the domains of child, family and community well-being.
3. Mobilize knowledge built on evidence to support cross-sectoral policy and service delivery.
4. Measure the impact of The Centre's initiatives.

Core Functions

- Engage in research, evaluation, communication and knowledge mobilization.
- Conduct, fund and build capacity in applied research.
- Link, analyze and manage data.
- Manage resources and strategic relationships.
- Measure and communicate our impact and value.

The activities listed in this section have been undertaken by PolicyWise in support of our four strategic directions.

Project Status Legend



Initiated



Ongoing



Complete

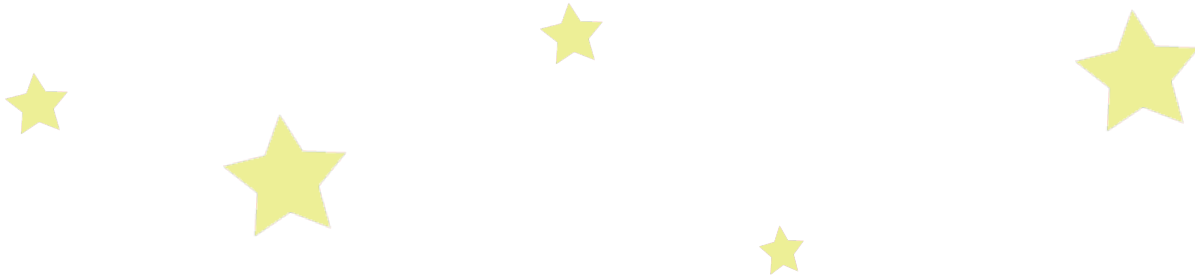
Lead in the management,
linkage and analysis of
administrative data and
research to identify
opportunities for improvement





Alberta Home Visitation Network Association – Reflective Supervision and Parent Coaching Trainings Evaluation

PolicyWise worked with The Alberta Home Visitation Network Association (AHVNA) to evaluate the parent coaching and reflective supervision training pilots. A developmental evaluation approach was used to evaluate the training sessions, in combination with an Implementation Science framework and knowledge mobilization support. Included in this work was consideration and recommendations to inform the broader Community Capacity Framework described in the project, Prevention and Early Intervention – Home Visitation and Parent Link Centres (Naomi Parker and Cathie Scott).



Child and Youth Data Laboratory (CYDL) Longitudinal Study: Experiences of Alberta Children and Youth over Time, 2005/06-2010/11

The CYDL Longitudinal Project focuses on understanding the experiences of children and youth (0 to 30 year-old Albertans) over time (a six-year period). The project looks at service use within and across ministries, as it is related to key indicators and to the passage of time. Several major research themes were developed as a result of extensive consultations and ongoing collaboration with participating ministries. These include transitions, resilience, early childhood development, and other specific topic areas such as disability, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD), and mental health. These themes are being studied using various research and analysis methodologies to understand the characteristics of the population and to reveal deep and complex relationships of determinants and influencing factors and outcomes for children, youth and families.

The first deliverable, the Program Overlap Matrix between government programs in the project was released in late 2016 and includes a comprehensive report and an interactive data visualization that provides information on service patterns at the program level. Profiles of defined populations have also been released, such as students in post-secondary education, Child Care Services clients, and service access for those with a mental health diagnosis. Reports on focused topics such as injuries, chronic diseases, gifted and talented students, justice system diversions, apprentices, and homelessness are forthcoming.

In collaboration with partnering ministries, a knowledge mobilization plan for the longitudinal project has been developed and provides a strategy for release and mobilization of findings. Mobilization of findings incorporates multiple strategies targeting a spectrum of audiences from policy-makers to service providers. PolicyWise is continuing to work closely with partnering ministries to implement the plan through activities such as topic-specific presentations and workshops, data visualizations and webinars delivered online (Xinjie Cui and Jason Lau).



Enviros Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) Support Program

PolicyWise conducted an evaluation of Enviros' FASD Support Program. A rapid review on FASD support programs; interviews; and review of data was included. The purpose s to determine how well the program is working, for whom, in what ways and circumstances, and identify features of the program that have significant influence on outcomes. The information generated will inform the development of a framework for ongoing monitoring, improving, and adaptation (Naomi Parker, Tara Preston, Cathie Scott).



FASD Data Strategy

The Ministry of Community Supports and Services provided a grant to PolicyWise in March 2017 to initiate the first phase of the foundational work described in the FASD Data Capture and Analysis Framework. PolicyWise will engage with Service Alberta to work towards the integration and expansion of linked FASD data sets with the vision of increasing our understanding of FASD across the lifespan (Tara Preston, Xinjie Qui, Christine Werk).



FASD Knowledge and Capacity Development

With support from the FASD Cross Ministry Committee, FASD Data Capture and Analysis Framework was developed. The process involved identifying disparate sources of FASD data, creating an inventory and then assessing elements to propose a data linkage and analysis solution. The Framework describes a three phased approach as a pathway toward a vision for a centralized FASD data system to advance knowledge for FASD prevention, planning, and policy development for the purpose of improving outcomes (Tara Preston, Leslie Twilley, Christine Werk).



Foundations of Caregiver (FCS) Supports: Models of Care Literature Review

FCS (2015) provides a “base from which to develop caregivers’ capacity to improve positive outcomes for infants, children and youth” (p. 4). This project identifies and describes evidence on leading and promising models of care that use trauma informed approaches including the pillars of knowledge and practice described in the FCS (2015) document; child development, trauma, and loss and grief. The elements of trauma awareness, emphasis on safety, and strengths-based emerged as leading elements among trauma informed models of care. Key principles of these elements were clearly stated in empirical and supporting documents for the models. Although the “rebuild control” element was not clearly supported by the literature, it may be an important factor to consider when transition planning (Cathie Scott).



IMPACT (Innovative Models Promoting Access-to-Care Transformation)

This five-year research program provides opportunities to build upon Local Innovation Partnerships (LIPs) and research to co-create models of Primary Health Care (PHC) that enhance access for vulnerable populations. LIPs represent communities of stakeholders who share a common concern around vulnerable populations that are at increased risk due to limited access to the delivery of PHC. Set in three Australian states, Alberta, Ontario and Québec, IMPACT is creating learning networks of decision makers, researchers, clinicians and members of the vulnerable communities in the six local health regions. The Alberta LIP intervention is a pop up services event where service providers unite, offering a variety of services (Cathie Scott).



Pilot Filming Interactions to Nurture Development (FIND) Implementation Evaluation

PolicyWise conducted an implementation evaluation of Filming Interactions to Nurture Development (FIND). Three settings were used to evaluate implementation: families receiving support through home visitation, child care services and early childhood development services, both in Edmonton and Calgary.

The implementation evaluation report outlines a number of factors and an associated cost framework that would influence a scaling up of FIND should it be considered for implementation in Alberta. The considerations for discussion include: supporting staff, editing, outcomes, tracking system, program support, caseloads, eligibility, information technology, agency readiness, and coaches' role definition (Naomi Parker and Cathie Scott).



Prenatal Outreach Support Team (POST) Project Developmental Evaluation

The Prenatal Outreach Support Team (POST) is a collaborative partnership between the Sheldon Kennedy Child Advocacy Centre, Alberta Health Services Public Health and the Calgary Police Service to identify and provide specialized intervention and referral services to vulnerable pregnant persons in high risk situations. PolicyWise is coordinating a developmental evaluation of the POST. Evaluation findings will inform the Sheldon Kennedy Child Advocacy Centre's understanding of the programs: design and delivery; outputs associated with the implementation of an integrated practice team delivery model; and projected achievements (Naomi Parker and Cathie Scott).



Prevention and Early Intervention – Home Visitation and Parent Link Centres

Children's Services has engaged PolicyWise to conduct current Prevention and Early Intervention Early Childhood Development program evaluation framework for the Alberta context. To date, PolicyWise has completed a literature review of evidence-informed Home Visitation services; a current state assessment of Home Visitation and Parent Link Centres in Alberta; a review of the Standards and Guidelines for both Home Visitation and Parent Link Centres; and, a community capacity building framework to support the work. This work will increase capacity of Prevention and Early Intervention programs and services to support eligible children and families by outlining the critical components of an evidence-informed Prevention and Early Intervention programs, identify areas for potential improvement and investment and to develop a framework for PEI community capacity building (Naomi Parker and Cathie Scott).

↔ Secondary Analysis to Generate Evidence (SAGE)

Funded by an anonymous donor, Secondary Analysis to Generate Evidence (or SAGE) is a data repository created to collect, document, manage, and provide secure access to research, community service and administrative data to secondary users. SAGE has comprehensive governance, metadata, data deposit and access processes, and infrastructure to ensure appropriate, ethical, and secure re-use of data. Currently, SAGE has ten research datasets including two large birth cohort studies – these studies represent over 5000 Albertan families. To incentivize the use of data available at SAGE, PolicyWise created the Secondary Data Use Grant. Successful applicants were awarded in May 2017. SAGE is seeking additional datasets, with the long term goal of linking data across the academic, not-for-profit and government sector to enable more complex analyses that support evidence informed policy and practice.

SAGE is not only a data repository, but also a collaborative platform. SAGE strives to build capacity within the academic, not-for-profit, and government sectors through collaborative opportunities. The Calgary Foundation has funded an initiative between SAGE, the Centre for Child Well-being, and a small group of not-for-profit organizations in Calgary, which seeks to discover and share meaningful indicators of poverty and predictors of social service needs. This initiative will address barriers to data sharing and strengthen the not-for-profit sector by better targeting the needs of the community through effective use of data, information, and evidence to inform service improvements. Alberta Innovates is supporting an initiative between SAGE, Alberta Innovates, Alberta Health Services, and the Government of Alberta, which aims to understand children with medical complexity and/or neuro-developmental disorders, their service use, their outcomes and the impact of services accessed. This initiative will explore a data sharing process that will enable ongoing data linkage and analysis for policy makers, community members, and researchers to support social policy and quality improvement (Xinjie Cui and Jason Lau).



Build capacity for the generation and use of policy-relevant, interdisciplinary research in the domains of child, family and community well-being





Aboriginal Women's Economic Security

In partnership with Indigenous Community Connections, Children's Services, PolicyWise supported University nuhelot'jine thaiyots'j nistameyimâkanak Blue Quills to lead a community based research study. The investigative team held several community research circles and interviewed over 100 participants about the needs of Indigenous women related to economic security. They explored Indigenous definitions of economy, economic participation and well-being. A Gathering was held in April 2016 to share results and discuss next steps with participants from across Northeastern Alberta. The final report was completed in September 2016 (Tara Preston).

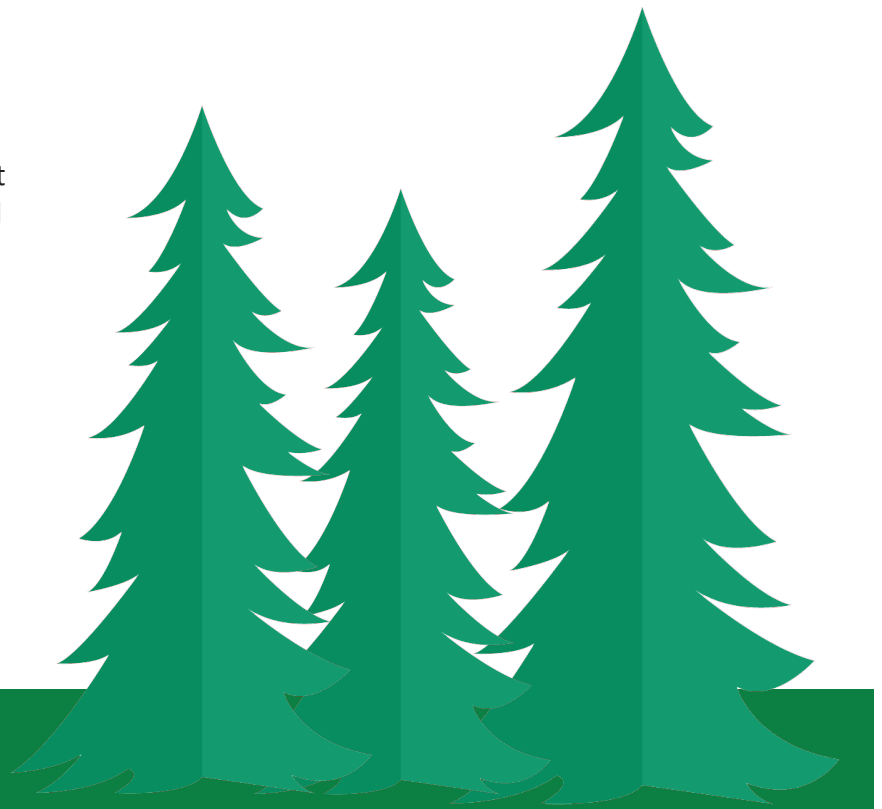


Advancement of the Housing and Homelessness Research Strategy for Alberta *Housing and Homelessness Knowledge Generation*

With support from Community and Social Services, PolicyWise funded two projects related to housing and homelessness.

The Centre for Public Legal Education Alberta was supported to develop the initial plan and methodology to conduct research that will tell the stories of survivors of domestic violence who have navigated the justice system. The overall goal is to generate research to improve the legal environment that survivors of domestic violence must negotiate in pursuing legal remedies. An annotated bibliography, *Navigating the Legal Terrain*, was created as a resource to inform the plan. This project is a follow up from their 2014 study, *The Hidden Homeless: Residential Tenancies Issues of Victims of Domestic Violence*.

The Alberta Council of Women's Shelters completed *Building Informed Service Delivery in Second Stage Shelters*. The report describes services and outcomes for women and children who resided in eleven second stage shelters between April 2013 and February 2017. The project built upon previous work which enhanced capacity to collect, analyse and report on data. With increased knowledge of outcomes, shelter staff are better positioned to provide effective services and support women as they transition into independence (Roxanne Felix-Mah and Tara Preston).





Expanding the Circle: A peer-led, resilience-based model of obesity and diabetes prevention for Indigenous youth

Researchers led by Dr. Jon McGavock have found a school based peer mentoring approach tested in Manitoba to be an effective population level intervention to youth's weight gain and improved knowledge of healthy living. Through a CIHR Pathways to Health Equity for Aboriginal People grant, the Aboriginal Youth Mentorship Program (AYMP) is expanding into Alberta schools. The research team is applying an implementation science lens to evaluate the initiative. PolicyWise is contributing funding to build research capacity by supporting a student to participate (Tara Preston).



Family Violence Framework Evaluation Action Plan

PolicyWise has been collaborating with the Interdepartmental Committee on Family Violence to develop an evaluation plan for The Framework to End Family Violence in Alberta. The emphasis of the framework is on preventing intimate partner violence; stopping the transmission of violence to children, youth and young adults; and building healthy relationships across the lifespan. The Evaluation Action Plan is a step towards maximizing data and evaluation research to demonstrate the collective impact of this coordinated, multi-ministry approach to addressing family violence (Roxanne Felix-Mah and Tara Preston).



Indigenous Women Fleeing Domestic Violence and Issues Related to Housing and Homelessness Scoping Review

The Interagency Council on Homelessness (IAC) and Community and Social Services identified Indigenous women fleeing domestic violence and issues related to housing and homelessness as a top research priority. PolicyWise initiated a scoping review to address the research question, "What policy recommendations have been made in the existing documents to address housing and homelessness issues for Indigenous women experiencing violence in Canada?" As part of the process, two consultations took place in early May 2016 in Edmonton and Calgary with Indigenous community members, organizations, service providers, and government representatives. The consultations shaped how the final research findings were organized and presented, and helped identify priorities for future policy development in Alberta. The IAC made recommendations to the Minister based on the findings from the final report (Roxanne Felix-Mah and Tara Preston).





Indigenous Youth as Agents of Change for Community Wellness: Promoting Resilience and Positive Youth Development through Theatre

With a CIHR Pathways to Health Equity for Aboriginal Peoples Grant award, Dr. Cindy Jardine and Dr. Tracy Friedel are working with a team to conduct participatory research. The research seeks ways to involve Indigenous youth as agents of change for health and wellness in their own communities through participation in a Forum Theatre. It is a collaborative, arts-based approach, grounded in local realities, that engages both the youth actors and community members. PolicyWise is providing funding to support students and community participants to build research skills through engagement with the project (Tara Preston).



