



**Centre of Excellence
for Children & Adolescents with Special Needs**

ANNUAL REPORT
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Julia O'Sullivan, Ph.D.
National Director



Health Canada Santé
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Lakehead
UNIVERSITY

The Centre of Excellence for Special Needs is one of five Centres of Excellence for Children's Well-Being funded by Health Canada. The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the official policies of Health Canada.



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I. INTRODUCTION / DIRECTIONS OF OUR CENTRE

About Our Centre

- Established in October 2000, our Centre is focused on the distinct challenges faced by children and adolescents with special needs living in rural and northern Canada.
- Sponsored and administered by Lakehead University, our Centre's national partners are the Government of Nunavut, Memorial University, Mount St. Vincent University, and the University of Northern British Columbia.

Mission/Vision/Mandate

- Our mandate is to produce knowledge about children and adolescents with special needs in rural and northern Canada and transfer it effectively to those who can use it to make a difference in the lives of these children.
- We document and describe the opportunities and challenges for children with special needs in rural and northern communities highlighting best policies, practices, and principles for prevention, early intervention and supports.
- We draw on our networks to communicate our work to parents, teachers, service providers, researchers, and policy makers through reports, conferences, on-line service directories, posters, pamphlets, and the media.
- Our vision is to be recognized nationally and internationally for the production and transfer of knowledge about children with special needs in rural and remote communities; to establish Canada as a world leader in research, policy and service delivery in this area; and, to establish our Centre as a "policy network" for special needs in northern and rural Canada.

Principles Guiding Our Research

- "Needs" refer to the things necessary for quality of life. They represent an interaction between the child and the contexts in which the child develops (family, school, community, culture).
- Children and adolescents with special needs have the same types of needs as others, but their needs vary in amount, quality and intensity.
- All children who require additional public or private resources beyond what are normally required for healthy development have special needs.

- Each child and adolescent with special needs is an exceptional individual, with a unique pattern of needs.
- Children and adolescents with special needs living in rural and northern Canada face unique challenges because of where they live.
- Access to effective, culturally and linguistically appropriate services should be available to children within their rural and remote communities.
- Emerging technology offers a brighter future for children with special needs living in rural and northern communities.

Objectives

- Improve access to useful information on prevention, early intervention, and supports.
- Improve access to appropriate prevention, early intervention, and support service delivery.
- Augment community capacity to influence policy.

National Partner Organizations

- Government of Nunavut
- Lakehead University
- Memorial University
- Mount St. Vincent University
- University of Northern British Columbia

Over 200 other organizations are involved in our Centre's network.

II. CONSOLIDATION OF RESEARCH

Our Strategic Goal

- Document the unique challenges and opportunities faced by children and adolescents with special needs in rural and northern Canada; identify unanswered questions and promising practices and policies for prevention and early intervention.

Results

Our results highlight the importance of intersectoral cooperation in the health of children and adolescents with special needs in rural and northern Canada. They highlight how factors outside the health care system can impact on the health and well-being of children and adolescents with special needs, and how prevention and early intervention in one sector, such as education, can have generalized positive effects on their development. All too often, political, financial, and geographic barriers may impede decision-making about appropriate and effective services. Prevention and early intervention policy and programs that preserve evidence-based best principles, while allowing for their translation into appropriate local practices, appear promising. A national research agenda and a policy network that will build on these results are called for to support a comprehensive health promotion model for children and adolescents with special needs.

Examples

Spraggon, D. (2003). *Attention and behaviour difficulties: An annotated bibliography with a focus on northern youth.*

This annotated bibliography covers the many facets of attention and behaviour difficulties in youth. Traditional definitions of behaviour, attention, and oppositional defiant difficulties have yet to be changed to ensure cultural appropriateness. The review includes literature related to definitions, culture, identification and assessment, interventions, rural context, parents and caregivers, teachers and paraeducators, and other topics. This review has informed a needs assessment for the development of a conference on attention and behaviour difficulties. The bibliography is a valuable resource to researchers, educators, and parents, and is available on-line at www.lcnorth.ca.

