

# Extending the Program Reach

## CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

What can be done to sustain and extend this kind of socially-inclusive, generative approach to strengthening child and youth care capacity and development in cultural communities? How can the collective experience of the First Nations Partnership Programs stimulate systemic change?

The program evaluation, based on participants' commentaries, yielded findings that were overwhelmingly positive, both about the process and the impacts of the program. Yet, as this report has already identified, challenges arose in every partnership. Challenges ranged from initial difficulties recruiting a sufficient number of students and initial skepticism about the feasibility and value of involving Elders in classes, to extreme initial difficulties securing funding to mount the program. There is much to be learned from how challenges were addressed in each partnership. Recommendations for future steps are discussed in this part of the report. These recommendations are derived from the evaluation of the seven partnerships as well as from consideration of documented inquiries from over 40 First Nations groups across Canada who investigated the possibility of partnerships but ultimately did not pursue a partnership program. The challenges and limitations as well as proven successes described in this report, can provide impetus for the next steps needed to extend the reach of the Generative Curriculum Model.

## PROGRAM DELIVERY APPROACH

It is likely that the Generative Curriculum Model is applicable to a range of cultural communities across Canada and internationally. There are, however, limitations to the applicability of the program in its present form. In particular, the program cannot be mounted in very small and isolated communities where student numbers do not make the investment financially feasible and where students have no local access to practicum settings with skilled supervision. The cost-effectiveness of the program, in its current form, depends upon having at least 10 students enroll in the program. Many communities that have inquired about implementing the program have been too small to recruit, support, and eventually employ this number of students.

One solution demonstrated effectively by four First Nations was to recruit students from neighbouring bands and to amalgamate post-secondary funding. We believe that to support capacity building that will benefit children in very small and geographically or culturally isolated communities requires a different program delivery approach. Participants in this evaluation, along with community representatives who have not found it feasible to enter into partnership agreements, have strongly encouraged the development of courses using multi-method delivery strategies.

**Recommended:** Combine direct and distance education while retaining the guiding framework of the Generative Curriculum Model, including co-constructed curriculum and community-identified training goals, to provide multi-method strategies for delivering ECCD programs in partnership.

## PROGRAM SCOPE

Four former First Nations partners have initiated discussion with the university-based team to explore the development and delivery of advanced training, particularly in the areas of infancy and special needs. Further training would take the communities a step closer to self-sufficiency and social inclusion in supporting the diverse needs of children and families.

**Recommended:** Expand the scope of partnership programs to further strengthen community capacity building.

## INSTITUTIONAL COMMITMENT

The most serious challenge facing this program approach is that it remains at the margins of mainstream university and government priorities. It has yet to attract programmatic support from major First Nations and/or non-First Nations funding agencies, with the exception of the sponsors of the documentation and evaluation project. This challenge persists despite a decade of documented successes and appeals from both First Nations communities wishing to mount the program and post-secondary institutions wishing to respond to these communities through partnerships.

A specific financial challenge for both communities and partnering institutions is the length of time needed to develop community and institutional will, establish a partnership relationship and negotiate formal agreements, deliver the program, and provide follow-up support for program participants. As community and institutional administrators underscored in this evaluation, the importance of the pre-program delivery phase cannot be underestimated. Yet, funding for education and employment training is typically available only for the period of formal program delivery when students are enrolled in courses. Across partnerships, the program lasts approximately 23 months. This represents no more than one-half of the time invariably needed to bring a successful partnership program to fruition.

The evaluation findings are only as useful as there are willing “users” who are positioned to make a difference in how we think about the lives of children and families in communities. It is not First Nations communities who have most to learn from the insights yielded by the evaluation research, but the educational and development assistance institutions, policy-making bodies and agencies – both First Nations and non-First Nations – which are involved in establishing and enforcing criteria for funding and delivering training and services for children.

Being responsive to indigenous communities means more than letting community members voice their concerns or preferences, more than acknowledging diversity, and more than arranging a welcoming environment on mainstream campuses to accommodate indigenous students who are able to come to them.