Indigenous Youth Suicide Prevention

With support from Indigenous Community Connections and Children's Services, PolicyWise launched a scoping review to explore peer-reviewed literature and grey literature addressing Indigenous youth suicide and resilience. It describes the particularities of Indigenous youth suicide, identifies promising practices, and outlines knowledge gaps. Guidance from ten Indigenous Advisors and interview participants who lead Indigenous youth suicide prevention programs in Alberta help to contextualize findings to the province. The project is a unique blend of framing information from different perspectives and worldviews. The project will be completed in the summer of 2017 (Tara Preston).

Parent Child Assistance Program in First Nations Evaluation

Community and Social Services provided funding to six FASD Service Networks to establish or expand Parent Child Assistance Programs on First Nation reserves in Alberta. An evaluation is being managed by PolicyWise and carried out by the Alberta Clinical and Community-based Evaluation Research Team (ACCERT) at the University of Alberta. Emerging outcomes are being observed in the areas of relationship building with clients, addressing clients' addictions, supporting clients' sexual and reproductive health, nurturing clients' basic needs and overall health, as well as developing and enhancing clients' parenting skills. The FASD prevention program has also established strong partnerships with other agencies in First Nation communities toward collaborating for service delivery and building community capacity and awareness (Tara Preston).

Paul First Nation Partnership Project

Indigenous Community Connections, Children's Services, Mitacs, PolicyWise and Paul First Nation School began working together on a community based research project to identify and support promising interventions to build youth resilience. The focus of this project is on a specific intervention strategy developed by the Paul First Nation's School administration in 2014 that arose out of a need to address youth suicide. This school-based program has since been called Dayna's camp, named after a young school-age girl from Paul First Nation who had committed suicide a few years prior. The research team will investigate the potential benefits of Dayna's camp to regular school based programming by employing Indigenous Research Methodologies to uncover information that will benefit the Paul First Nation and all sponsoring agencies (Tara Preston).





↔ **PAX/Triple P Randomized Control Trial**

With support from Alberta Health, PolicyWise is leading a randomized control trial to investigate a combination of two strategies to protect children from risks of mental, emotional, and behavioral disorders. These two interventions are PAX: Good Behaviour Game (school-based) and Triple P: Positive Parenting Program (home-based). Since 2013, the study has been underway in 24 schools in 9 Alberta cities and towns. Now, in its final year, the data is being analyzed to assess potential outcomes related to child functioning, classroom behaviour, self-report from teachers (job satisfaction, stress and burnout), and changes in child mental health referrals, absenteeism and teachers retention rates (Tara Preston and Suzanne Tough).

▶ **Psychosocial Response and Recovery Evaluation of the RMWB Wildfire**

In response to the May 2016 wildfire in the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo (RMWB), local and provincial stakeholders were mobilized to support the immediate needs of residents of the Region. Recovery efforts will continue in what is acknowledged as a long-term, complex and multi-faceted process for the communities recovering from disasters. PolicyWise has been contracted by Alberta Health to conduct an evaluation of the Psychosocial Recovery and Response of the RMWB Wildfire. This includes: documenting the activation and operationalization of psychosocial response for the 2016 RMWB Wildfire during the Response and Recovery Phase; conducting an evaluation of the Response Phase following the RMWB Wildfire as well as the initial actions of the Recovery Phase through a lens of community best practice to determine if activities met the psychosocial needs of the affected population and stakeholders involved; identifying successful activities as well as areas of unmet psychosocial need in the Response and Recovery Phases as articulated by stakeholders; identifying potential program or political targets that would lead to positive psychosocial outcomes following a successful disaster response and recovery in the future; and identifying the infrastructure, policies and resources required to develop, implement and maintain a provincial Disaster Psychosocial Framework (Cathie Scott, Naomi Parker, Christine Werk).



Relational-based Supports for High School Students

PolicyWise was contracted by the School and Community Supports for Children and Youth Branch of Alberta Education to do an environmental scan of the current landscape of relational-based supports working in Alberta schools to support vulnerable students in attending and completing high school. This included assessing positions such as success coaches, family and school liaison workers, career coaches, roots and wings workers, etc. A scan of public information and review of the literature on school-based and linked rational-based supports was conducted in consultation with Alberta Education staff involved with High School Redesign and the Welcoming, Caring, Respectful, and Safe Learning Environments Initiative, including FASD (Robyn Blackadar, Naomi Parker).

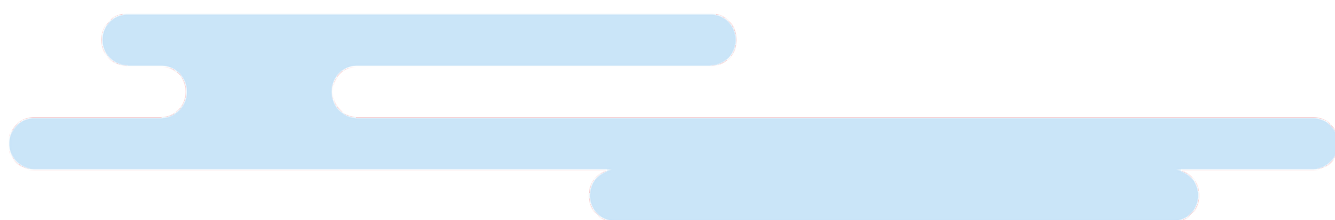


Trauma, Child Development, Healing and Resilience: A Review of the Literature with a Focus on Aboriginal Peoples and Communities

With support from the Indigenous Community Connections division of Children's Services, PolicyWise is facilitating research about the effects of trauma, grief and loss, on child development with a focus on Aboriginal Communities. Exploring Cree law, culture and pedagogy is the foundation for understanding what was damaged by colonization and what must be reclaimed in the healing process. A second phase of this project will examine the commonalities and differences between the Indigenous view of child development and Western perspectives based on neuroscience (Tara Preston)

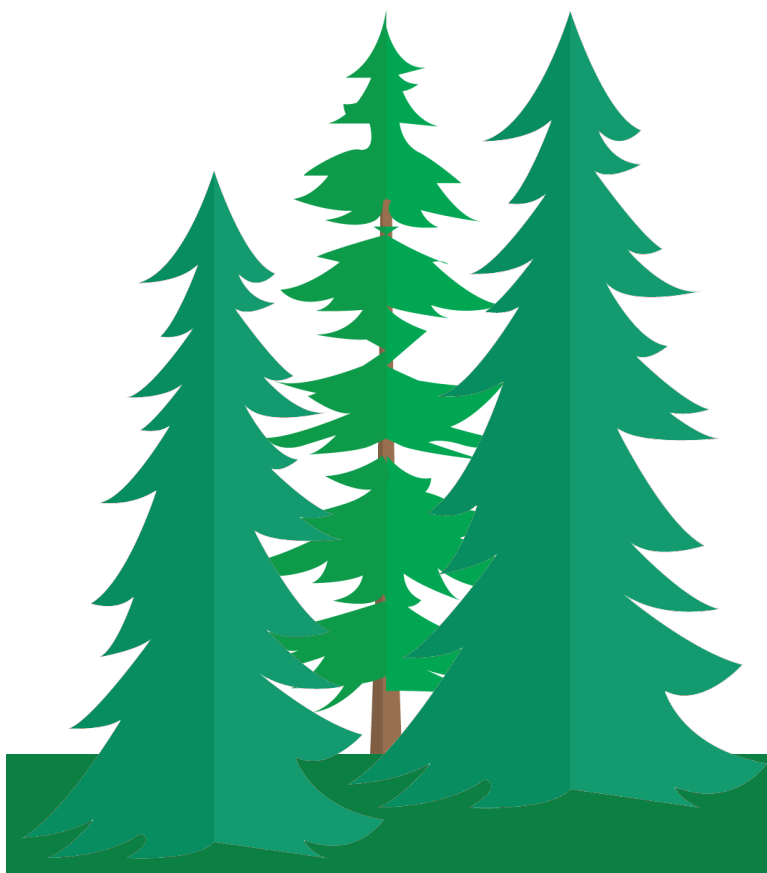
Year 10 Evaluation of the Government of Alberta's FASD 10 Year Strategic Plan (2007-2017)

The Cross-Ministry FASD Committee developed the FASD 10-Year Strategic Plan with ten partnering Ministries. PolicyWise successfully led the Year 5 and 7 evaluations and is currently leading the Year 10 evaluation. The Year 5 report included historical information about Alberta's response to FASD and provided baseline data. The Year 7 reported on the latest research conducted on the incidence and prevalence of FASD in Alberta and included an in-depth evaluation of the Service Network model. The final evaluation will assess to what extent the goals have been met, include an historical analysis of the implementation of the Plan, and highlight key lessons learned, innovations and trends that have contributed to results achieved over the last 10 years (Tara Preston).

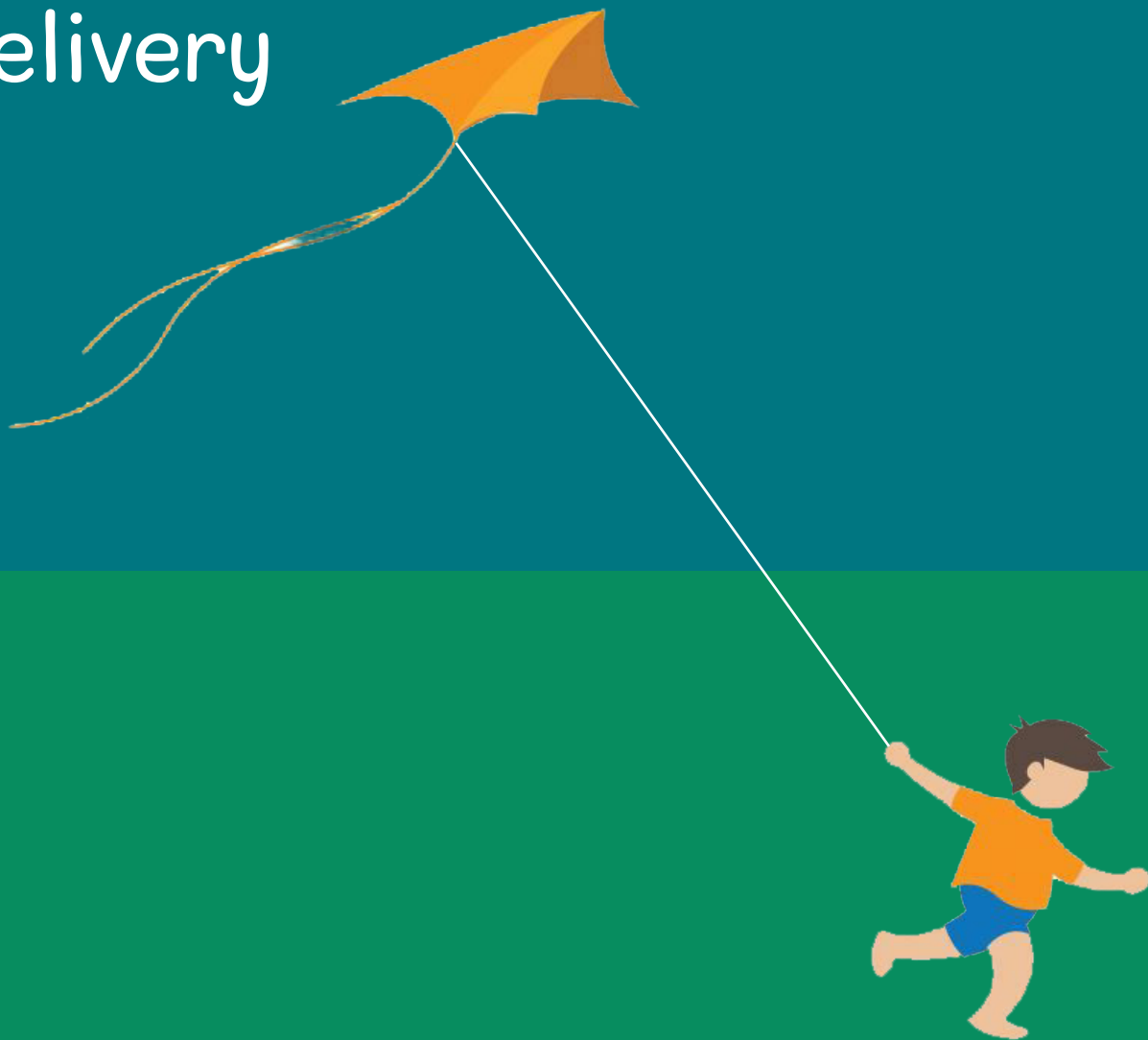


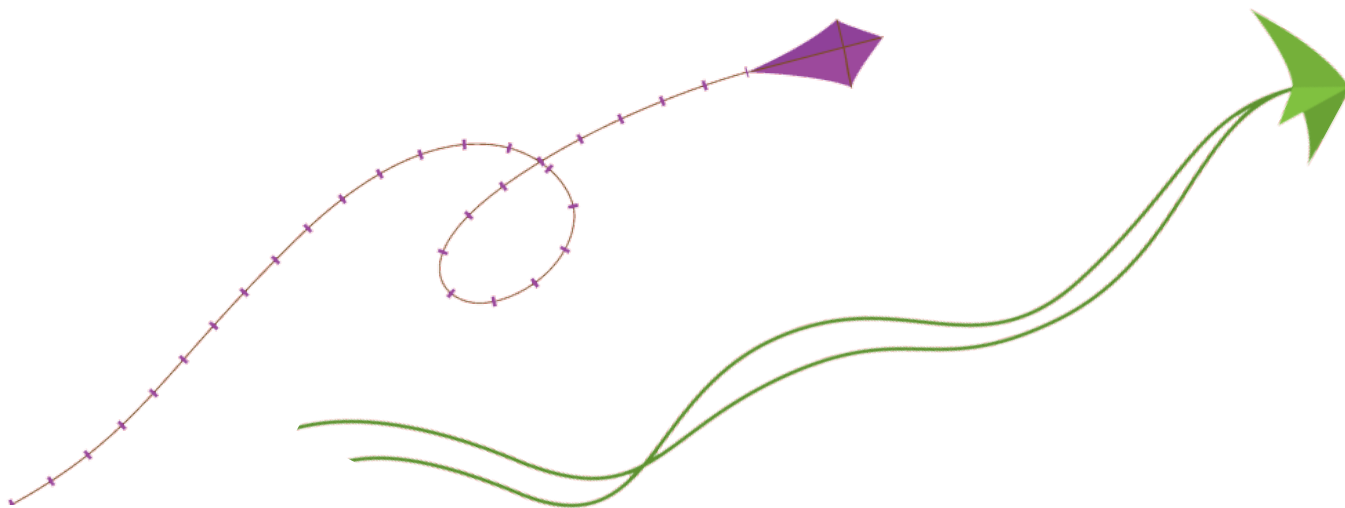
Youth Mental Health Community Support Program Evaluation

The Ministry of Health, Children's Services, Community and Social Services, and Alberta Health Services are implementing new programs for children and youth with complex needs in Calgary, Edmonton and Red Deer. PolicyWise is facilitating the developmental evaluation of the programs and supporting the Institute of Health Economics to conduct an economic analysis. Based on evaluative feedback, sites continue to refine practices and early results indicate that youth are making positive advancements, setting and achieving goals, strengthening relationships with others, and gaining self-esteem (Tara Preston).



Mobilize knowledge built on evidence to support cross-sectoral policy and service delivery





Mental Health Promotion, Suicide Prevention and Strengthening Resilience Among Indigenous Youth

PolicyWise hosted a one-day workshop on May 9, 2016 featuring Dr. Laurence Kirmayer, Gregory Brass and Deanna Cook who presented on historical trauma and resilience and innovative work on the “Listening to One Another – to Get Strong Program” for youth and their families. Over 500 stakeholders attended the workshop and engaged in discussions to identify ways to move forward to build resilience among Indigenous youth (Aimee Caster and Tara Preston).