Barrett, T.R. (2003). *Implementing a policy network: Current status and future directions for the Centre of Excellence for Children and Adolescents with Special Needs.*

The Centre of Excellence has, as one of its functions, the provision of policy advice to appropriate government agencies. In order to provide such advice effectively, the need to develop a set of relationships among various important stakeholders in the policy process has been recognized. That relationship set has

sometimes been referred to as a policy network. This paper reviews the literature available concerning the history and structures of policy networks and considers the current status of our Centre's efforts to implement one. It concludes by suggesting future directions for consideration such as maintaining resources necessary for the policy network to survive and evolve, the development of a co-operative relationship between the policy network and relevant government agencies, broadening the membership of the network, and consensus building among members of the network.

III. FOCUSED RESEARCH

Our Strategic Goal

- Conduct research projects designed to evaluate new and existing prevention, early intervention, and support services and policies.

Results

Our results show the value of emerging technologies in providing continuing education for personnel and providing accessible information about services to parents of children with special needs. Our findings consistently demonstrate that rural and northern communities wish to be involved in the planning and development of services for special needs and are currently delivering some appropriate prevention and early intervention programs. The contribution of local expertise and volunteers is significant. Policy and programs that recognize, include, and build on community strengths and local practices can support capacity in prevention and early intervention and enhance the health and well-being of children with special needs.

Examples

Zamporo, J., & Seburn, L. (2004). *Descriptive community survey of mental health information and related programs and services with an emphasis on suicide prevention.*

There continues to be concern about the suicide rate among the Inuit of Nunavut which is reported to be among the highest in the world. While previous studies have explored the reasons for increased incidence of suicide, this study was designed to determine the availability of mental health services and suicide prevention programs. It provides baseline information concerning the community's knowledge and understanding of issues, so that preventative steps can be taken to address the problem at a community level. Service providers and mental health committees in the 26 communities of Nunavut responded to a questionnaire related to mental health services. The results of the survey support the need for

service coordination, information dissemination and staff training, development of mental health policies, and community development.

Bowd, A. (2003). *The young mothers project: Prevention of otitis media through breastfeeding and second-hand smoke abatement.*

This exploratory study was conducted with young mothers and pregnant adolescents attending a special program at the Adolescent Parent Centre in Winnipeg. Eighty percent of the participants were of Aboriginal descent. Culturally-sensitive methods and materials were considered fundamental in designing the project which was aimed at encouraging participants to choose to breastfeed as long as possible and to attempt to reduce their babies' exposure to second-hand smoke. Questionnaire data indicated positive changes in attitudes and reported behaviour related to breastfeeding and reduced exposure to second-hand smoke. Focus group transcripts, besides providing participants' perceptions related the explicit themes introduced in the groups, revealed three broad issues of significant importance to these young women. These were (a) curiosity and confusion about drug use and its effects on mother and infant; (b) contraception, sexuality, sexually transmitted diseases and related future plans, and (c) partners, family and social support. This project has significant implications for policy relating to culturally sensitive prenatal and infant health promotion strategies, preschool screening programs, and classroom interventions for children affected by otitis media.

Canning, P., Courage, M., & Frizzell, L. (2003). *Prevalence of overweight and obesity in a provincial population of Canadian preschool children.*

Throughout the world, overweight and obesity among school-aged children has increased dramatically over the past two decades and the upward trend continues. Many countries now report a similar trend among pre-school children. In Canada, there is little information on the prevalence of overweight and obesity among pre-school children. Thus the purpose of this study was to determine the prevalence of overweight and obesity in a cohort of 3-5 year-old children born in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador in 1997. Body Mass Indices (BMIs) were calculated using weights and heights measured by public health nurses during the province-wide Preschool Health Check Program as conducted between October 2000 and January 2003. Descriptive data on the children's BMIs were generated and were analyzed by sex and age using both the classification system recommended by the International Obesity Task Force (IOTF) and the Centres for Disease Control (CDC). The results show that twenty-five percent of preschool children as young as three years of age are already overweight or obese. Prevention measures must begin before preschool age if the problem of obesity is to be addressed successfully.

IV. POLICY ADVICE

Our Strategic Goal

- Establish our Centre as the nucleus of a developing policy network for special needs in rural and northern Canada.

Results

- Our Centre provided policy advice on special needs at local, regional, provincial, territorial and national levels.
- We organized events to bring policy makers together to discuss and plan special needs policy issues, including policy relevant research.
- We participated directly in policy planning roundtables and meetings and worked in partnership with governments and community organizations on policy-relevant research projects.
- We contributed to increased emphasis in policy discussions on the context for prevention and early intervention of special needs in rural and northern communities.

Examples

Promotion and Protection of Indigenous Children's Rights, UNICEF, Florence, Italy, March 2003.