**Recommended:** Open up the foundations of how training programs are conceived and delivered by post-secondary institutions, how optimal child care and development is defined, and how communities can play leading roles in capacity-building initiatives.

## What does it take to be a responsive partner?

Administrative coordinators of the First Nations Partnership Programs who were based at the University of Victoria and at the three other post-secondary institutions were already pre-disposed to take certain risks and to press for flexibility within their institutions (e.g., in course scheduling, admissions criteria) in order to accommodate and support community partners. As part of the evaluation, these administrators were asked to give advice about how other institutions considering this type of initiative would need to be similarly prepared.

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Institutional partners and community leaders themselves must be scrupulous about not being pre-emptive and not overwhelming the community with imported 'goods and services' from outside their own context and out of step with their own internal rhythm and pace.

## What does it take to work in partnership?

Administrators addressed a set of attitudes and forms of interpersonal engagement.

- Tolerate high levels of uncertainty and shared control of the program.
- Clarify and confirm informally, and later formally, agreement about the 'mission' of the partnership and the core elements of the program.
- Make a long-term commitment and persevere.
- Respond to expressions of community needs regarding program implementation with a high level of flexibility. Post-secondary partners need to be self-critical and willing to jettison the 'excess baggage' of their institutions and work around some of the constraints of their institutions.
- Become familiar with the priorities, practices, and circumstances of the community, without becoming involved in them. (In the First Nations Partnership Programs, the post-secondary partners did not seek or presume to become experts or insiders of the cultures or social life of the community partners.)
- Assume an encouraging, non-directive stance while waiting.
- Avoid 'doing' when non-action would be more productive of community agency and, ultimately, capacity building.
- Be receptive to what the community brings to the project, although these contributions may come in unfamiliar forms and at unexpected times.



The First Nations Partnership Programs effectively broke new ground with the open architecture of the Generative Curriculum Model. The four video documentaries produced as part of the evaluation research, along with participants' accounts, provide compelling testimony about the potential for learning and development through the partnerships. They show how universities and colleges can reach beyond the walls of on-campus structures and respond flexibly to communities that recognize education as an important tool for social and economic development. The challenge remaining is how to go beyond the open architecture of the Generative Curriculum Model to an open architecture in the pedagogical and administrative structures comprising post-secondary institutions as a whole. One way institutions could start to manifest a new vision would be to show substantial support for off-campus programs that are receptive to community initiative and inclusion in program delivery and curriculum design.

The program evaluation revealed many expected and unexpected positive outcomes when Early Childhood Care and Development training is seen as a tool for:

- capacity building
- personal healing and transformation
- cultural revitalization
- community development
- institutional change.

Despite considerable differences among the First Nations partners in terms of their infrastructure, location, culture, economic status, and existing services for children and families, all of the partnerships yielded unprecedented successes for students, for the communities, and for the institution-based teams. The evaluation shows that post-secondary education can be delivered in communities as small and distant from the partnering university as Tl'azt'en Nation, with an on-reserve population of about 600 people in three villages nestled in wilderness. And it worked as well, though differently, in the larger, semi-urban setting of the Cowichan Tribes, co-located with one university-college partner and within an hour of the other university partner.

First Nations Partnership Programs demonstrates the benefits that can flow when partners recognize the need to anchor capacity-building initiatives deeply within the context of the local people, their existing social organization and cultural strengths, their potential for transformation, and their will to move forward on internally articulated agendas. Many human service and development assistance initiatives at both individual and community levels proceed on the basis of the assumption that the more chronically oppressed or needy a group of people seems to be, the more one must bring to the situation in order to be helpful. The record of First Nations Partnership Programs shows the opposite.

To be supportive of community efforts to strengthen capacity, institutional partners and community leaders themselves must be scrupulous about not being pre-emptive and not overwhelming the community with imported 'goods and services' from outside their own context and out of step with their own internal rhythm and pace. Rather than evoking the potential in any community for passive receptivity and eventual dependency, capacity-building initiatives must capitalize upon the community's agency.