Regional Collaborative Service Delivery Learning Series

Regional Collaborative Service Delivery (RCSD) is a regional partnership among Alberta Education, school authorities, Alberta Health Services, Alberta Children’s Services, Alberta Community & Social Services, and other community stakeholders. There are 17 RCSD regions whose partners work collaboratively and share available resources to: address regionally identified needs; coordinate and leverage systems; build system capacity; and plan for sustainability.

PolicyWise is working with the School and Community Supports for Children and Youth Branch of Alberta Education to produce the RCSD Learning Series. The series aims to address the outcomes of cross-ministry work to build system capacity for learning environments that are welcoming, caring, respectful, and safe and collaborative systems. The purpose of the RCSD Learning Series is to share emerging, promising and leading practices related to content-specific approaches among the 17 RCSD regions to capture experiential knowledge and wisdom with the intent of mobilizing existing capacity and knowledge sharing. A recorded presentation and knowledge mobilization resources will be created for each of the 17 RCSD regions and shared on the PolicyWise website. An evaluation process will be undertaken to assess the extent to which the RCSD regions learned about emerging, promising, and leading practices across the province and whether participating in the project changed their practice (Naomi Parker and Cathie Scott).



Supporting Every Student Learning Series

The Supporting Every Student Learning Series is a partnership with the School and Community Supports for Children and Youth Branch of Alberta Education. The series supports Bill 10 and Alberta Education's Welcoming, Caring, Respectful, Safe Learning Environments Initiative, which prioritizes mental health, social and behaviour support, inclusion, character and citizenship, and bullying prevention to foster learning environments that respect diversity and nurture a sense of belonging, and a positive sense of self. This initiative aims for students to feel safe, secure, able to learn and, ultimately, able to complete high school.

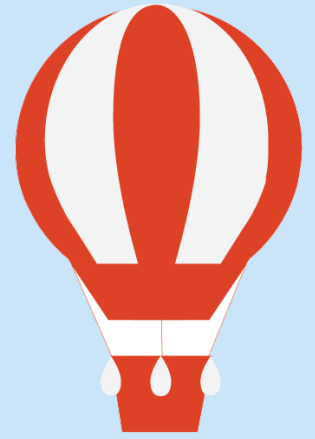
The Supporting Every Student Learning Series is comprised of 25 recorded presentations and associated conversation guides that aim to support professional learning opportunities for school and school authority leaders by focusing on topics related to evidence-based strategies for supporting the success and wellbeing of all students. The series also addresses the outcomes of the cross-ministry work of Children's Services, Community and Social Services, Health, and Education to build system capacity for collaboration and for learning environments that are welcoming, caring, respectful, and safe. This project was completed in 2016 and the presentations and conversation guides are now available on the PolicyWise website (Aimee Caster).

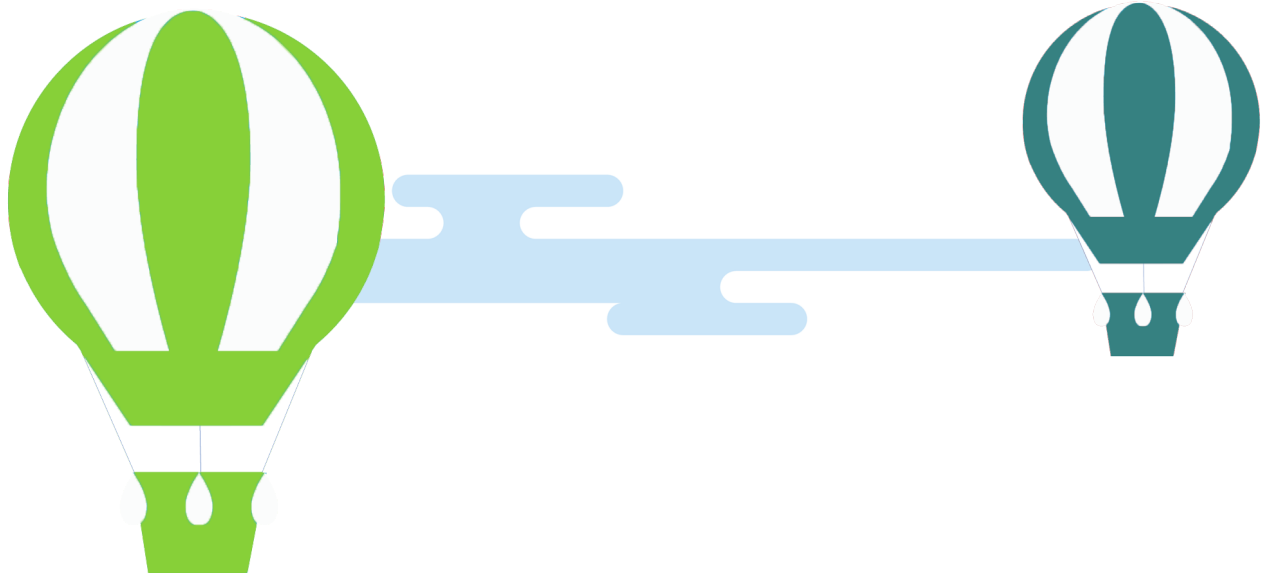


Youth Mental Health Website

With support from Bell Canada, the Government of Alberta has developed www.help4me.ca, a website hosted on MyHealth.Alberta.ca. It serves as a gateway to mental health resources and information to support youth, families and caregivers. PolicyWise continues to be engaged with the project to facilitate youth engagement, and work with Calder Bateman on a marketing strategy (Tara Preston).

Measure the impact of
PolicyWise's activities





Evaluation Quality Assurance Framework Development

PolicyWise's Evaluation Quality Assurance Framework was developed to guide assessment of all evaluation projects submitted to and managed by PolicyWise. It is a living document which we use to organize the full range of our quality concepts, policies, tools and practice. It assists us to ensure clarity, transparency, consistency, learning, and engagement are experienced and demonstrated in our evaluation processes and products (Roxanne-Felix Mah, Naomi Parker, Tara Preston, Cathie Scott).



Alignment of Quality with the PolicyWise Mission



Generating Evidence for Policy and Practice: PolicyWise-Funded Research

Introduction

PolicyWise funds policy-relevant applied research that has the potential to improve the well-being of Alberta's children, their families and communities; we are specifically interested in research that looks at outcomes for children and/or youth. We offer a variety of funding opportunities to support and sustain research for both trainees and independent investigators.

Research Themes

PolicyWise is pleased to support Community-Based Research (CBR) and encourages researchers and communities to partner equitably in the research process. PolicyWise funds policy-relevant research that aligns with five Research Themes:

- Early Childhood Development
- Middle Childhood and Youth Wellbeing
- Family Capacity Building
- Community Capacity Building
- Tracking Long-Term Outcomes

Further, PolicyWise's primary relationship is with Alberta Children's Services and our agreement includes supporting research, analysis and knowledge mobilization related to the following strategic issues:

- Addressing issues with respect to Aboriginal and recent immigrant populations.
- Alleviating broader socio-economic conditions including poverty and homelessness.
- Meeting challenges related to disabilities and mental health.

In 2016/2017, the following projects were either initiated, in progress, or completed from a previous year.

Each project has been sorted into a thematic area.

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Project Status Legend

-  Initiated
-  Ongoing
-  Complete

Disability studies





An Exploratory Examination of the Transition to Adulthood in Autism Spectrum Disorder - Dr. David Nicholas, University of Calgary.

Background:

This study examined the transition from adolescence to adulthood for young people with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Research questions were:

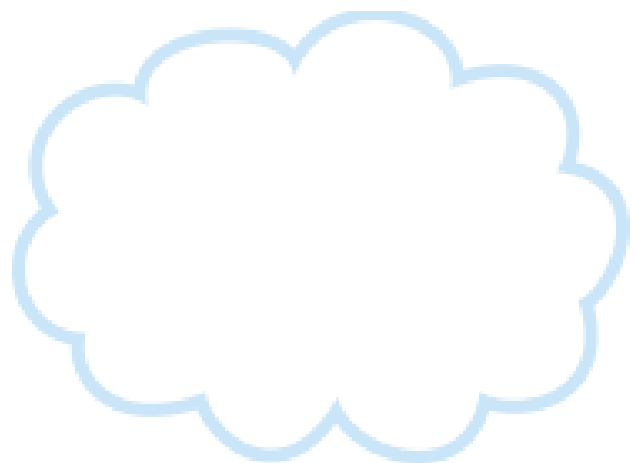
1. What are key points of transition for young people with ASD?;
2. What are markers of self-care activities for young people with ASD across the developmental trajectory and heterogeneity of the ASD spectrum?;
3. How do young people with ASD, their parents and their service providers understand the developing person with ASD?; and
4. What are perceived facilitators and barriers to successful transition in ASD?


The study utilized a grounded theory design comprising interviews with a sample of youth with ASD, parents and service providers. The sample consisted of interviewed triads: young persons with ASD (n = 29), parents (n = 23) and service providers (n = 10), as available (all interviewed separately, total triadic sample = 62).

Results:

Youth and young adults struggled with physical, cognitive, sensory and emotional challenges. For some, these challenges had a negative impact on how they could participate in social and employment settings. Young persons with ASD struggled with how to define themselves as an adult and often struggled in adult worlds of employment, social relationships and housing.

Parents expressed concern that youth and their families are insufficiently prepared for their young person with ASD to move into adulthood. They felt some services providers lacked sufficient awareness and expertise in ASD to meaningfully support their youth/young adult. As a caregiver, they felt this role was absorbing in demanding diverse tasks, and resulted in mixed emotions.





Building Parenting Capacity in Families of Children with Disabilities Phase 2: Understanding and Resourcing Fathers of Children with ASD from Diverse Socio-economic and Cultural Backgrounds - Dr. Bonnie Lashewicz and Beth Parrott, University of Calgary.

Background:

The purpose of this collaborative Phase II project was to promote the health of Alberta children and families by building understandings and informing practice, policy and research priorities related to supporting socio-economically and ethnically diverse fathers of children with ASD. The investigators achieved this by collecting and analyzing in-depth, first-hand accounts from ten fathers about their experiences and needs in raising their sons and daughters with ASD including how supports and services address their experiences and needs. The investigators elaborated perspectives of fathers' experiences and needs by conducting a knowledge exchange event (April 25, 2015, Alberta Child Development Centre) with representatives from agencies, and allied university departments, focused on supporting socio-economically and culturally diverse families of children with ASD.

Results:

No results to date.



Enhancing Function and Meaningful Participation of Children and Youth with Motor Disabilities: A Program of Research - Dr. Leslie Wiart, University of Alberta.

Background:

The investigator's ultimate career goal is to contribute to improved patient and family outcomes by conducting clinically relevant research and facilitating the uptake of research in policy-making and clinical practice. This includes two main areas of focus:

1. Evaluation of the effectiveness of physical therapy interventions for children with cerebral palsy.
2. Evaluation of pediatric rehabilitation service delivery for children with neuromotor disabilities.

This program of study consists of three projects in various stages of implementation:

Project 1: Evaluation of the effectiveness of robotic gait training and gait-focused physical therapy programs for children and youth with cerebral palsy: A mixed methods randomized controlled trial.

Project 2: Engaging children in setting their rehabilitation goals: Feasibility of using the Canadian Occupational Performance Measure (COPM) with children with neuromotor impairments in a pediatric outpatient setting.

Project 3: Development and Evaluation of a modified car for young children with cerebral palsy: The Young Movers Project.

Results:

No results to date.





✓ Enhancing Resilience in Youth with Autism Spectrum Disorder through Social Intervention - Dr. Adam McCrimmon and Dr. David Nicholas, University of Calgary.

Background:

This study explored the effectiveness of a unique social intervention Program for the Education and Enrichment of Relational Skills (PEERS) for teens with High Functioning Autism Spectrum Disorder (HFASD). Teens with HFASD experience substantial impairments to social functioning that result in poor mental health, resilience, and developmental outcome. Previous research on PEERS has indicated significant improvement in participant social skills and social knowledge, but additional factors of interest have yet to be examined. This study was the first Alberta-based investigation of PEERS, and also examined social cognition, resilience, mental health, and other variables to further explore the effectiveness of PEERS for teens with HFASD.

Results:

Results indicate that teens with HFASD improved in cognition, though their social skills did not show significant improvements. Additionally, relatedness (an aspect of resilience) was seen to improve, demonstrating an additional factor important in understanding the effectiveness of PEERS. Finally, mental health concerns were not seen to improve (although symptoms of anxiety approached significance); however, the sample did not report issues with mental health which likely influenced the team's ability to detect improvements in this domain.

The investigators continue to offer PEERS as an important intervention resource for teens with HFASD and data collection will continue. The investigators anticipate being able to identify further variables of interest that are enhanced via completion of the program.



SKIP Program: Supporting Kids Inclusion and Participation (Autism Focus) - Dr. Sandra Hodgetts, University of Alberta.

Background:

This program of research relates to multi-dimensional, interdisciplinary treatment approaches to improve participation, inclusion, and wellbeing for people diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and their families. This research is focused on interventions and treatment approaches embedded within the context of daily life (home, school, and community environments), based on philosophies of family-centered care and inclusion.

This program of research is aimed at building capacity of various stakeholders, across home, school and community settings, to facilitate understanding and inclusion of children with ASD. It may also build parent capacity to identify when/if their children with ASD are being isolated or victimized, facilitate understanding and inclusion with peers/friends in organized or informal community activities, and increase understanding of cultural nuances related to disclosing and explaining ASD.

Results to Date:

The projects completed thus far have identified additional studies that will help fill knowledge gaps to improve wellbeing for people with ASD and their families, and also potentially inform policy related to community inclusion and participation.

Next steps include supporting active recruitment, data collection, data analysis and knowledge dissemination for the two following studies:

1. investigating supports and barriers to community inclusion for children with ASD; and
2. continuing the line of inquiry related to processes and perceived outcomes of disclosing an ASD diagnosis to others in the community by now investigating the perspective of persons with ASD, and potentially community members.





The Elephant in the Room: Talking to Children with ASD about their Diagnosis - Dr Adam McCrimmon and Dr. David Nicholas, University of Calgary.

Background:

This study explored the lived experience of parents in terms of their disclosure of an ASD diagnosis to their child to enhance the understanding about this topic to support future parents through this challenging time in their lives. 307 parents from around the globe completed an online survey regarding their experiences with disclosure of an ASD diagnosis to their child. Subsequently, 40 parents (20 who have disclosed the diagnosis to their child and 20 who have not) completed a semi-structured interview regarding their personal experiences and perspectives.

Results:

Qualitative analyses of the disclosed parents' interviews yielded themes pertaining to their context for disclosure, the planning they took prior to disclosure, their reasons for disclosure, barriers to disclosure, and perspectives on when to disclose. Additionally, parents discussed how disclosure happened, the conversation of disclosure, positive experiences, and negative experiences, among others. Finally, participants provided advice to families contemplating disclosure. In contrast, non-disclosed parents discussed why they chose not to disclose, the information that they have shared with their child to date, and supports that have been beneficial in their journey as a parent of a child with ASD. Additionally, non-disclosed parents also provided more specific detail for their reasons for and against the possibility of disclosing in the future and on when and how they may possibly disclose in the future.

Overall, the results of this study provide important information about the parental experiences with disclosure of an ASD diagnosis to their affected child. These results will serve as the foundation for subsequent studies that expand upon this new information by allowing the team to explore disclosure from within additional contexts.



Training Parents and Service Providers to Promote Healthy Sexuality and Relationships among Youth with Intellectual Disabilities - Dr. Sandra Reilly, University of Calgary and Dr. Wendi Lokanc-Diluzio, Alberta Health Services.

Background:

Sexuality is a significant aspect of the overall wellness of all individuals, including those with intellectual disabilities. Although all Canadians have a right to comprehensive sexuality education, youth with intellectual disabilities do not always receive it. Youth who do not receive sexuality education that is inclusive to their needs are vulnerable to abuse, sexual exploitation, sexually transmitted infections, HIV, social isolation, and lower quality of life. Youth with intellectual disabilities require “support, acceptance, understanding and compassion from their families [and caregivers] to transition through healthy development” (PHAC, 2013, p. 11). However, it may be difficult for families and caregivers to fill this role, when they themselves need support.