Our Centre was an invited participant and the only representative from Canada to attend this consultation organized by UNICEF's Innocenti Centre. The meeting brought together Indigenous people from around the world to discuss Indigenous children's rights.

Conquering childhood obesity: Is the answer in the past? Health Canada Policy Forum, Ottawa, Ontario, February 2004.

Our Centre participated in this policy dialogue examining the impact of lifestyle on physical fitness. Our participation was based on our extensive research on preschool overweight and obesity.

National School Portal, Council of Ministers of Education of Canada.

Our Centre is contributing to discussions on the development of the national school portal with regard to access for students with special needs and content in special needs education.

Best Practices in Suicide Prevention and the Evaluation of Suicide Prevention Programs in the Arctic, Iqaluit, Nunavut, April 2003.

Our Centre participated in this international forum that brought together practitioners from within the circumpolar world to discuss issues and identify best practices related to the administration and evaluation of culturally appropriate suicide-prevention programs.

Nova Scotia Department of Community Services.

A partnership project documenting current provincial qualifications and training program provisions for early interventionists. Recommendations for training required by early interventionists and for professional credentialing standards will be developed.

British Columbia North Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders Coalition.

Our Centre participated in this initiative of the Ministry for Children and Family Development (British Columbia). The coalition brought together medical and health professionals, educators, community leaders in FASD and service providers from across Northern British Columbia in order to review the document *Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders: A strategic plan for British Columbia*.

Otitis Media with Fairstart.

Our Centre provided advice to Fairstart (a program for early years screening in Thunder Bay, Ontario) regarding the prevalence of otitis media among young Aboriginal children, minimal hearing loss and implications for language deficit, and the importance of early detection of minimal hearing loss.

Ministerial Briefing Meetings

Our Centre met with Federal and Provincial/Territorial Ministers to discuss our work and its implications for policy at the national provincial and territorial level.

Examples

- Joan Atkinson, Assistant Deputy Minister, Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Arun Dighe, Associate Regional Director General, Ontario Region.
- Ethel Blondin- Andrews, Secretary of State for Children and Youth.
- Joseph Comuzzi, Minister of State (Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario).
- Senator Landon Pearson.

- Robert Nault, Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development.
- Linda Reid, Minister of State for Early Childhood Development (British Columbia).

V. COMMUNICATIONS

Our Strategic Goal

- Ensure that our products are available in multi-media formats and reach those who can use them to make a difference in the lives of children with special needs.

Results

- Our findings have been communicated through presentations at international, national, and regional conferences; through our hosting national and regional conferences and workshops; through our products such as on-line service directories, research reports, power point presentations, posters, and pamphlets.
- Our products are designed for, and reach, different target audiences including researchers, service providers, parents, teachers, and policy makers.

Presentations Made and Events Attended

Our Centre has attended 48 conferences, workshops, seminars and roundtable meetings and has presented 32 papers.

Examples

Presentations at International Conferences

Canning, P., Courage, M., & Frizzell, L. (2003). *A study of overweight and obesity in a preschool population in Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada*. European Congress on Obesity, Helsinki, May.

Greenwood, M., & de Leeuw, S. (2003). *Inclusive child care in rural, northern and First Nations communities: Challenges, recommendations, and solutions*. National Association of the Education of Young Children Annual Conference, Chicago, Illinois, November.

McClure, F., Kienapple, K., & Lyon, M. (2003). *Special Needs Information Services On Line*. Third World Congress on Child Health and Youth, Vancouver, May.

O'Sullivan, J., & Epp, J. (2003). *Early literacy school improvement: Research, policy and practice in northern Canada*. The Learning Conference, London, July.

Presentations at National Conferences

Boone, M., Minore, B., Katt, M., & Kinch, P. (2003). *Discipline based not discipline bound: Working towards better mental health care in remote Aboriginal communities.* Canadian Association for Suicide Prevention Annual Conference, Iqaluit, Nunavut, May.

Bowd, A., & Hill, C. (2003). *The young mothers project: Encouraging breastfeeding and avoiding second hand smoke.* Maternal and Child/Youth Health Conference 2003. Exploring the Links, Vancouver, British Columbia, November.

Kienapple, K. (2003). *An overview of the research activities of the Centre of Excellence for Children and Adolescents with Special Needs.* Journey of a Lifetime: Charting the Course. 12th Annual Conference on Developmental Disabilities, Winnipeg, Manitoba, October.

