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APRIL 1996



NATIONAL  
CRIME  
PREVENTION  
COUNCIL

CANADA

PREVENTION  
AND  
CHILDREN  
COMMITTEE:  
A COMPENDIUM  
OF APPROACHES  
FROM ACROSS  
CANADA

REFERENCE

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1996

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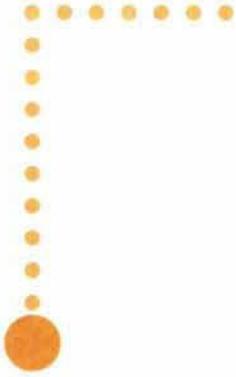


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MAY 1996

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For additional copies

National Crime Prevention Council Secretariat  
130 Albert Street  
Ottawa, Ontario  
K1A 0H8  
Tel. (613) 941-0505  
Fax (613) 952-3515

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Printed in Canada

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This document is an abridged version of *Healthy Children, Healthy Communities – A Compendium of Approaches From Across Canada*, published by the Healthy Child Development Project in November 1995. It contains examples of community-level activities that are targeted at children up to six years of age. It also covers examples of activities at the community level that are targeted at children and youth in general, but which have a component focusing on children up to six. What is not included in this version of the compendium that was in the original document are summaries of activities and developments occurring at the provincial/territorial levels. This abridged edition has been prepared for the National Crime Prevention Council, Prevention and Children Committee by the Healthy Child Development Project, a joint initiative of the Canadian Institute for Advanced Research in Toronto and the Centre for Studies of Children at Risk in Hamilton, Ontario.

In searching out examples and gathering material to be included in this document, the three goals of the project provided guidance. The goals are:

- 1) promoting innovation,
- 2) building leadership, and
- 3) achieving and measuring results

More than 300 individuals have contributed to the development of this compendium, through phone interviews, submission of materials, and approval of the final drafts. These people included community developers, program administrators, government representatives, professionals from several disciplines and volunteers.

To expand the scope of potential communication, the information collected for the original compendium will be made available in a practical format on the World Wide Web.



## INTRODUCTION

The National Crime Prevention Council is an independent, voluntary council.

Its focus is on crime prevention through social development.

The mission of the Council is to develop strategies to enable individuals and their communities to improve their safety, security and well-being. Its goals are to:

- promote the safety of all individuals and their communities
- develop plans which look at the causes of crime, the opportunities to commit crime, and the conditions that leave people exposed to crime
- develop partnerships with communities to carry out crime prevention activities

### **Children and youth are the Council's greatest concern**

Over the years, there have been many efforts to improve the well-being and living conditions of children and youth. These efforts are being increasingly undermined by social and economic insecurity and by public fiscal restraint. Our failure to invest in the social development of children and youth has, and will continue to have, serious implications. We weaken our ability to protect children and youth as victims. And there is a direct impact on criminal behaviour. Researchers have identified many factors that place children and youth at risk of engaging in criminal activity, including the following:

- child poverty
- inadequate living conditions
- inconsistent and uncaring parenting
- childhood traumas, such as physical and sexual abuse

- family breakdown
- racism and other forms of discrimination
- difficulties in school
- delinquent friends
- living in situations where there is a alcohol, drug and other kinds of substance abuse

### **The Council's immediate priority is children up to six years of age**

It believes that by working in partnerships with communities, it is possible to build on the strengths inherent in Canadian families, cultures and communities.

- to ensure a nurturing, safe and supportive social environment for our children; and
- to provide families with the knowledge, skills and support they need to raise healthy children.

There are many innovative projects that support children, youth and families across the country. This abridged compendium does not describe them all, but there are enough examples here to indicate how much we can learn from each other.

Ensuring the healthy development of Canada's children depends largely upon people who can work together to create change, build on each other's successes and work effectively across sectors. This compendium is intended to encourage interested Canadians to come together on behalf of children and youth – to try new initiatives, to build community capacity, and to bridge sectoral boundaries. Many Canadians have responded by providing information about their initiatives and by volunteering to be contact persons in this compendium.

## NEWFOUNDLAND

### EXAMPLES OF COMMUNITY-LEVEL ACTIVITIES

**Port au Port Community Education Initiative, Inc.**, a non-profit organization connecting educational initiatives with community needs, evolved in Port au Port, Newfoundland, over several years. Community members wanted to improve literacy rates and reduce high school drop-out rates. A series of projects and programs connected with life-long learning and involving various community partners were developed starting in the early 1980s to address these goals. Ten years later, in 1993, agencies and organizations came together to integrate services and formalize the Community Education Initiative. This partnership supports community economic development by focusing on social issues and life-long learning from the early years on.

Current activities include early childhood programs, community schools, alternative/adult education and community awareness initiatives. The early childhood programs, located in primary schools, include family resource centres and preschool enrichment programs. The community schools try to connect education and community life through literacy programs, parenting programs and community-based curriculum development. Alternative/adult education at the Pathfinder Learning Centre provides an alternative setting to pursue high school level and adult basic education courses using a computer-managed system which allows for independent study. With federal and provincial support, the centre also has coordinated other training and employment initiatives. These include a cooperative education program and linkages that match youth with a local employer for 26 weeks. Locally televised community forums are used to broaden the base of participation and involvement in the planning of Community Education Initiative activities and future directions.