The main purpose of this mixed methods study is to explore the effectiveness of two types of training programs (face-to-face and blended learning) in enhancing the capacity of parents and service providers to promote healthy sexuality and relationships among youth with intellectual disabilities.

Results to Date:

The projects completed thus far have identified additional studies that will help fill knowledge gaps to improve wellbeing for people with ASD and their families, and also potentially inform policy related to community inclusion and participation.

Next steps include supporting active recruitment, data collection, data analysis and knowledge dissemination for the two following studies:

1. Investigating supports and barriers to community inclusion for children with ASD.
2. Continuing the line of inquiry related to processes and perceived outcomes of disclosing an ASD diagnosis to others in the community by now investigating the perspective of persons with ASD, and potentially community members.



Early childhood development





Can the Associative Learning Abilities of Late Talking Toddlers Predict a Persistent Language Impairment? - Dr. Beverly Collisson, University of Calgary and Dr. James S. Magnuson, University of Connecticut.

Background:

Two-year olds who are behind schedule to begin talking (late talkers) are at high risk for a diagnosis of Specific Language Impairment (SLI), one of the most common neurodevelopmental disorders. Little is known about late talkers' abilities in domains outside of language because clinical tests that categorize late talkers center on measuring their vocabulary abilities.

This study focuses on measuring late talkers' associative learning abilities. It builds on the investigators' own line of research demonstrating that three and four year old children with SLI are impaired in simple visual associative learning, an ability critical to linking language to physical objects. This pilot will test whether visual associative learning ability at ages two and two and a half predicts which late talkers will progress to diagnoses of SLI. If so, paired visual associative learning could provide an easily measurable, early biomarker of SLI, helping to identify children most in need of early intervention.

Results to Date:

Research activities completed to date:

- Assessment and testing equipment ordered
- Graphic artist completed sketches of novel and unidentifiable shapes to send to manufacturer for construction
- Manufactured wooden shapes piloted and revised based on toddler and preschooler responses to shapes
- Six toddlers participated in testing protocol – revised with each successive assessment
- Two additional toddlers tested with final shapes and final protocol

Next steps for this project include:

- Continuing to apply final version of test protocol to pilot participants and continuing to gather data from participants
- Analyze data
- Write final report





Coaching Early Educators to Invest in Children's School Readiness - Dr. Wendy Hoglund, University of Alberta.

Background:

One-third of Alberta children demonstrate significant delays in their readiness for school, higher than the Canadian norm of one quarter of children. Rigorous research indicates that early educators' instructional quality and interactions with children are the mechanisms through which the value of attending early education programs transmits to children and enhances their school readiness and self-regulation skills.

The two overarching objectives of this project were to:

1. Develop a research partnership.
2. Prepare a research proposal to conduct a study of coaching models designed to support early childhood educators in their instructional practices as a way to enhance young children's school readiness skills.

Results:

To achieve the project objectives, the research team:

1. Organized a meeting in November 2015 with stakeholders in early childhood education, including academics, service providers, and policy makers. The purpose of this meeting was to discuss the meaning of coaching and mentorship with early childhood educators and to discuss one coaching model in-depth, MyTeachingPartner (MTP);
2. Collected pilot data (as part of another research project) examining how observed characteristics of preschool classroom instructional practices relate to child self-regulation in preschool; and
3. Conducted a background literature review to support a grant application to further develop a research partnership among some participants who attended the stakeholder meeting.

The next step for this program of research is to develop a SSHRC Partnership Development Grant to support a more formalized partnership among some stakeholders who attended the meeting in November 2015.





Examining the Impact of Music Education and Afterschool Programming for Underserved Students: Piloting Tools, Measures, and Processes - Dr. Laurie Shnirer, University of Alberta, Dr. Holly Stack-Cutler, University of Alberta, and Ms. Alyssa Paterson, Edmonton Symphony Orchestra.

Background:

The Youth Orchestra of Northern Alberta Sistema (YONA) program offers free, intensive afterschool music instruction to elementary school students from two schools in a low socioeconomic Edmonton neighbourhood. The Community-University Partnership for the Study of Children, Youth, and Families partnered with the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra, the Edmonton Community Foundation, and University of Alberta researchers to pilot tools and processes to inform long-term monitoring of YONA student, family, and community outcomes.

This project focused on skills students develop in the program and opportunities YONA provides to students, challenges, and future research. The investigators conducted focus groups and interviews with 36 YONA stakeholders, including parents, teachers, volunteers, and staff members, and administered standardized behavioural and academic measures to 32 students, accompanied by parental reports.

Results:

Findings indicated that participating YONA students developed social skills, cognitive and academic skills, self-development skills, emotional awareness, and music and motor skills, and that YONA offers students opportunities to be with healthy role models, to receive musical and cultural exposure, and to grow in terms of their skills, sense of personal pride, and future aspirations. Improvement areas include student behaviour issues, time commitment, program design, stakeholder resources, and unclear identity/roles.

Future research will examine the program's long-term impact on students' social and community lives, academic abilities, skill development, and retention. This collaboration has led to new partnerships, increased community-based training, and informed methods for community partners and researchers to use when tracking YONA student, family, and community outcomes long-term.





Gestational weight gain and infant neurodevelopment at 2 years of age - Dr. Piush Mandhane, University of Alberta and Dr. Ryan Van Lieshout, McMaster University.

Background:

Psychiatric disorders affect 1 in 5 Canadians. As brain development begins at conception, it can be adversely affected by maternal health problems during pregnancy. Pre-pregnancy overweight affects nearly 40% of Canadian women and 55% will gain too much weight during pregnancy. The intrauterine environment associated with excess maternal adiposity may adversely affect offspring neurodevelopment.

Data from 815 children born to women enrolled at the Edmonton site of the Canadian Healthy Infant Longitudinal Development Cohort (CHILD) were used to examine associations between gestational metabolic complications and externalizing and internalizing scores on the Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL-1.5 to 5) at 2 years of age. These were assessed before and after adjustment for confounding variables (socioeconomic status, smoking in pregnancy, postpartum depression and gestational diet quality).

Results:

This study shows that both sub-optimal gestational diet and postpartum depression account for the associations between pre-pregnancy BMI, gestational diabetes mellitus, and offspring behavioral problems. Given the long-term impact of early behavior problems, directing prevention efforts toward interventions targeting gestational diet and/or postpartum depression may inform the prevention of behavior problems early in life.





Increasing School Capacity to Provide Evidence-based Support for Young Children with Behavioural Struggles - Dr. John McLennan, University of Calgary and Dr. Julie Owens, Ohio University.

Background:

The aim of the seed project was to support the development of a partnership between community agencies (based in Calgary and area) with a research group (from the University of Calgary and Ohio University) to explore the possibility of implementing an evidence-based tool in the school setting to help improve school mental health. More specifically, the project aimed to explore whether local school districts would be interested in adopting a newly developed online version of the Daily Report Card (DRC.O) as a tool for teachers to help students struggling with attention and behavioural difficulties.

Results:

A key activity supported by the seed grant was to bring Dr. Julie Owens to Calgary to meet with community partners. Dr. Owens developed the DRC. O with colleagues at the Center for Intervention Research in Schools (CIRS) at Ohio University. Multiple presentations and discussions occurred during her visit with personnel from the Calgary Board of Education, the Calgary Catholic School District, and the Rocky View School District. Additional meetings were held with area mental health professionals and with the Community Outreach of Pediatrics and Psychiatry in Education (COPE) program. Substantial support was identified in moving forward with a pilot study to implement the DRC O in the participating school districts.

Following these initial meetings, the research team continued to meet with community partners to develop a grant proposal to submit to PolicyWise for Children and Families. In addition, the research team continued to meet with school partners to further gain an understanding of differences between school district that should be considered to facilitate successful pilot interventions across school districts. The collaborative team was successful in obtaining a grant from PolicyWise to implement pilots of the DRC.O in 2017.

Mental health





Acute Physical Injury and Subsequent Stress Symptoms - Dr. Sarah Curtis and Dr. Amanda Newton, University of Alberta.

Background:

Physical injury occurs commonly, impacts children and families greatly, and causes stress. Stress can be severe, even after a mild injury, and untreated unhealthy stress in childhood may increase rates of mental and physical illness in child and adult life. Currently, it is not known how often children and families are affected by unhealthy stress after injury and so hospitals do not know how to best meet the needs of children and families in this regard. Currently, after treatment in a hospital emergency department (ED) for physical injuries, families go home without being prepared for the possibility of stress symptom development in the injured child and parent, and without knowledge of what to do if this should happen.

This project will include all recently injured children (and parents) seeking care in the Stollery Children's ED over a six-month period. In addition to routine care for physical injuries in the ED, they will undergo a brief screening questionnaire to determine how many children and parents are identified as being at high risk for later stress symptom development. One month after discharge home into the community, children and parents will be asked to fill out a brief stress symptom questionnaire to see if they have experienced symptoms of ongoing post-trauma psychological distress. This information will help investigators to address gaps in knowledge and service delivery with policy-makers and health care decision-makers so that trauma-related care for children can improve.

Results to Date:

The research team has screened 825 individuals for participation in the study and has enrolled 249 children and 249 caregivers. Data cleaning and analysis have been completed. A presentation was given at the Trauma Association of Canada conference.

Next steps include writing the final report, as well as writing and submitting for publication.





Background:

Stress, depression, and anxiety affect 15-25% of women during the perinatal period (e.g., conception to 1 year postpartum). However, less than 20% of health care providers assess and treat mental health problems during pregnancy. Compounding this, less than 20% of pregnant and postpartum women actively seek help for mental health; among those who do seek help, the lack of system integration and existing barriers prevent 90% of women from obtaining needed treatment. The impacts of this are wide and long-term. However, early intervention can improve maternal mental health in pregnancy/postpartum and should improve these outcomes.

Using a randomized controlled trial and interviews, the objective of this research was to evaluate the acceptability, clinical- and cost-effectiveness of a sustainable, innovative, integrated process of online psychosocial assessment, referral, and cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT) for pregnant women. Members of the research team pilot tested a CBT program comprising three workbook-based modules and telephone-based coach support. Pregnant women (n=8) completed CBT modules and followed-up weekly with prearranged meetings with their trained telephone coach.

Results to Date:

The overall findings revealed that women found the program acceptable with recommendations that CBT modules be offered: (1) earlier in pregnancy; (2) in an online format; and (3) as shorter modules while retaining the content.

In response, the research team plans to recruit pregnant women prior to 37 weeks gestation and evaluate an online CBT program comprising six 30-minute modules. Given the additional healthcare cost that is incurred through telephone-based coaching and evidence that online CBT is equally efficacious with/without coaching in reducing depression, this trial will evaluate the effectiveness of online CBT without telephone coaching.

This feasible, sustainable, and accessible intervention can be widely implemented in primary care to improve maternal prenatal mental health that will impact family well-being, parenting, and child mental health and development.





Relationship between Lifestyle Behaviours, Social Determinants of Health, and Mental Health in Canadian Immigrants Across the Life Course - Dr. Bukola Salami and Dr. Kathleen Hegadoren

Background:

This study examined the relationship between self-perceived mental health and reported diagnosis of mood disorders with age, gender, migration status, time since migration, as well as social determinants of health and the perspectives of immigrant service providers on mental health.

Results:

Analyses of data from 12,160 individuals in the Canadian Health Measures Survey indicate that increased income, older age, employment, shorter duration of residence in Canada, and a solid sense of community belonging were associated with better self-perceived mental health. Self-reported diagnosis of mood disorders was positively associated with being middle age, female, and unemployed, and with having a lower income and weak sense of community belonging. Interviews and focus groups with 53 immigrant service providers identified factors that contribute to mental health and factors that contribute to immigrants' access to mental health services. Factors associated with mental health by interview and focus group participants include unemployment, underemployment, and poverty; immigration status; community belongings; family dynamics and conflict; gender; discrimination and racism; time since migration and age at immigration; culture shock; and parental stress.

Strategies to improve the mental health of immigrants include community-based mental health delivery, mental health awareness programs, cultural competence in mental health and interpretation services, addressing the issue of unemployment and underemployment, building capacity of healthcare providers, and removing systematic barriers. In conclusion, there is a need for funding and programs to address the mental health service needs of immigrants across the duration of their residence in Canada while attending to the diverse social determinants of health.





Seeking Mental Health Services for Children and Adolescents - Dr. Kristin von Ranson and Dr. Kathleen Hegadoren, University of Alberta.

Background:

This pilot study systematically examined knowledge and perceptions of parents and caregivers (“parents”) about the process of decision-making about mental health treatment for their child, and about their preferences, such as about the importance of research evidence in choosing a psychotherapy approach. 106 parents seeking mental health services for a child or adolescent (“youth”) through Alberta Health Service’s Access Mental Health completed a 10- to 15-minute structured phone survey. In addition, in a focus group, four Access Mental Health child/adolescent clinicians discussed their perceptions of the knowledge, needs, and desires of these clients regarding mental health decision-making.

Results:

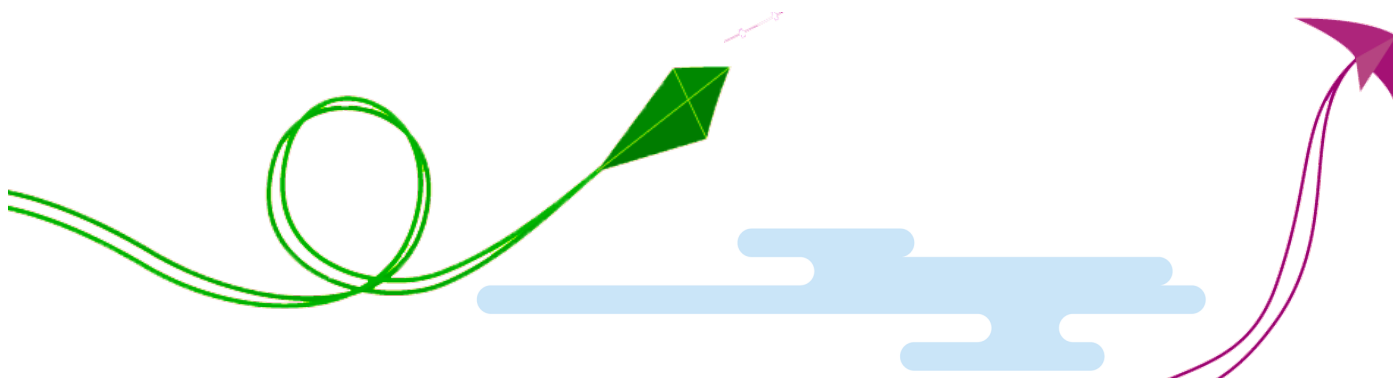
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Parent/Caregiver capacity





Adding Circle of Security © to Enhance Parenting Resources in Alberta - Dr. Gwendolyn Rempel, Athabasca University.

Background:

The aim of this seed grant was to establish an interdisciplinary team of academic and non-academic researchers, collaborators, and knowledge users to conceptualize a fundable intervention study to test the effectiveness of a relationship-based parenting program with parents of typically developing young children (urban and rural) and young children with congenital heart disease (CHD).

A further contribution of this proposed research was to test the waters as to the readiness of service providers and policy makers in Alberta to engage in a paradigm shift from traditional parenting training programs to attachment/ relationship based parenting intervention.

Investigators have run six COS groups with parents of typically developing children in collaboration with Paintearth Community Adult Learning Council and McMan Youth, Family and Community Services Association in rural settings; and Sleephaven Sleep Consultation and Edmonton Police Service Wives Association in an urban setting. In the context of these groups, the research team has piloted quantitative and qualitative measures. The research team has conducted a construct validity study with the most promising tool, the Parent Reflective Functioning Questionnaire – 18 questions (PFRQ-18).