Presentations at Provincial/Territorial/Regional Conferences

Carlson, J. (2003). *Overview of the Centre of Excellence.* Ontario First Experience Coordinator Conference, Thunder Bay, Ontario, November.

de Leeuw, S. , & Stockburger, J. (2003). *Homelessness and concurrent disorders: FASD and Youth.* The Elizabeth Fry Discussion Series, Prince George, British Columbia, July.

Greenwood, M., & Palmantier, M. (2003). *History of First Nations issues in northern British Columbia.* 2003 FASD Medical Education Symposium, Burns Lake, British Columbia, September.

Kienapple, K., & Lyon, M. (2004). *Issues related to children with special needs.* Bright Beginnings – Strong Communities Symposium. The Union of Nova Scotia Indians and the Confederacy of Mainland Mi'Maq, Nova Scotia, February.

Presentations On-Line/Telecommunications

Education Network of Ontario. February 2003.

Our Centre was the invited guest in an on-line forum for the Education Network of Ontario, which maintains on-line support to Ontario teachers. Our Centre responded to questions on special needs posted on-line by educators around the province.

Burning Issues in Education II: The Consequences of Not Dealing with Literacy Issues: Pay Now or Pay Later. Thunder Bay, Ontario, February 2004.

Our Centre participated in a blue ribbon panel discussion on the costs to Canada of low literacy. The Burning Issues in Education forums are broadcast on cable television throughout northwestern Ontario.

Events Attended

Canadian Association for Suicide Prevention Annual Conference, Iqaluit, Nunavut, May 2003.

The annual meeting brought together policy makers, community members, and front-line workers from across Canada. Our Centre participated in planning the conference and presented 7 papers.

CANARIE Third Pan-Canadian E-Learning Workshop, Vancouver, January 2004.

Our Centre participated in this international workshop which provided an opportunity to showcase the products of CANARIE sponsored projects. Delegates discussed future directions and establish linkages.

Canadian Health Services Research Foundation (CHSRF) 6th Annual Invitational Workshop, Vancouver, March 2004.

Our Centre participated in this workshop designed to enhance linkage and exchange between researchers and decision makers in the health care sector. The workshop focused on interpreting evidence-based decision-making for management and policy.

Events Hosted

10 events were hosted including:

Piguninga Unipkaat: The Power of Telling Your Story: Youth Engagement Conference, Iqaluit, Nunavut, May 2003.

This conference for youth was conducted concurrently with the annual meeting of the Canadian Association for Suicide Prevention and was co-hosted by the Centre of Excellence for Children with Special Needs and the Departments of Education and Health & Social Services of the Government of Nunavut.

Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, James Karl Bartleman, Thunder Bay, Ontario, June 2003.

The Lieutenant Governor made an official visit to our Centre's National Office, met with members of our Centre, and discussed issues of mutual interest including the role of reading in school success for northern children.

Special Needs Information Services Online, Official launch, Halifax, Nova Scotia, November 2003.

The Special Needs Information Services Online (SNIS) is a practical directory of services and information for parents of children with special needs. Invited to the launch of SNIS were the media, the Nova Scotia departments responsible for children with special needs, service agencies and providers, parents and children with special needs, and everyone who worked on the project.

Supporting Children with Autism in Child Care Settings. DVD. Official launch, Halifax, Nova Scotia, January 2004.

This DVD provides self instructional modules to help those who work with young children with autism to understand the disorder and how it affects development and learning. Invited guests to the launch of the DVD included the media, provincial departments in the Atlantic region responsible for autism services and child care services, service agencies and providers, parent support groups, and educators.

Centre's Community Partners of Nova Scotia Meeting, Halifax, Nova Scotia, November 2003.

The community partners are local (Nova Scotian) agencies involved in early child development at the policy, program, and service provider level. This group meets biannually to assist in the work of our Centre in early intervention by suggesting research work and activities, reviewing and approving projects and activities, and disseminating results within the early childhood community.

Centre's Advisory Council of British Columbia Meeting, Prince George, British Columbia, June 2003.

The Advisory Committee on Substance Abuse Research and Management involves health professionals, educators, agency representatives and community members with expertise about substance abuse. This group meets four times a year to assist with the work of our Centre related to

substance abuse by suggesting areas of research and dissemination of information.