Institutions, investigators, and program planners can contribute to capacity building and cultural sustainability by collaborating with community leaders and groups to build 'social capital' from within the ranks of the youngest to the oldest generations. 'All-ways' respectful social networks based on trust, reciprocity, and the will to act on behalf of community well-being are fundamental to healthy, sustainable, social ecologies in which children and families can thrive.

Being responsive to indigenous communities means more than letting community members voice their concerns or preferences, more than acknowledging diversity, and more than arranging a welcoming environment on mainstream campuses to accommodate indigenous students who are able to come to them.

The evaluation research underscored the need for institutions to open up the foundations of how training programs are conceived and delivered, how optimal child care and development is defined, and how communities can play leading roles in capacity-building initiatives.

## LOOKING FORWARD

Program participants recommended extensions of the Generative Curriculum Model at both pre-program and post-program ends of the spectrum. The university-based team and supporters of their initiatives identified the need for a comprehensive presentation of the potential for education to serve community-identified goals for capacity building and sustaining culture. Next steps indicated by the program evaluation are described in this final section of the report.

### 1 Pre-university modules for community development in Early Childhood Care and Development

Three pre-university modules are being developed in collaboration with First Nations community resource people. These modules will be intended to increase community involvement in promoting children's well-being and undertaking new initiatives to benefit children and families. The modules will be useful to communities wishing to identify and recruit community members who may be suitable for specialized training. The modules address:

- constructions of childhood and child care, internal and external to the community
- assessment of conditions, needs, and goals for children within the context of families and communities
- enhancement of indigenous practices that support positive developmental outcomes.

### 2 Professional development module

Many aboriginal graduates in Canada have difficulty successfully transferring the knowledge and skills acquired in a mainstream program to the cultures and conditions in their communities. One module is planned to support community members' transition from mainstream training to implementation of programs in Early Childhood Care and Development in cultural communities.

### 3 Extension of curricula using the Generative Curriculum Model

First Nations community partners and other communities have identified a need for co-constructed course work that would lead to advanced certification and capacity to operate programs in their communities. New course development is planned in three areas:

- a. early childhood specialization in caring for infants and toddlers;
- b. early childhood specialization in children with special needs;
- c. advanced child and youth care, culminating in a degree.

This evaluation and a recent pilot project with Onion Lake First Nation underscore the need to conceptualize post-secondary education in ECCD and Youth Care as part of a larger, community development agenda in which the community necessarily plays significant roles. The pilot project with Onion Lake First Nation began with a traditional distance education approach to delivery of third and fourth year university course work. Early in this project it became clear that this approach would not provide the supports that had worked so successfully for students during their earlier, diploma-level program and would not ensure that the knowledge and skills that students were learning would be culturally relevant or would enjoy broad community acceptance and subscription. Because the program had been conceptualized as a pilot project based on established distance education materials in

the School of Child and Youth Care, there was insufficient funding to make significant changes in the structure of the program. While the earlier two-year diploma program had enjoyed a completion rate of 100%, the completion rate for the 'standard' distance education program was 55%. Much was learned from the Onion Lake degree pilot program, reinforcing the understandings of the First Nations Partnership Programs team that a Generative Curriculum Model has a significantly greater likelihood to be effective in meeting community-identified training goals than established post-secondary distance education approaches.

#### 4 'Generative Communities Project'

There is a need to assess and understand the sustainability of effects brought about by the First Nations Partnership Programs. Support for a participatory program of research is currently being sought, to build on evaluation results to date by documenting the legacy and potential of a 'generative' approach to community development using practice-oriented education as a tool. This analysis will illuminate the socio-cultural circumstances and processes that generate public will and community involvement in child well-being initiatives.

Funding is currently being sought to support preparation of a volume that would provide a full account of the conceptual framework and research evidence supporting a 'generative' approach to capacity building.

#### 5 ECCD leadership development graduate program<sup>6</sup>

The principles of the Generative Curriculum Model and the findings of this evaluation of seven First Nations Partnership Programs are currently being applied to an innovative capacity-building initiative in Sub-Saharan Africa. This initiative is creating a full, masters degree curriculum in ECCD that is grounded in culturally contextualized understandings of child care and development. Program delivery combines face-to-face seminars and electronically networked interactions among members of a geographically dispersed student cohort and instructors who are leaders in ECCD from around the world. This graduate program will be available for adaptation in First Nations and other cultural communities seeking to strengthen leadership in community-focused ECCD.