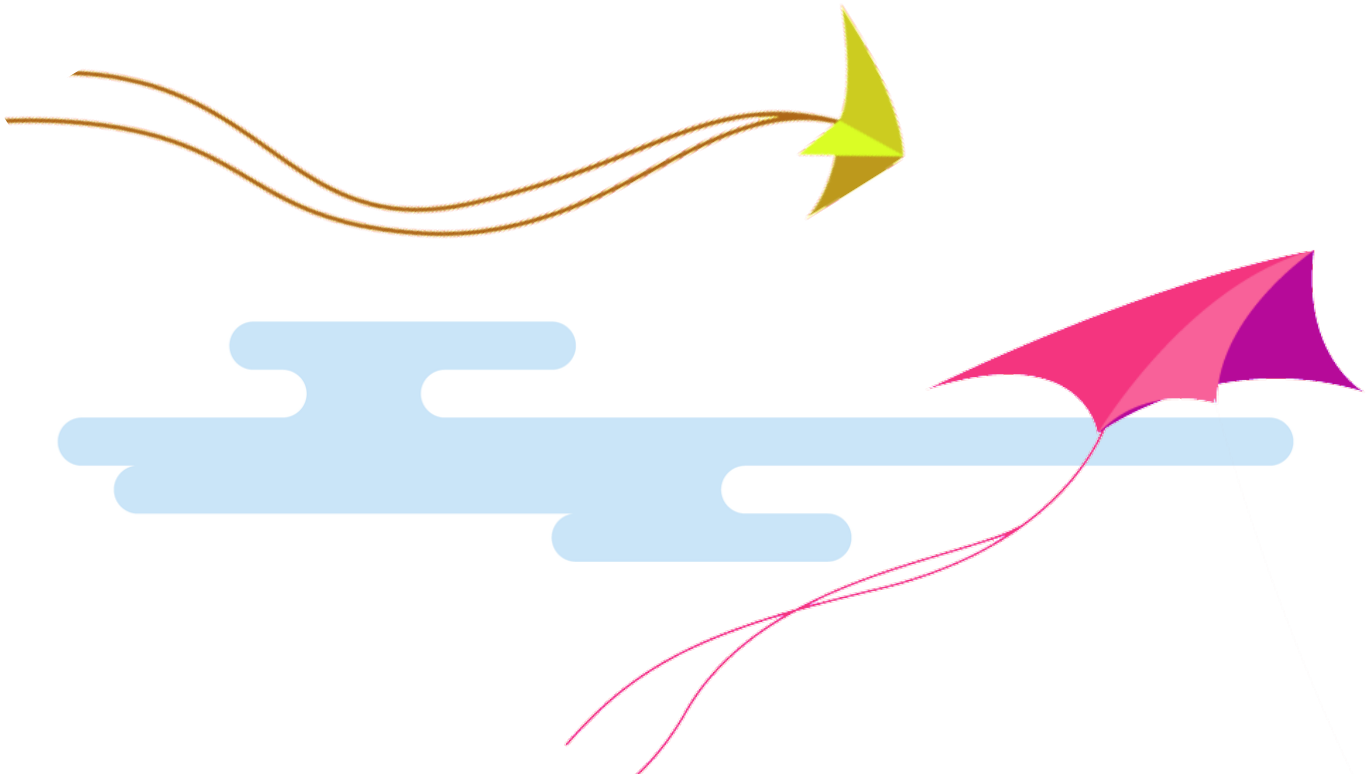
Results:

Forming an engaged, interdisciplinary Circle of Security (COS) Evaluation team that now meets weekly, with each member meaningfully contributing, is the most significant outcome of this seed grant.

Additionally, through intensive literature review by graduate students and wide consultation, investigators have identified Parent-child Mutuality and Parent Reflective Functioning as primary outcomes for evaluation research of the 8-week COS parenting intervention.

Publication of the results will strengthen the emerging research protocol and will contribute significantly to the field. Investigators have also contributed to the development of intervention fidelity practices.

The next steps are to publish the literature review of parent reflective functioning, the PFRQ-18 construct validity study, the pilot data, and the research protocol. The investigators are well situated for a successful operating grant to test COS through a randomized controlled trial in the context of mixed methods research.



Child Welfare Process and Outcomes for Children of Parents with Cognitive Impairment [II] - Dr. David McConnell, University of Alberta.

Background:

The number of children referred for protective services who have a parent with cognitive impairment (CI) is increasing. There is however scant data on the child maltreatment investigation process and outcomes for children of parents with CI in Canada.

Utilizing data from the third Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect (CIS_2008), this study investigated prevalence and outcomes for children of caregivers with cognitive impairments subject to child maltreatment investigations.

Results:

The findings of this study suggest that systemic bias/discrimination against parents with CI partially explains why so many parents with CI have their children taken from them. Further, the findings raise questions about the appropriateness or adequacy of prevention-focused supports and services: It appears that parents with CI may not be receiving the kinds of supports and services, including material assistance and practical support, shown to reduce maltreatment risk and improve children's life chances.

The results of this study informed the development of a successful application for a SSHRC Partnership Development grant (partnering with the community sector in Alberta and the government sector in Quebec).



FAMILY: Family Access to Municipal Infrastructure for Leisure: Young Children - Dr. Candace Nykiforuk, University of Alberta.

Background:

Physical activity (PA) engagement in early childhood is associated with long-term physical, developmental, and mental health. Through structured and unstructured active play, young children can engage in a variety of activities (e.g., games and sports) and meet recommended PA levels for their optimal growth and development. In order to tackle increasing physical inactivity and overweight/obesity among young children, one approach is to promote active use of indoor recreation facilities and outdoor spaces. There is a lack of studies on community-level factors affecting young children's PA participation. However, it is well-known that ready access to community play spaces (e.g., playgrounds) have a critical role in providing PA opportunities and increasing PA levels among young children.

It is necessary to understand how parents perceive community play spaces because they make the decisions about when and how their preschool children use those spaces. Working in partnership with Strathcona County (SC) Recreation, Parks and Culture (RPC), the purpose of this research project is to identify facilitators or barriers that parents of young children aged 3-5 years face when using (or trying to use) public indoor recreation facilities and outdoor spaces in this municipality. This information is valuable to SC RPC to help inform policy and community programming.

Results:

No results to date.





Background:

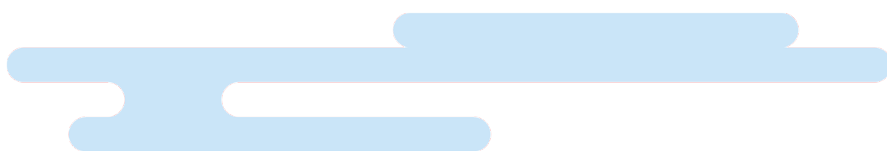
Language policy research puts little emphasis on parental agency. The parents of English as Additional Language (EAL) learners are often excluded from school decision-making processes whereas White middle-class parents are more strategic in intervening in their children's schools. This study explored how immigrant parents advocated for higher quality and more equitable EAL policies and practices in Alberta. Through qualitative interviews with 35 immigrant parents and community group members as well as two focus groups with parents and policy makers, this study demonstrates how immigrant parents undertook various collaborative as well as individualized strategies to influence EAL policies as well as assert their presence in front of ministries and other stakeholders.

Results:

Participants made the following recommendations for policy:

1. Hire more EAL trained teachers and culturally competent teachers.
2. Utilize funds for EAL more effectively at the district level.
3. Value students' multilingual abilities and more diversity in the school system at the school level.
4. Parents and community members need to be part of the policy-making process.
5. Increase funding for EAL students and remove the funding cap.
6. Develop multicultural curriculum.
7. Allow more time for EAL high school students' graduation at the provincial level.

Results of this research will provide directions for EAL policies, programs and services, as well as new insights into the effectiveness of advocacy and capacity building of EAL parents.





Transition from Pediatric to Adult Care Services: The Experiences of Family Caregivers of Young Adult Survivors of Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)

Background:

Traumatic brain injury (TBI) is one of the leading causes of death and disability throughout the world. This study examined the experiences and challenges of family caregivers of young adults with TBI who have recently transitioned from services for children and adolescents to adult supports and services. The parents of 14 young adult survivors of TBI who recently transitioned to adult services were interviewed, based on a descriptive phenomenological approach.

Results:

Results identify themes of:

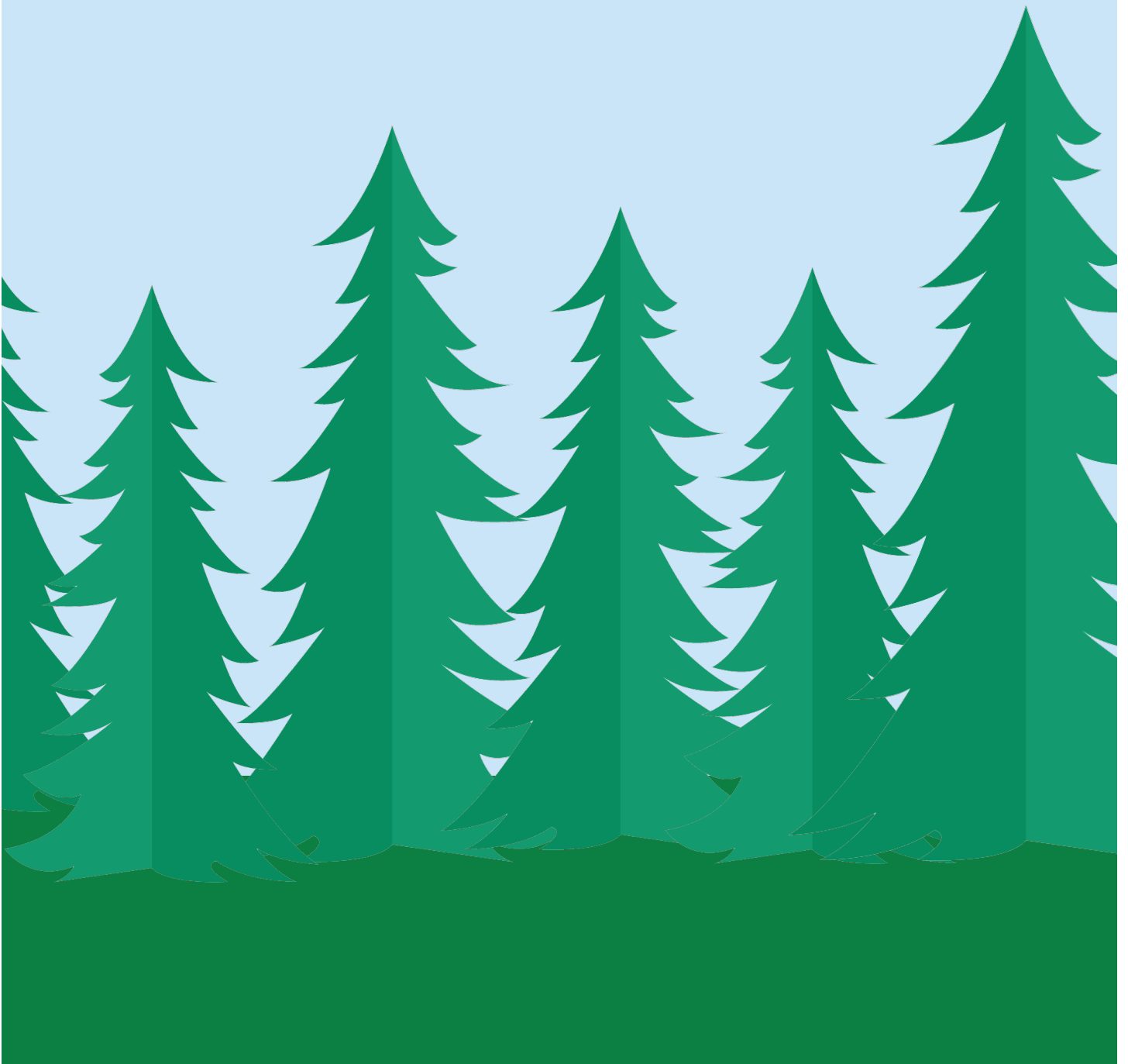
1. Physical, cognitive, and personality changes that impact transition to adult care services.
2. The transition phase is uncertain, and overwhelming.
3. Parents taking responsibility for their child's care upon themselves due to frustration over limited or poor response from service providers.

Findings convey that caregiving parents are profoundly impacted by their child's TBI, which is pervasive and lingering in parents' lives. Implications for practice and policy are that

1. Transition should constitute a life course as recovery is an ongoing process.
2. Transition planning must be initiated as early as possible and completed with the parent.
3. Transition planning must be comprehensive including social, educational and vocational areas.
4. A system or network of service providers must be available to provide coordination, information and follow-up.



Research involving Indigenous communities





A Narrative Inquiry alongside Urban Indigenous Children and Families into their Familial and Early School Curriculum Making Experiences - Ms. Cindy Swanson supervised by Dr. Jean Clandinin and Dr. Janice Huber, University of Alberta.

Background:

The proposed inquiry attends to the experiences of three young children and families of Indigenous ancestry as they begin, and continue, to compose their lives in familial and school curriculum-making worlds. There are three research purposes:

1. Understand the early experiences of children and families of Indigenous ancestry as they compose familial curriculum;
2. Attend to personal, social, historical, cultural, and institutional narratives shaping the lives of the children and families within the dominant narratives of school curriculum making; and,
3. Understand the tensions experienced by the children and families as they move between familial curriculum-making worlds into school curriculum-making worlds.

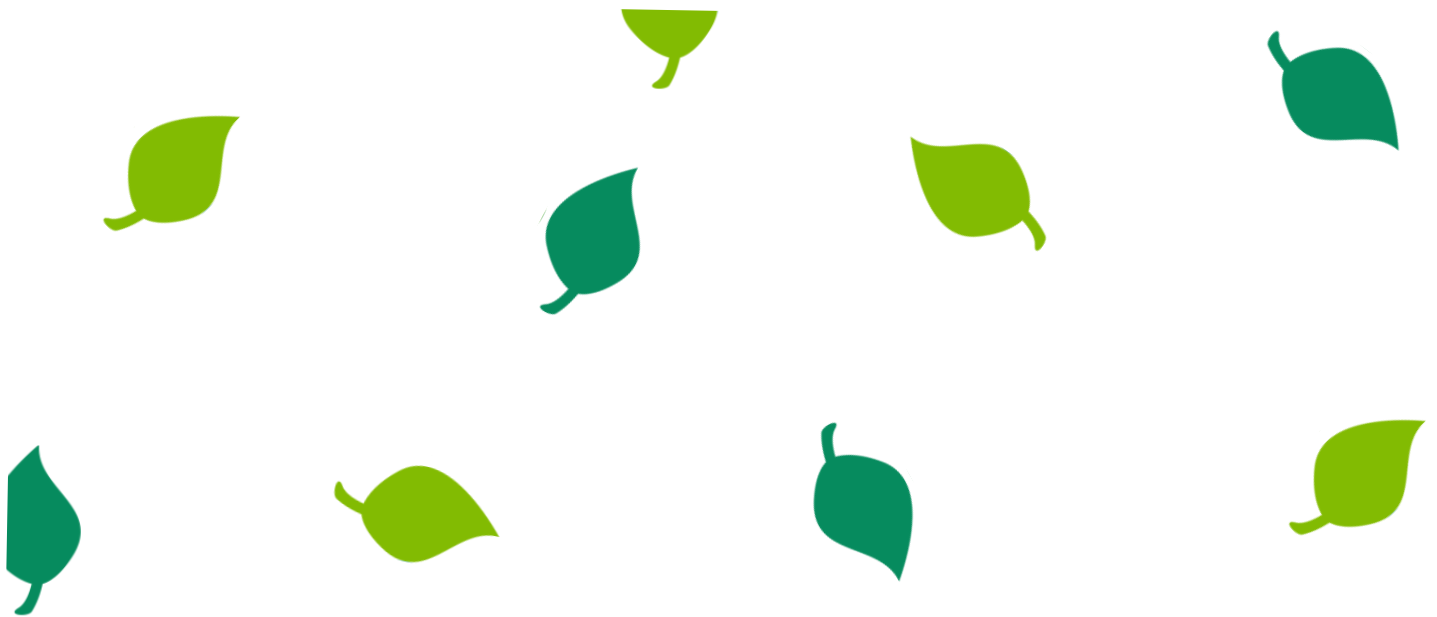
Results to Date:

Since this Doctoral Award began, the investigator has been deeply engaged in research conversations with three children and their families as they continue to compose their lives in familial and school curriculum making experiences while attending to three research purposes. The investigator has carefully negotiated entry to come alongside the children and their families while attending to the central question that connects all three research purposes, which asks “What are the experiences of young Indigenous children and their families as they first enter urban school landscapes?”