Communication Products Developed

30 communication products have been developed including:

Research Reports as Downloadable PDF Files From Our Web Site

Bowd, A. (2003). *The young mothers project: Prevention of otitis media through breastfeeding and second-hand smoke abatement.*

Minore, B., & Hopkins, H. (2003). *Suicide response plans: A comparative cross-jurisdictional analysis.*

Stockburger, J. (2003). *Substance abuse related special needs in Canada: Best practices for prevention.*

Information Directories and Services

- The Special Needs Information Services Online (SNIS) is a comprehensive directory of services and information available in communities in the province of Nova Scotia for parents of children with special needs.
- Website development for promoting and disseminating Centre work to provide a point of access to selected information services and sources dedicated to special needs issues.
- Searchable databases: over 300 titles concerning questionable practices in special education; inventory of resources (e.g. video, print material) for substance abuse special needs.

Other Products

- A biannual report in newsletter format highlighting our research findings, advertising our outputs and how to access them, and publicizing upcoming events, published in English, French and Inuktitut.
- *Coping with Middle Ear Disease in the North.* A video workshop to assist in community-based identification and prevention of otitis media and associated disabilities in Ontario's north.
- *Supporting Children with Autism in Child Care Settings.* The goal of this DVD is to provide self instructional modules to help those who work with young children with autism to understand the disorder and how it affects development

and learning. The materials also explain how to use strategies and techniques that promote development in children with autism. Particular attention is focused on the child care centre as the context for this material.

Publications

Bowd, A., & O'Sullivan, J. (2003). Questionable practices in Special Education, *Alberta Teacher's Association Magazine* 84 (1) 4-8.

de Leeuw, S., & Greenwood, M. (Winter 2003/2004). At the heart of community, where children belong. *Family Groundwork: Canada's Magazine for Parenting Children with Challenges*, 18 (6). 19-21.

VI. NETWORKING

Our Strategic Goal

- Develop partnerships with regional, provincial, national, and international organizations to increase our research capacity and our development as a policy community for special needs in rural and northern Canada.

Results

- We supported our network, conducting several research projects in partnership with government and community-based groups.
- We expanded our network focusing on partnerships that would strengthen our capacity in the areas of prevention and early intervention, northern and circumpolar regions, interdisciplinary services and research, and families of children with special needs.

Existing Research Networks and Partnerships Include

- **British Columbia Aboriginal Child Care Society (BCACCS.)** *Special needs children (0-6) and their care providers: An inquiry into 58 on-reserve child care centres.*
- **Centre pour Ressource Préscolaires** Phase Two. *Les enfants de 0-6 ans ayant incapacités dans les communautés acadiennes et francophones hors Québec. Les ressources en langue française.*
- **Fathers' Involvement Research Alliance**, Community University Research Alliance on *Fathers' Involvement in their Children's lives*, funded by SSHRC.

- **Health & Community Services St. John's.** *An evaluation of the Healthy Beginnings Program.*
- **Integrated Services for Northern Children (ISNC).** *Managing continuity of care for children with special needs in rural and remote parts of northern Ontario.*
- **Newfoundland and Labrador Departments of Finance and Education and the Kids Eat Smart Foundation.** *Two projects: A regional and economic analysis of school communities served and not served by the Kids Eat Smart Foundation (KESF) and A Community-based school food program model: Levels of service and self-sufficiency of school food programs in rural and urban communities of varying socioeconomic capacity.*
- **Newfoundland and Labrador's six health regions.** *The current status of preschool children's body weights in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.*
- **Newfoundland and Labrador's Departments of Human Resources and Employment, Health, Vital Statistics; Family Resource Centres, Healthy Baby Clubs, and the Women's Policy Office.** *The mother baby nutrition supplement program study.*
- **The Technical Resource Centre of Nova Scotia and the King's Regional Rehabilitation Centre of Nova Scotia.** *The Special Needs Information Services Directory Online (SNIS).*
- **W.W. Creighton Youth Services.** *Finding better paths: Rural young offenders' access to mental health services.*

Expanded Research Networks, Partnerships and Projects

- **Centre for Nursing Studies, Memorial University, Newfoundland.** *A research project: What resources do Public Health Nurses (PHNs) have and need to help them address the problem of preschool children's overweight and obesity?*
- **Children Families Communities Conference Society.** *The development, organization and forthcoming implementation of the Circles of Influence Conference: Building Capacity Through Partnership and Collaboration, Prince George, May 2004.*
- **Department of Family Studies and Gerontology, Mount Saint Vincent University and Family Resource Programs Canada.** *Preparation of grant proposal for Development of Logic Model for Family Resource Programs. The*

overall focus of the proposed project is to identify how the principles of family support are implemented into practice and to identify outcomes that adequately reflect the translation into practice.