<sup>6</sup> The Early Childhood Development Virtual University ([www.ECDVU.org](http://www.ECDVU.org))



# First Nations Partnership Programs Documentation and Evaluation Project Publications 1998-2000 (chronological order from most recent)

- Ball, J., Pierre, M., Pence, A., & Kuehne, V. **Rediscovering First Nations values in child care in Canada.** In M. Kaplan, N. Henkin, & A. Kusano (Eds.). Intergenerational program strategies from a global perspective. University Press of America. (In press)
- Ball, J. & Pence, A. **A 'Generative Curriculum Model' for supporting child care and development programs in First Nations communities.** Journal of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology: Special Issue. (In press)
- Ball, J., Leo, C., & Pierre, M. **Profile: Mount Currie First Nation: Aboriginal Child and Youth Care Program.** Interaction/Ideas Journal of the Canadian Child Care Federation. (In press)
- Ball, J. & Pence, A. **ECE training in First Nations communities: Five "secrets" of success.** Interaction/Ideas Journal of the Canadian Child Care Federation. (In press)
- Ball, J. & Pence, A. (2000). **A post-modernist approach to culturally grounded training in Early Childhood Care and Development.** Australian Journal of Early Childhood, 25 (1), 21-25.
- Ball, J. & Pence, A. (1999). **Beyond developmentally appropriate practice: Developing community and culturally appropriate practice.** Young Children, March, 46-50.
- Ball, J., Definney, S., & Pence, A. (1999). **Evaluation of community involving ECCD training in seven First Nations communities.** In E. Lowe (Ed.), Linking research to practice: Second Canadian forum. (pp. 188-193) Ottawa: Canadian Child Care Federation and Canadian School Boards Association.
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- Dahlberg, G., Moss, P. & Pence, A. (1999). **Beyond quality in early childhood education and care: Postmodern perspectives.** London: Falmer Press.
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- Pence, A. & Ball, J. (1999). **Two sides of an eagle's feather: Co-Constructing ECCD training curricula in university partnerships with Canadian First Nations communities.** In H. Penn (Ed.), Theory, policy and practice in early childhood services. (pp. 36-47) Buckingham, UK: Open University Press.
- Pence, A. (1999). **"It takes a village...", and new roads to get there.** In D. Keating & C. Hertzman (Eds.), Developmental health as the wealth of nations. (pp. 322-336). New York: Guilford Press.
- Pence, A. (1998). **On knowing the place: Reflections on understanding quality care.** Canadian Journal for Research in Early Childhood Education, 7 (1), 71-80.
- Pence, A. (1998). **Reconceptualizing ECCD in the Majority World: One minority world perspective.** International Journal of Early Childhood, 30 (2), 19-30.

## Publications about First Nations Partnership Programs (prior to 1998) \*

- Pence, A., & McCallum, M. (1994). **Developing cross-cultural partnerships: Implications for child care quality, research, and practice.** In P. Moss & A. Pence (Eds.). Valuing quality in early childhood services: New approaches to defining quality. (pp. 108-122). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Pence, A., Kuehne, V., Greenwood-Church, M., & Opekokew, M.R. (1993). **Generative curriculum: A model of university and First Nations co-operative post-secondary education.** International Journal of Educational Development, 13 (4), 339-349.
- Kuehne, V., & Pence, A. (1993). **Developing a model for cross-cultural education in child and youth care.** Child and Youth Care Forum, 22 (4), 301-314.
- Pence, A., Kuehne, V., Greenwood-Church, M., Mulligan, V., & Opekokew, M.R. (1992). **First Nations early childhood care and education: The Meadow Lake Tribal Council / School of Child and Youth Care Curriculum Development Project.** Multiculturalism / Multiculturalisme, 14 (2/3), 15-17.

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