Next steps include:

- Continued data collection and research conversations
- Negotiation and completion of Narrative Accounts with research participants
- Submission of Draft Dissertation to committee
- Doctoral/Dissertation requirements met and approved
- Sharing research findings both locally and nationally
- Seeking opportunities to disseminate research findings locally, nationally, and internationally, as well as within Indigenous communities





Assessing the Feasibility of an Aboriginal Community-led Health Centre in Lethbridge - Dr. Cheryl Currie, University of Lethbridge.

Background:

In Lethbridge, Alberta there is a community-identified need for culturally relevant treatment and prevention services, and improved continuity of care. To address these problems in other cities, a promising practice has been the introduction of a full-service Aboriginal health access centre. These Aboriginal community-led centres provide traditional healing, primary care, cultural programs, health promotion programs, community development initiatives, and social support services. The goal of this project is to assess the feasibility of an Aboriginal Health Centre in Lethbridge by:

1. conducting a needs assessment,
2. meeting with teams who lead Aboriginal health centres in other cities and learning from them,
3. conducting a gap analysis to determine the technical requirements needed on a team to move forward, and
4. engaging the community as the team moves through these steps as well as at the end of the project to share both the process and the outcomes of this work.

Results to Date:

The research team has completed all data collection for the project, including an environmental scan of the urban-based healthcare landscape for Indigenous peoples in southern Alberta, and the exploration of models developed to address Indigenous health in other urban jurisdictions. Data were collected via document and website review, and in-depth interviews with individuals who initiated, organized and/or currently worked at these centres. In total, 22 individuals were interviewed including Indigenous physicians, nurses, healers, Elders, and health care managers through phone interviews, in-person visits, and video conferencing.

In mid-2016, the investigator presented the findings at the National Indigenous Health Conference in Toronto with much excitement and follow up from the audience. Next steps include continuing the knowledge translation work both locally in southern Alberta and nationally.



Experiences of Urban Aboriginal Families as They Ready Their Children For, and During, Kindergarten - Dr. Janice Huber, University of Alberta.

Background:

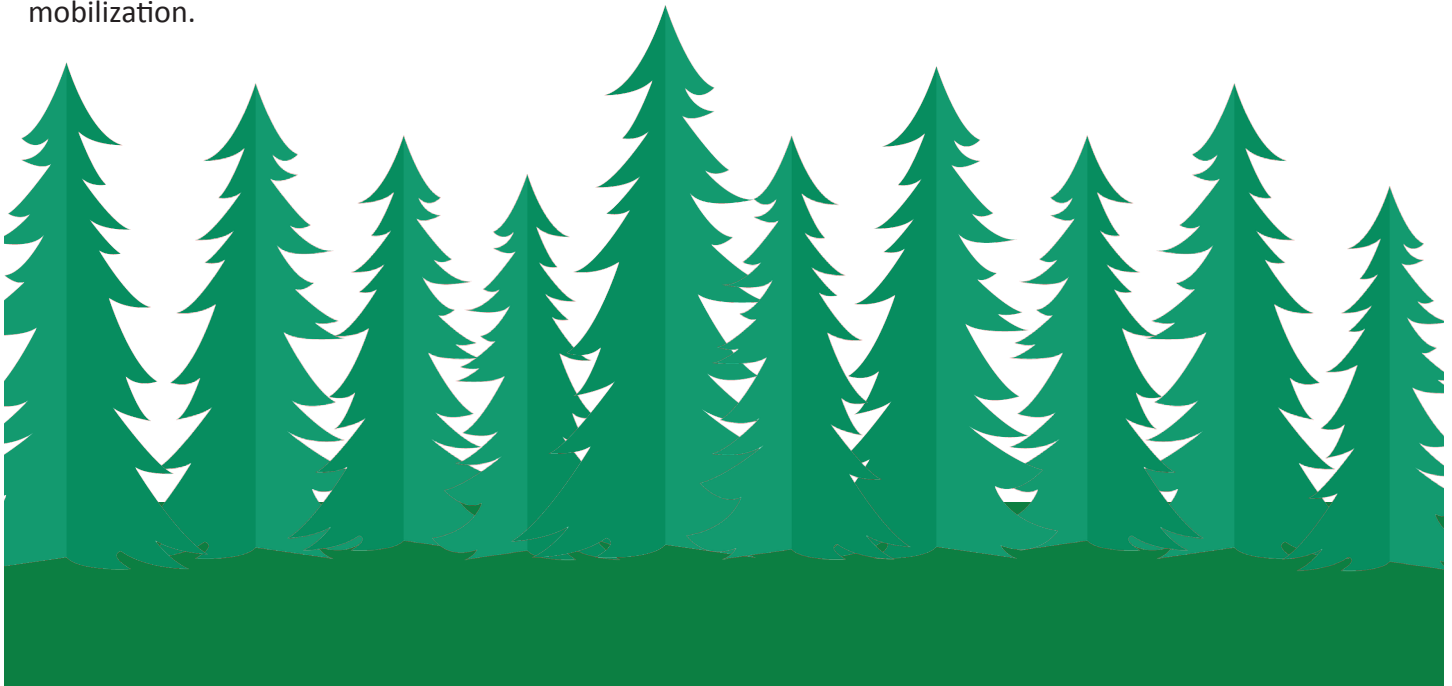
This project's research questions of the experiences of Aboriginal families as they ready their children for entry into, and success in, Kindergarten grow out of an earlier study of early school leaving. Previous results indicated that some Indigenous youth began to leave or disengage from school during their early years of schooling. Influences of early schooling experiences in the lives of Aboriginal children and youth, and their families, are concerning given the rapid growth of the Canadian Aboriginal population. Although there is research on the experiences of teachers who are struggling with ways an increased focus on academic achievement is reshaping Kindergarten classrooms, little is known about the experiences of urban Aboriginal families as they interact with school readiness policies and practices. Attending to the experiences of urban Aboriginal families will improve educational policies and practices for Aboriginal children.

Results to Date:

To date, the team's research accomplishments include:

1. Protocol with two Elders who are guiding the team during their inquiry;
2. Engagement of an experienced doctoral student as a member of the research team;
3. Engagement of eight parent (family) participants
4. One of the Elders has agreed to share her experiences as a mother, grandmother, and Kindergarten teacher and to co-author with the research team.

Next steps include continuing to have conversations with each of the eight parent (family) participants as well as with the Elder who has agreed to share her experiences. From these conversations, a narrative account for each participant will be developed. Writing and negotiating the narrative accounts will follow, including looking across the narrative accounts for resonant threads, which will be shared with the broader research team members, including the Elders, as the team seeks their insights in relation with knowledge mobilization.





Maskwacis Youth Perceptions of Strength and Resilience - Dr. Lola Baydala, University of Alberta.

Background:

There are more than 600 First Nations communities in Canada, with unique and thriving cultures, traditions, ways of life, and identities. However, narratives regarding the health, economic, and social disparities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people are widespread, and contribute to negative perceptions about Indigenous communities and cultures. In the face of negative media attention, Maskwacis community members and Elders identified the importance of reframing perceptions of the Maskwacis community. As such, the aim of this project was for youth in Maskwacis to explore and promote their community strengths through creative photography.

Two research questions were addressed:

1. How do youth in Maskwacis view their community strengths and resilience? and
2. To what extent can photographs be used as a tool for reframing perceptions of an Indigenous community?

Results to Date:

Two Elders and eleven youth were engaged in this community-based participatory research project. Two experienced Indigenous photographers separately provided training to youth participants, and two community Elders provided mentorship and guidance for youth to capture photographs with the intent of reframing Maskwacis as a strong and vibrant community that its members could take pride in. Next, youth selected 40 photos that showcased the community's strengths and resilience, and generated descriptions for each of these photos. These photos were featured in a total of six photo exhibits in Edmonton, Wetaskiwin, and Maskwacis, and eight news articles (e.g., in the Edmonton Journal, Wetaskiwin Times) were written about the project. In addition, feedback surveys were distributed to 392 exhibit attendees.





Moving the Mountain: Piloting a Learning Model for Youth with High-Risk Behaviour - Dr. Jacqueline Pei, University of Alberta, Catherine Broomfield, iHuman Youth Society.

Background:

The main purpose of this research project was to study an alternative education initiative called Moving the Mountain (MTM). Moving the Mountain is an integrated, holistic, and individualized approach to learning that focuses on meeting the education needs of Aboriginal youth put at risk with engagement and motivation through an innovative harm reduction and empowerment framework. It was hypothesized that program participants would experience positive improvements in feelings of empowerment, and academic functioning over the course of a year in the program.

In order to address these questions, several sources of program data were consulted: program attendance, group projects, the Beerbox Game (youth directed goal setting tool), diary entries from program facilitators, a report by the program facilitator, and writing samples from participants.

Results:

Results from this research project demonstrated that MTM fostered improvements in the youths' senses of empowerment and success, impacted youths' academic abilities and motivation to learn, and increased their well-being. Core overarching themes identified were hope for the future, growth of positive identity, increased confidence, improved reading skills, youth-led learning, change of focus away from drug use, and lastly, increasing safety. The three research questions proposed highlighted some important areas of evaluation for MTM and strategies for working with vulnerable youth that are interrelated. This project highlighted that a holistic, embedded approach is essential to better understand the progression of vulnerable youth toward positive futures.





► **Popular Theatre as a Primary Prevention Approach for Youth Suicide Among Aboriginal Communities: Evaluation - Dr. Lynden (Lindsay) Crowshoe, University of Calgary, Dr. Rita Henderson, University of Calgary, Dr. Stephanie Montesanti, University of Alberta, and Dr. Wilfreda Thurston, University of Calgary.**

Background:

A review of the available literature shows that First Nations youth suicide is occurring at an alarming rate across Canada. A relationship exists between the youth suicide rate and the degree of control that Aboriginal communities have over their own lives. Recent traumatic events like the June 2013 Southern Alberta floods that devastatingly impacted Aboriginal populations in the city of Calgary and First Nations reserves, has exacerbated already fragmented social and cultural systems in Aboriginal communities. Popular Theatre (PT) is a particularly relevant though understudied suicide prevention strategy among this population, as it offers a means of promoting personal health, the healing of ruptured or forging of new community ties, and self-advocacy skills through a collaborative, arts-based approach to prevention. It also poses strengths-based and transformative community-driven solutions adaptable to diverse Aboriginal realities. The objectives of this project is to pilot-test and evaluate the process and outcomes of a Popular Theatre (PT) intervention aimed at addressing Aboriginal youth suicide risks among a group of Aboriginal youth in the city of Calgary.

Results:

No results to date.



Background:

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission has clearly stated that since the 1880s Aboriginal people have been the victims of systematic, cultural genocide through practises of assimilation, discrimination, dispossession and appropriation. As a result, traditional forms of inter-generational knowledge transmission were disrupted. This project is designed in response to Opokaa'sin's, and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's, expressed need for practical research findings on producing effective, culturally appropriate programming and community capacity building. This project will develop a model to aid Aboriginal communities in addressing these gaps, and will promote resiliency and well-being, and reduce vulnerability. This project is designed to provide Opokaa'sin Early Intervention Society with an interactive, child-friendly database of Blackfoot stories, language and tradition for use in their educational and cultural programming for children and youth between 6 and 17 years old. This will be achieved through a series of storytelling sessions between Blackfoot young people and Elders. Opokaa'sin requires data that informs their educational programming, and this project will provide them with applicable data. Through qualitative methods, this project will document the experience of Blackfoot young people and Elders as they share stories about culture and construct the database. This will in turn provide data necessary to assess the potential of participant driven and child-centered research, as well as the use of digital technologies, in projects designed to develop resilience in vulnerable communities. In collaboration with Opokaa'sin staff and FNMI high school students, the research team will analyze the impact of inter-generational knowledge transmission activities, such as storytelling, in capacity building projects and programming.

Results:

No results to date.





Searching for Pathways to Implement the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Recommendations for Social Work - Dr. Peter Choate, Mount Royal University and Dr. Bruce MacLaurin, University of Calgary.

Background:

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) has issued a call to action that includes the social work profession, including educators, particularly in the child protection field. This call challenges new ways of understanding the history of public policies aimed at assimilating Aboriginal Peoples and the ways in which those policies created a “cultural genocide.” This project is a first step in that direction aiming to understand how both social work students and educators understand the term “cultural genocide” and what it means for practice with Aboriginal children, families and children. This project seeks to understand how the TRC language is being interpreted and the implications for learning. A key question is how can this language be used constructively in achieving the educational goals set out by the TRC and avoid the creation of paternalistic or divisive responses.

When disseminated, the research will assist educators in working with social work students to more effectively understand the inter-generational trauma from Canada’s assimilation programs with Aboriginal peoples. This effort would be focused directly on how that influences engagement, assessment, case planning and intervention with children and families. This will be particularly meaningful in systems with a significant over-representation of Aboriginal peoples: child protection, mental health, health services, community services and correctional and justice programming. The research will create a baseline of data from which to go further. At the same time, this is a pilot study that is intended to lead to a broader view of how social work education might shift social work education and the impact of social work practice on Aboriginal people, children, families and communities.

Results:

No results to date.





Sustaining the Life Skills Journey Program for Metis Children & Youth - Dr. Fay Fletcher, University of Alberta.

Background:

The Métis Settlements Life Skills Journey (MSLSJ) Train the Trainer program is one piece of the research team's work on individual and community capacities for program sustainability. In order to capture the breadth of potential benefits of Train the Trainer, the data on the impacts of Train the Trainer (on individual facilitators) will be analyzed within a broader picture of individual and community change. Train the Trainer is one of several factors impacting service/program sustainability by communities. Locally based trainers are not only critical to program delivery, but also provide skill development and employment for many youth who choose to be MSLSJ facilitators. Analyzing and developing a mechanism for continued training in the community is the major objective in this grant.

Results:

The team's most significant achievement to date was the implementation of a pilot Métis Settlements Life Skills Journey - Train the Trainer in May-June 2016, followed by Facilitator Training (applying the skills from Train the Trainer) in June 2016. In turn, these trained Settlement-based youth led a summer program with children aged 7-14. Buffalo Lake Métis Settlement (BLMS) participated in Train the Trainer, while Buffalo Lake, Fishing Lake, and Elizabeth Métis Settlements participated in Facilitator Training. The program expanded and extended training beyond the spring/summer in order to maintain relationships and build capabilities throughout the year by offering experienced facilitators opportunities to participate in the Indigenous Community Engagement program at the Faculty of Extension, University of Alberta.





The Participation of Indigenous Populations in Health Services Planning and Development - Dr. Wilfreda Thurston and Dr. Stephanie Montesanti, University of Calgary.

Background:

This research was supported by PolicyWise for Children & Families and The Calgary Foundation. The seed funding from PolicyWise was used to support research on the engagement of Siksika First Nation in emergency and disaster planning in the aftermath of the 2013 Alberta flood. A partnership project was agreed upon that would lead to the development of guidelines for future culturally safe disaster planning and emergency response in Siksika Nation.

Results:

The university researchers developed a partnership agreement with the Siksika Community Wellness Committee (SCWC) to document their nation-led community wellness response. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)/partnership agreement between the University of Calgary and the SCWC was approved in June 2014. This was communicated to Chief and Council by the Tribal Manager and the Rebuild Committee Coordinator as the process unfolded. The research strongly affirmed OCAP™ principles, in particular by first engaging community leadership in a university-community partnership, ensuring that community members played key roles in the design and implementation of the research, and ensuring that appropriate Nation specific communication strategies were used so that Chief and Council were informed and gave their approval.