- **Northern Ontario Medical School (NOMS)** Roger Strasser, Dean of the newly established Northern Ontario Medical School has been appointed to our Centre's National Advisory Board.

VII. TRAINING AND CAPACITY BUILDING

Through our research and projects our Centre augments the learning of university students at both the graduate and undergraduate level as well as high school students on special projects.

Examples

- Presentation to Special Education III students, Faculty of Education, Lakehead University on our Centre's work.
- SSHRC grants to hire students as research assistants.
- A practicum in Community Nursing, Memorial University Centre of Nursing Studies.
- Opportunities for graduate students from Lakehead University to assist with research projects and conferences in Nunavut.
- Youth at Work employment program to hire youth.
- Work Study Summer Program to hire students.

VIII. ABORIGINAL CHILDREN

The mandate of our Centre is to produce and transfer knowledge about children with special needs in rural and northern Canada. Most projects include some focus, and several have an exclusive focus, on Aboriginal children. Findings have clear implications for improving the health and well-being of Aboriginal children.

Knowledge Production

Bowd, A. (2003). *The young mothers project: Prevention of otitis media through breastfeeding and second-hand smoke abatement.*

The development and evaluation of a culturally sensitive intervention program to reduce the occurrence of otitis media and upper respiratory disease among Aboriginal infants.

Greenwood, M., Littlechild, S., & de Leeuw, S. (June 2003). *Preliminary report: Special needs children (0-6) and their care providers: An inquiry into 58 on-reserve child care centres.*

This inquiry, in partnership with the British Columbia Aboriginal Child Care Society, undertakes a needs assessment of special needs children (0-6 years of age) and their care providers in the 58 on-reserve licensed child care centres throughout British Columbia.

Stockburger, J. (2003). *Substance abuse related to special needs in Canada: Best practices for prevention.*

This paper is designed to support communities in their delivery of services by documenting existing prevention practices, identifying and defining gaps, challenges and barriers to availability and accessibility of quality services.

Zamporo, J., & Seburn, L. (2004). *Descriptive community survey of mental health information and related programs and services with an emphasis on suicide prevention.*

This study was designed to determine the availability of mental health and suicide prevention programs and services in Nunavut. It provides baseline information about what the communities know and understand about these issues so that preventative steps can be taken to address the problem at a community level.

Knowledge Transfer

The Government of Nunavut, one of the 5 national partners that make up our Centre, plays a vital role in our knowledge transfer to Aboriginal communities.

- We conduct many projects with Aboriginal communities ensuring that knowledge transfer is direct and immediate to the community and partners involved. For example: *Preliminary report: Special needs children (0-6) and their care providers: An inquiry into 58 on-reserve child care centres.*
- We host workshops and roundtables to communicate our work to Aboriginal peoples and communities. For example *Piguninga Unipkaat: The power of telling your story: Youth engagement conference.*

- Centre findings and products are widely disseminated in print, on-line, and through conferences and workshops that include representatives from Aboriginal communities. For example: presenting the keynote address *Children and Unity* at The BC Aboriginal Child Care Society Early Child Care Conference.

IX. OFFICIAL LANGUAGES MINORITY COMMUNITIES (OLMCs)

Our Centre produces and transfers knowledge about children with special needs in rural and northern Canada. Most projects include some focus and others include an exclusive focus on children in Official Language Minority communities. Findings have clear implications for improving the health and well-being of these children.

Knowledge Production

In partnership with the Centre pour Ressource Préscolaires

Les enfants à besoins spéciaux d'âge préscolaire: ressources en langue française. A description of French resources to contribute to the development and growth of a preschool-level child with special needs. Resources that are accessible and relevant to any individual involved in early childhood education in Canada are included.

In partnership with the Centre pour Ressource Préscolaires

Phase Two. *Les enfants de 0-6 ans ayant incapacités dans les communautés acadiennes et francophones hors Québec. Les ressources en langue française.* This project builds on the work previously completed in *Les enfants à besoins spéciaux d'âge préscolaire: ressources en langue française.*

Knowledge Transfer

- A biannual report in newsletter format highlighting our research findings, advertising our outputs and how to access them, and publicizing upcoming events published in English, French and Inuktitut.
- All of our Centre's products are disseminated in print, on-line, or through conferences and workshops that include representatives from OLM communities.
- Work conducted in partnership with organizations such as the Centre pour Ressource Préscolaires ensures that knowledge transfer is direct and immediate to that organization from where it is disseminated through libraries and networks to the wider community.