The investigators attended several SCWC meetings and reported on the progress of the study. The investigators also lead a scoping review of academic and non-academic sources to identify culturally appropriate disaster and/or emergency response plans or frameworks. Key informant interviews were conducted with representatives from the SCWC, service providers from Siksika First Nation, and one person from Alberta Health.





Utilization-focused Evaluation of a First Nation school's Nutrition Policy and Activities - Dr. Noreen Willows, University of Alberta.

Background:

The recent development of a school nutrition policy at Kipohtakaw Education Centre (KEC) in Alexander First Nation provides two important opportunities:

1. To review the policy and the accompanying activities to support healthy eating for congruency with the health goals of the community and with the Alberta Government's Alberta Nutrition Guidelines for Children and Youth.
2. To evaluate the policy and its implementation for relevance to, and acceptability by school staff, students, and families.

Findings will provide evidence-based strategies to inform best practices for the development of effective policies to improve healthy eating in other First Nations schools. KEC is an Alberta Project Promoting active Living and healthy Eating (APPLE) School. Learnings can help to define more effective ways to create, support and sustain healthy First Nations, Metis and Inuit APPLE School communities. The synthesis of findings from this research will be used to develop coordinated nutrition policy and programs at KEC that are amenable to school staff, students and parents, and that include nutrition education, a school environment that models healthy food choices, and community partnerships.

Results to Date:

Activities to date include:

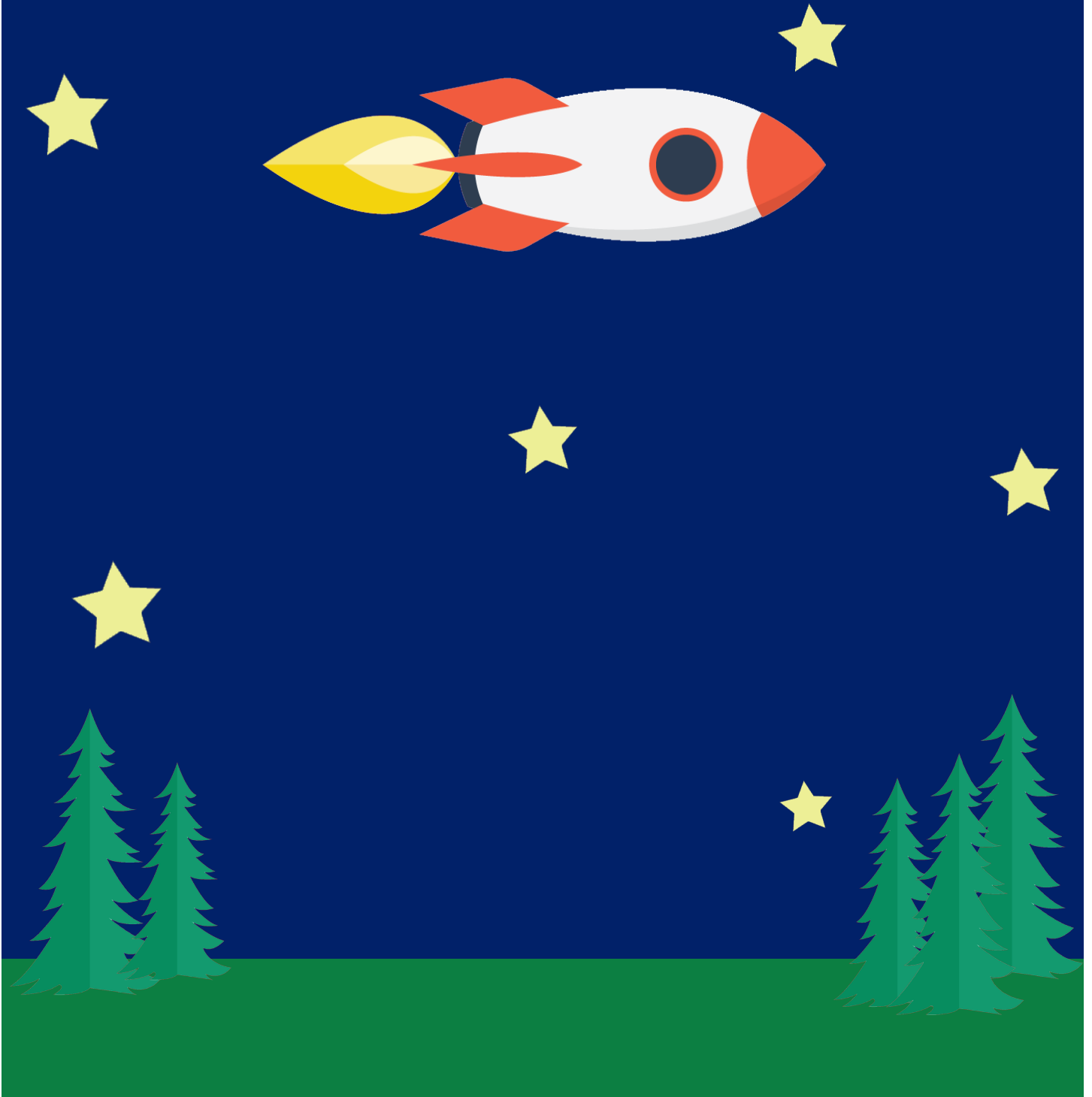
- Surveys completed by school staff, parents, and students
- Interviews conducted with staff, parents, and students
- Preliminary participant observation of the school nutrition environment initiated
- Follow-up surveys about the school nutrition policy completed by staff
- Student nutrition survey administered to students

Next steps include:

- Additional school nutrition environment observations and interviews with students about their perceptions of the school nutrition policy at KEC
- Parent and student interviews analyzed
- Collaborative interpretation of data with community members
- Writing research manuscripts with community members



Tracking long-term outcomes





Participant, Legal and Privacy Issues Related to Longitudinal Research Projects - Dr. Kiran Manhas, University of Calgary.

Background:

This work will examine parental experience of participation in the All Our Babies cohort study to clarify their perceptions of the risks, benefits, costs and burdens associated with participation in a longitudinal birth cohort. Dr. Manhas will also be invited to contribute to the development of SAGE at PolicyWise, specifically regarding legal and privacy issues.

This program of study is closely linked to the “Views and Preferences of Alberta Birth Cohort Parent Participants on the Secondary Use of Research Data” grant currently ongoing with Dr. Tough and Dr. Manhas, described elsewhere in this report.

Results to Date:

Data collection was completed on all phases of the mixed-methods study exploring parent perspectives on data sharing. Data analysis was completed on the qualitative study (2 journal articles published), cognitive interviewing (1 poster presentation), and quantitative survey (1 manuscript under review; 1 manuscript in preparation with first draft with co-authors). Data collection is complete for the distinct, but related, research project that was added to this grant: an online survey of health researchers in Alberta on their practice and perspectives on secondary data use. Data analysis is underway, and the first manuscript for journal submission is being prepared. Eight distinct research proposals for research grant competitions have been completed; three have been successful.

The investigator has been working with the SAGE operations team in their work with Calgary Thrives and other future community service, not-for-profit organizations. The focus of this work has been the development of a discussion paper of the legal and ethical requirements around data sharing, particularly around applicable privacy legislation. The investigator has also been involved in presenting at lunch and learns to promote SAGE and the opportunities therein.

Next steps involve:

- Continued developing of manuscripts for journal submission.
- Presenting findings at at least one international conference.
- Producing a short report for stakeholders.
- Developing specific project proposals for ethics review for two sub-projects considering the ethics of precision health.
- Preparing for three upcoming grant or fellowship competitions.





Views and Preferences of Alberta Birth Cohort Parent Participants on Secondary Use of Research Data - Dr. Suzanne Tough and Dr. Kiran Manhas, University of Calgary.

Background:

In Alberta, a partnership involving four research institutions is preparing to implement a child-focused research data repository (RDR), as part of PolicyWise' SAGE initiative, which will enable secondary use of research data. Two Alberta longitudinal, birth cohort studies, All Our Babies (AOB) and Alberta Pregnancy Outcomes & Nutrition (APrON), have collected questionnaire data and biological samples since 2008 for over 500 mother-baby pairs (and 1100 fathers) followed from early pregnancy. Plans are underway to include all non-biological data from these cohorts in the RDR.

This study aims to describe the views and preferences of AOB and APrON parent participants as they relate to the transfer of their own and their child's individual-level, non-biological data to a structured RDR and to subsequent secondary uses. The specific research objectives are:

1. To understand the factors that influence cohort parent participant willingness to include data in a secondary RDR.
2. To describe cohort parent participant views around the risks and benefits of RDR establishment and participation.
3. To describe preferences of cohort parent participants on RDR governance strategies.

Results to Date:

38 parents participated in the qualitative description study in component one of this research project. Eight parents participated in the cognitive interviews. And, 346 parents completed the quantitative online survey. For the researchers' perspective study, six researchers participated in the cognitive interviews and 872 researchers participated in the online survey.

The work that remains to be completed includes:

- Preparing manuscripts on the data analysis of the quantitative online survey of parent perspectives, especially on (a) consent preferences; (b) implications of using children's data long-term; and (c) privacy/governance
- Completing the researchers' perspective study data analysis
- KT/dissemination



Trauma-focused research





A Mixed Method Study to Examine the Knowledge, Confidence and Capacity of Service Providers to Identify and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse Imagery Online (CSAIO) - Dr. Gina Dimitropoulos, University of Calgary.

Background:

With technological advances and the explosion of the Internet, the creation and distribution of child sexual abuse images has increased exponentially. Child sexual abuse images online (CSAIO) are nearly impossible to destroy, and the increasing use of technology by perpetrators has aided in the continuous, lifelong abuse of victims. Frontline service providers are often the first to discover or receive disclosures of CSAIO by children and youth, but are not supplied with adequate information and training for this task.

This study looks to explore the current level of knowledge, confidence, and capacity of frontline service providers in recognizing and responding to CSAIO. Using a mixed-methods design and an integrated knowledge translation protocol, the research team will distribute an online questionnaire across Southern Alberta, targeting five practice fields:

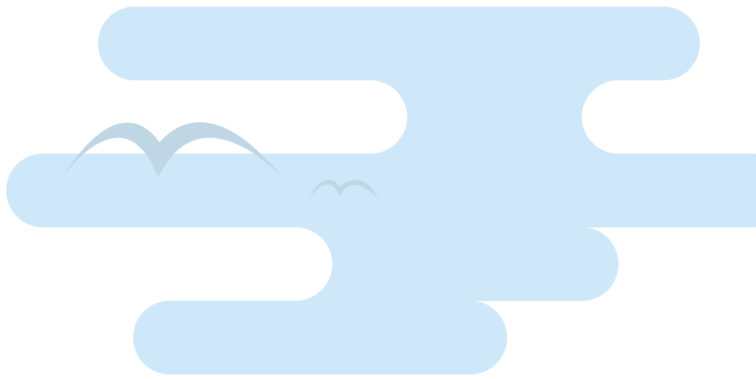
1. Law enforcement.
2. Child welfare.
3. Specialized mental health services.
4. Specialized child abuse services.
5. School support staff.

Following the survey, investigators will host focus groups to discuss the findings and develop recommendations and outcomes based on the survey and focus group results. This process will be facilitated by an interdisciplinary research team that brings together new and experienced researchers (University of Calgary), community partners (Sheldon Kennedy Child Advocacy Centre), and decision-makers, along with an Advisory Committee of experts in the five practice fields to ensure the outcomes can be implemented and integrated in practice. The research will conclude with a Stakeholder Engagement Forum to share the outcomes of the research, and discuss further policy and practice implications to address the growing issue of CSAIO.

Results:

No results to date.





Building and Strengthening Academic-Community Collaborative Partnerships to Investigate the Longitudinal Impact of Childhood Sexual Abuse and Online Child Abuse Imagery: Informing Policy and Practice - Dr. Gina Dimitropoulos, University of Calgary.

Background:

Over the last few years, academics, researchers and governmental officials have argued for research on the long-term impact of child sexual abuse and the re-victimization that occurs when the images of the abuse are distributed online on youth and their families. This seed funding is for the first phase of a study to facilitate community consultation with various stakeholders and community partners to investigate the effects of child sexual abuse and the subsequent re-victimization associated with online sexual abuse imagery, with the aim of informing policy and the provision of effective services to affected individuals and their families.

The overarching objective of this study is to strengthen partnerships between researchers and key stakeholders to identify mutually agreed upon research priorities, the methods of collecting important information and identifying ways for addressing barriers to engaging individuals who are especially vulnerable because of their experiences of child sexual abuse and images of their abuse being distributed online. In developing these partnerships, the investigators will actively engage the community in forming research questions that are meaningful for them. The research team will develop four committees including a Community Advisory Committee (e.g. child welfare, law enforcement), a Scientific Committee (national researchers), a Youth Committee, and a Parent Committee. A key outcome of this study will be to provide a full-day scientific-community forum for all stakeholders/committees to provide feedback on the knowledge gained from the consultation process and to seek input on a proposed research design. After integrating the feedback from the forum, the investigators will develop a research proposal to be submitted for Tri-Council Funding.

Results:

No results to date.



Community Capacity Building for Sexual Violence Prevention - Dr. Florence Glanfield, University of Alberta and Dr. Christine Mhina, Sexual Assault Centre of Edmonton.

Background:

This pilot study applies a community development approach to engage community members in the initiation of processes to reduce sexual and intergenerational violence. The project, based in a rural Alberta Métis community, will enhance local family well-being and build community capacity to address these issues. The pilot study will:

1. Assist community members to become local change agents by facilitating the development of a critical understanding of structural factors contributing to the perpetuation of sexual violence;
2. Develop an action plan of what should be done to begin the work of changing the attitudes of local people towards sexual violence;
3. Identify and implement initial steps to be undertaken; and
4. Identify allies and community leaders with whom they can work to implement a long-term community plan to prevent sexual violence in their community.

Results to Date:

Since receiving this seed grant, the research team has completed a literature review and has been negotiating working with a new community. The research team has been in contact with four First Nations communities in the Edmonton area.





Developing Interventions for Children and Youth at Risk for Sexual Exploitation: A Community-based Participatory Research Project - Dr. Margot Jackson, University of Alberta.

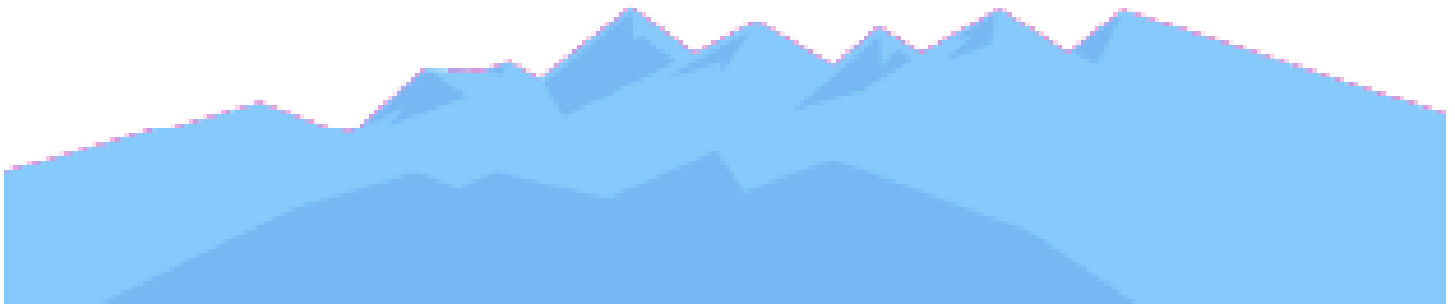
Background:

Worldwide, children and youth are at a high risk of sexual predation and exploitation. Sexual exploitation and sexual abuse are used synonymously in law and literature to describe the acts of sexual behavior towards underage children. This project is a response to the Standing Senate Committee's Report on Human Rights that calls for an urgent need to take national action on the sexual exploitation of children (Government of Canada, 2011).

The overall purpose of this proposed research is to work in participation with youth ages 15-18 years who themselves have been, or currently, are at risk for sexual exploitation. The intent is to co-create programming with youth that is sustainable by the community. The research team aims to gain an understanding of youths' experiences within broader social, legal, economic, cultural and institutional contexts. Particular attention will be paid to how the experiences of children and youth who are at risk for sexual exploitation are embedded within familial, intergenerational, and larger community stories.

Results:

No results to date.





Participatory Action Research: Developing a Team - Dr. Beth Archer-Kuhn, University of Calgary.

Background:

Many families experience tremendous challenges navigating the legal and social service systems when they have experienced domestic violence and are in the process of child custody decisions. Presently, in Calgary, service providers are not well positioned to understand the complexities of the experiences for families of domestic violence who are also trying to navigate child custody decisions.

This project proposes to develop a research team with the purpose of creating a research grant that will facilitate the mapping of the social and legal systems in Calgary that support families experiencing domestic violence and child custody decision-making. While significant debates have been occurring in the social science and legal literature in the last few years, the tensions between policy and practice in these overlapping areas, and specifically, the need for legislative reform have yet to be addressed. This project will provide the necessary resources to facilitate: a) a research team; b) an advisory committee; and c) a research grant proposal. This project can create community capacity and inform policy at the intersection of child custody decision-making and domestic violence. Participatory action research, as methodology for the service mapping, ensures the voice of all stakeholders are heard and action reflects the voices of those most impacted.

Results:

No results to date.





↔ **Post 1994 Genocide Survivors in Edmonton: Rwanda Community-based Research Project Exploring Mental Health Challenges, Strengths and Pathways to Healing - Dr. Linda Kreitzer, University of Calgary and Dr. Sophie Yohani, University of Alberta.**

Background:

The purpose of this research is to identify mental health issues that are experienced by survivors of the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi of Rwanda and their children. The objective is to ultimately identify a community-driven mental health intervention that is culturally appropriate and community specific that will address these mental health issues experience by children and their families.

The impact of this research will be transformative to the Edmonton Rwandan community who are concerned about what they see as mental health issues in their community related to the genocide.

Results to Date:

The research team has completed 15 interviews and has given three presentations to date on the preliminary findings.

Next steps include:

1. Finishing the analysis (including engaging the community in this process).
2. Presenting the findings to the community.
3. Traveling to Rwanda.
4. Writing a new proposal that feeds off this research.
5. Writing articles.
6. Giving presentations.



Understanding Inter-generational Dependency: Examining the Intersecting Issues of Homeless Families with Complex Needs - Dr. Katrina Milaney, University of Calgary

Background:

This project examined the intersectionality of social experiences for mothers and families who are experiencing homelessness in two shelters and one housing program in Calgary, Alberta. Much of the research on homelessness and 'what works' for supporting individuals into sustainable housing comes from literature on the single, adult, male population. Little is known about how to best support women and children who are experiencing homelessness or the pathways into and out of homelessness for this population.

This study took up multiple methods in order to examine the experiences of intergenerational issues including family violence and systems use by families experiencing homelessness and to identify changes to service delivery and public policy to propose a gender appropriate approach. The research question for this study was: How do women understand the complexities related to their experiences of family homelessness and violence and the influence of services and policy on their life trajectories?

Results:

This study provides evidence to better understand how families become homeless and the experiences of mothers and children as they move within the homeless, immigration and child welfare systems while dealing with a history of violence, trauma, and poverty.

The investigators conclude with several recommendations, from an asset or strength-base, to reduce structural barriers, bridge gaps between public systems, increase access and availability of supports and ensure trauma-informed care is at the root of interventions for vulnerable women and children.



Vulnerable populations





An Early Feasibility Study of Midwifery Services in a Vulnerable Population - Dr. Esther Suter, University of Calgary.

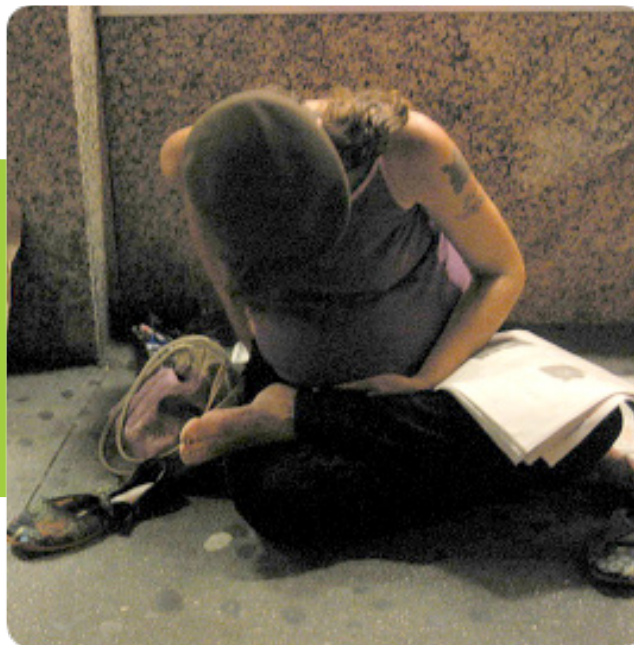
Background:

Socially vulnerable women (e.g., women from ethnic minorities, women at risk of poverty, homelessness) are less likely to access care during their pregnancies. Lack of appropriate care during pregnancy and after child birth has been associated with poor health outcomes for the mother and the baby. It is important to offer health services that not only address standard health issues associated with the pregnancy but look at the broader health and social needs (e. g., lifestyle, community relationship, social support) for these women.

This project will include an early feasibility study to explore if midwifery services would be beneficial and feasible for these women. This will be done through a developed research partnership with Aspen Family Community and Network Society, a not-for-profit social service that serves some of Calgary's most vulnerable and deprived neighborhoods. The research team believes that the individual and intimate care from midwives can improve the physical and emotional well-being of these women. Using a mixed methods approach, the team will collect data from different sources such as administrative databases, focus groups, surveys and interviews. Investigators will determine the overall feasibility of implementing a midwifery model of care in vulnerable communities. This proposed project involves integrated knowledge translation activities in that knowledge users (Aspen) are active contributors to the entire research process (proposal development, data gathering and analysis).

Results:

No results to date.





Improving Access to Social Services for Marginalized Albertans with Substance Use Disorders - Dr. Elaine Hyshka, University of Alberta.

Background:

Each year, Albertans, their families, and communities experience significant health, social, and economic costs related to drug and alcohol misuse, and substance use disorders (SUDs). A disproportionate amount of this burden is borne by Albertans living in poverty, unstable housing, and/or homelessness, who face challenges accessing effective substance use treatment and other supports. Combining treatment with social services like income and housing supports, may be an effective strategy for meeting unmet care needs and improving outcomes.

This program of research will evaluate The Addiction Recovery and Community Health (ARCH) Team, a unique model of care implemented at the Royal Alexandra Hospital (RAH), which provides substance use treatment and social supports to vulnerable patients. The ARCH team works directly with Human Services to help connect patients to Ministry programs. The overall objective is to generate policy-relevant knowledge that helps connect vulnerable Albertans with SUDs to income and housing supports, and improves their overall health.

Results:

No results to date.

Background:

In partnership with the Slave Lake Friendship Centre, this research project attempts to explore the question of “who are the homeless in Slave Lake?” Homelessness in Slave Lake over the last few years has taken on a very high profile for most members of the community, in part due to the recent wildfire that caused many to be homeless (though temporarily). Beyond the fire and the rebuilding, a persistent number of individuals appear to be chronically homeless, while others appear to be episodically homeless. The ultimate purpose of this research is to explore exactly who is homeless in Slave Lake, who is at risk of homeless, and what supports are necessary to prevent and to ameliorate the issue.

Results to Date:

To date, the research team has solicited and trained volunteers, and conducted a point in time count of the homeless of Slave Lake. They have also interviewed 20 individuals from the Town of Slave Lake to seek their understanding of “who are the homeless of Slave Lake”.

Next steps include continued analysis and sharing the results in focus groups. Discussions had in these groups will be incorporated with previous findings in the final report.



Youth-focused research





Background:

Primary prevention programs that target root causes of family violence, such as gender inequality, and promote healthy relationship skills are increasingly recognized as critical to violence prevention efforts across the lifespan. Since the goal of primary prevention is to stop violence before it starts, adolescents are a key target population for such efforts, as this developmental period is heavily focused on relationships and solidifying expectations of gender roles. For adolescent boys in particular, gender role development can mean vast pressure to conform to masculinities that are more likely to support gender inequality, and ultimately, violence.

The Calgary Sexual Health Centre has spent the past five years developing and formatively evaluating WiseGuyz, a school-based program for grade 9 boys that aims to reduce male-perpetrated violence and improve male sexual health by building healthy relationship skills and healthy masculinities. Evaluation to date supports the design of the program, and its promise for promoting youth well-being. However, to establish the evidence base for WiseGuyz and fill the noted prevention gap, controlled outcome evaluation is needed. Thus, this seed grant funding will be used to support preparation for this outcome evaluation, by: 1) Facilitating community-university partnership building; 2) Collecting pilot behavioral outcome data; and 3) Conducting a systematic literature review on associations between masculinities and future well-being. These three objectives will support the creation of a strong partnership that has the necessary data to inform policy and practice in Alberta and beyond.

Results:

No results to date.





Beyond the Hurt: The Effects of a National Cross-age Mentoring Program on Bullying in Middle School Children - Dr. Wendy Hoglund, University of Alberta and Dr. Bonnie Leadbeater, University of Victoria.

Background:

This two-year project was a pilot evaluation of the Canadian Red Cross' Beyond the Hurt (BTH) Bullying Prevention Program. BTH is a school-wide program that aims to reduce peer bullying and victimization, promote healthy relationships, and improve knowledge and awareness of bullying. This project was conducted in collaboration with the Canadian Red Cross Western Division and with seven junior high and three high schools. There were 1766 youth (56% girls) from seven junior high schools (27% in grade 7; 25% in grade 8; 29% in Grade 9) and three high schools (19% in grade 10) who participated in this project. There were also 300 teachers (59% females) who participated.

Data were collected in the Fall and Spring of two school years (2014-2015 and 2015-2016). Participating youth and school staff completed surveys on peer bullying and victimization and on strategies and initiatives used in their school to prevent bullying. During the 2014-2015 year, three junior high and two high schools received the youth facilitator training and staff PD workshops. In 2015-2016, the remaining junior high and high schools received the youth facilitator training and staff PD workshops.

Results:

Across year one of the project (Fall 2014 to Spring 2015), youth in schools that received the BTH training and resources showed significantly lower rates of relational victimization and cyber bullying in Spring 2015 than youth in the waitlist comparison schools. Nonetheless, these program differences were attenuated by the end of project year two, possibly as the waitlist schools also introduced the BTH Program in their schools at the start of year two and received the youth facilitator and adult advisor training. It may be that the BTH Program requires time to take hold in schools as schools establish cohorts of youth who are well trained and supported by adult advisors, can successfully develop and deliver workshops to younger youth, and who can lead social action projects in their schools.





► **Promoting Healthy Relationships and Masculinities Among Adolescent Boys:
Building a Community-university Partnership to Inform Policy and Practice - Dr.
Deinera Exner-Cortens, University of Calgary and Pam Krause, Calgary Sexual
Health.**

Background:

Primary prevention programs that target root causes of family violence, such as gender inequality, and promote healthy relationship skills are increasingly recognized as critical to violence prevention efforts across the lifespan. Since the goal of primary prevention is to stop violence before it starts, adolescents are a key target population for such efforts, as this developmental period is heavily focused on relationships and solidifying expectations of gender roles. For adolescent boys in particular, gender role development can mean vast pressure to conform to masculinities that are more likely to support gender inequality, and ultimately, violence.

The Calgary Sexual Health Centre has spent the past five years developing and formatively evaluating WiseGuyz, a school-based program for grade 9 boys that aims to reduce male-perpetrated violence and improve male sexual health by building healthy relationship skills and healthy masculinities. Evaluation to date supports the design of the program, and its promise for promoting youth well-being. However, to establish the evidence base for WiseGuyz and fill the noted prevention gap, controlled outcome evaluation is needed. Thus, this seed grant funding will be used to support preparation for this outcome evaluation, by: 1) Facilitating community-university partnership building; 2) Collecting pilot behavioral outcome data; and 3) Conducting a systematic literature review on associations between masculinities and future well-being. These three objectives will support the creation of a strong partnership that has the necessary data to inform policy and practice in Alberta and beyond.

Results:

No results to date.



School Integration Among Newcomer Youth: A Community Perspective - Dr. Anusha Kassan, University of Calgary.

Background:

The aim of this study was to develop an in-depth, multi-layered, contextual understanding of school integration as it pertains to newcomer youth in Calgary, Alberta. Defined broadly, school integration was conceptualized as adjustment across all aspects of students' lives (e.g., academic performance, occupational transition, peer relationships, home life, emotional well-being, etc.).

This study was conducted as part of a larger research project where a collective case study methodology was employed to elicit the perspectives of multiple groups of individuals (both within the school setting as well as the community) with respect to the phenomenon of school integration. Participants in this latter phase of the study included pre-service teachers as well as community service providers who worked with newcomer youth integrating into high school.

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Results:

Preliminary results demonstrated that pre-service teachers discussed their experiences with respect to the following areas:

1. Influence of personal experience on teaching.
2. Modifications for newcomer students.
3. Balancing students' needs.
4. Roles within and beyond the classroom.

Findings also indicated that newcomer youth need more meaningful means of engaging with the research process in order to share the depth of their experiences related to school integration. This study provided an important, untapped, perspective on pre-service teachers and community service providers who with newcomer youth in Calgary, Alberta. Results have important implications for practice, training, research, and policy. Specifically, future research will examine the experiences of newcomer youth through an arts-based research design in order to allow for more meaningful, ethical, and culturally sensitive data collection.





Social Identity in Rural School-Based Youth Sport Groups - Dr. Danny Balderson and Dr. Luc Martin, University of Lethbridge.

Background:

The purpose of this research was to develop a highly qualified research team and to establish preliminary data with regard to the relevance of Social Identity (e.g., Tajfel & Turner, 1979) in the context of rural community school youth sport.

Data were collected from 480 adolescent athletes participating on 31 interdependent sport teams in Southern Alberta.

Results:

Generally, the results indicate the unity experienced by athletes within a team to be significantly related to perceptions of social identity. Furthermore, athletes who are leaders (or see themselves as leaders) identify with their teams to a greater extent than those who are not. As a consequence, coaches should strive to provide young athletes with conditions that will help their teams come together as a group, and facilitate situations where athletes can feel like they are taking on a leadership role.

Future research will expand on these findings by exploring contextual variables that affect feelings of social identity.





Youth and Community Engagement for Improving Community Practice and Policy to Support High-risk Youth - Dr. Yoshitaka Iwasaki and Dr. Pushpanjali Dashora, University of Alberta.

Background:

Effective support of youth living with poverty, homelessness, abusive behaviours, and social exclusion is a major social and community issue. The most innovative and unique aspect of this research is its strategic use of youth leadership. The research team will use a participatory action research (PAR) process to address the following overarching research question: How can practices and policies around engagement at personal, family, and community levels be changed to enhance youth's capacity to mobilize the resources needed to promote youth development? Specifically, the team will develop and execute a PAR study to examine the key factors of working with and engaging marginalized youth.

Its objectives will include:

1. Development of a PAR study: Guided by a newly established group of youth leaders, the research team will develop a plan for implementing a PAR study to examine the key factors of working with and engaging marginalized youth, by focusing on both the opportunities and challenges of youth engagement and development for those youths.
2. Execution of the PAR study: This youth-guided PAR case study will be conducted through working with the Boyle Street Education Centre Charter School in Edmonton, Alberta, which serves young people (14 to 19 years old) with high-risk life conditions such as poverty, homelessness, abusive behaviours, and social exclusion.
3. Knowledge mobilization (KM): The learnings from this research will be mobilized to engage and influence intended audiences – youth and families, community and government agencies, and academic researchers – through a series of KM activities (e.g., community forums, websites, social media, reports).

Results:

No results to date.





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