X. FUTURE DIRECTIONS AND UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

Implementation of our Operational Plan for 2004-2005

- Preparation of our Centre's final report.
- Incorporation of our research on technology into our final report, drawing on the expertise of our Emerging Technologies Committee.
- Planning for the sustainability of our work beyond 2005.

Research Highlights

O'Sullivan, J. (2004). *Teaching and learning of early reading in rural and northern Canada.*

A systematic review of literature and secondary data analysis to describe the teaching and learning of early reading with particular attention to early reading difficulties in rural and northern Canada compared with metropolitan and southern communities.

Stockburger, J. (2004). *Substance abuse related special needs in Canada: Best practices for intervention.*

A systematic review of the literature to document existing intervention best practices for the purpose of identifying and defining gaps, challenges and barriers to availability and accessibility of quality services.

Lyon, M., & Kienapple, K. (2001-2004) *Supporting children with autism in child care settings: Distance education strategies.*

A program evaluation to identify the most effective model of distance education for child care workers and to provide information about autism in the context of child care settings.

Tan, J., Fockler, A., Boone, M., Vander Velde, J., & Levy, S. (2004). *Nunavut Kamatsiaqtut Help Line (NKHL) project.*

Thematic content and quantitative analyses on information gathered during help call interviews with the Nunavut Kamatsiaqtut Help Line (NKHL). The study is designed to inform policy with respect to the availability of, and need for, mental health services in the communities of Nunavut.

Canning, P., Courage, M., McNeil, D., Manning, A., & Frizzell, L. (2004). *An evaluation of the Healthy Beginnings Program*.

The Healthy Beginnings Program aims to improve access to and use of post-natal support services and programs, with the ultimate goals of improving children's developmental outcomes and parent effectiveness. This evaluation examines the program through a survey of the nurses involved in its delivery and by comparing families and children before and after the program.

Policy Advice Highlights

- In partnership with NOEL (Northern Ontario Education Leaders): A working session on school achievement of First Nations Children in Northwestern Ontario. The session will bring together educational leaders and policy makers at the Federal and Provincial levels.
- A briefing meeting with the senior management team of the First Nations and Inuit Health Branch, Health Canada.
- Hosting the *Attention & Behaviour Difficulties Among Northern Youth Conference*, Thunder Bay, August. An intersectoral, interdisciplinary group will meet to discuss issues and seek solutions regarding attention and behaviour difficulties with a focus on northern youth.
- Emerging Technologies: Initial policy implications and recommendations. Our Centre will complete its review of the literature on the effective use of technology for children with special needs with a particular focus on the training and service delivery in rural and remote northern communities.

Communications Highlights

We will be attending or presenting at the following:

- *American Educational Research Association Conference*, April, San Diego, California.
- *ECO 2004: 13th European Congress on Obesity*, May, Prague, Czech Republic.
- *Canadian Association for Suicide Prevention Annual Meeting and Conference*, October, Edmonton, Alberta
- 14th Inuit Studies Conference. *Bringing Knowledge Home: Communicating Research Results to the Inuit*, August, Calgary, Alberta.

- 5th National Canadian Rural Health Research Society Conference. *Rural Health: Celebrating Diversity & Strength*, October, Sudbury, Ontario.
- Circles of Influence Conference: *Building Capacity Through Partnership and Collaboration*, May, Prince George, British Columbia.

Special Needs Information Service Online. Expansion to include additional territories and provinces.

Networking Expansion Highlights

- *Education in the Circumpolar North*. Ongoing discussions linking our Centre's work in education to initiatives at the University of the Arctic and the Council of Ministers of Education of the circumpolar regions.
- *The Hospital for Sick Children*. Ongoing discussions with Bruce Ferguson, Director, Community Health Systems Resource Group about potential research partnerships especially concerning the proposed Ontario Institute for Child and Youth Success.
- *Northern Ontario Medical School (NOMS)* Roger Strasser, Dean of the newly established Northern Ontario Medical School has been appointed to our Centre's National Advisory Board. This appointment will enhance our exploration of joint research and curriculum development.