Local school boards, economic development associations, the Department of Social Services, Human Resources Development Canada, the local community college, police and public health departments are among the agencies essential to the Community Education Initiative. When a problem arises, necessary decisions are possible because everyone is at the table.

#### Contact:

BEVERLY KIRBY  
Coordinator  
Community Education Initiative, Inc.  
Bishop O'Reilly High School  
P.O. Box 70  
Aguathuna, NF A0N 1A0  
Voice: 709-648-9266  
Fax: 709-648-2786

**The Brighter Futures Coalition of St. John's and Area** consists of eight community groups and organizations within St. John's and the surrounding area. The coalition partners are:

Bell Island	709-488-3508
Buckmaster's Community Centre	709-579-0718
Froude Avenue Community Centre	709-579-0763
Kenmount Neighbourhood Centre	709-748-2082
Rabbittown Community Centre	709-739-3452
Shea Heights	709-726-2589
St. Scio Community Centre	709-722-1168
Virginia Park Community Centre	709-579-4534

The coalition was established to provide programs and services targeted at children at risk, living in these areas, between 0 and 6 years of age. With funding from Health Canada approved only recently, the coalition has just begun to establish programs.

The coalition completed an extensive needs assessment in each of the eight communities to determine what specific programs and services need to be developed and implemented.

Anticipated programs include community kitchens, toy libraries, family resource centres, child safety programs, parent and child programs, and much more. These community-based programs are being designed to involve parents as well as children. In fact, parents will play an active role in program development and management, serving on both the board and parent committees in each of the communities.

**The Community Centres of St. John's** were set up by the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation to encourage tenants in housing projects to become more involved in their communities. In 1985, the corporation opened the first of five centres located in the housing project areas of St. John's. Each centre has a board of directors consisting of at least 50 percent tenants, the remainder being community agencies and resource personnel. The common goal of all centres is the enhancement of the quality of life of residents through recreation, education, social and vocational programs. Programs offered through the centres include well-baby clinics; preschool health checks; tutoring and literacy programs; preschools; teen, parenting and seniors programs; summer recreation programs; plus a wide variety of community social events.

All centres collaborate to participate in joint funding projects and programs to enhance the interests of the areas they serve. An example is the development of the Brighter Futures

Coalition of St. John's and Area, in which each community centre manager serves as a Brighter Futures board member. The Brighter Futures-funded programs to be piloted at the community centres are a prenatal program, a community kitchen, a toy library and child safety programs.

#### **Contacts:**

JIM CROCKWELL  
 Manager  
 Buckmaster's Circle Community Centre  
 P.O. Box 22022  
 St. John's, NF A1C 6L2  
 Voice: 709-579-0718  
 Fax: 709-579-0718

BOB DAWSON  
 Manager  
 Froude Avenue Community Centre  
 89 Froude Avenue  
 St. John's, NF A1E 3B8  
 Voice: 709-579-0763  
 Fax: 709-579-0548

PAUL LAHEY  
 Manager  
 Virginia Park Community Centre  
 P.O. Box 21011  
 St. John's, NF A1A 5B2  
 Voice: 709-579-4534  
 Fax: 709-579-4534

PAT MURRAY  
 Manager  
 Rabbittown Community Centre  
 26 Braves Street  
 St. John's, NF A1B 3C5  
 Voice: 709-739-8482  
 Fax: 709-739-8482

MIKE WADDEN  
 Manager  
 Mt. Scio Community Centre  
 Brophy Place, P.O. Box 21046  
 St. John's, NF A1A 5B2  
 Voice: 709-722-1168  
 Fax: 709-722-1885

Located in Bay St. George, a rural area, the **Sexual Abuse Community Services Program (SACS)** aims to serve children who have experienced sexual abuse and to improve the climate and support for people who disclose sexual abuse experiences. The program provides intervention that is both survivor-centred and accessible in responding to needs linked to experiences of sexual abuse.

The service came about as a result of lobbying from community members, professionals and social, health and education services who argued that existing services in the community could not address the needs of survivors of sexual abuse. SACS has been made possible through cooperation among the provincial departments of Health, Social Services, and Education. These departments allowed three counsellors from different disciplines to work together using a team approach. This team operationalized the service model and opened the service in March 1993.

The mandate of the service is threefold: (1) to provide counselling and support services to people affected by sexual abuse, including survivors/victims and non-offending support person(s); (2) to promote community awareness of the impact of sexual abuse; and (3) to foster cooperative efforts among other community services and government agencies.

The model is set up to be readily accessible and welcoming. It is accountable to Community Health and a sub-committee of the local Mental Health Advisory Committee. It is located in a community hospital-based mental health service.

Although three independent evaluations of the service have been positive, the future of the service is uncertain given financial constraints.

**Contact:**

MICHELLE SKINNER  
Counsellor  
Sexual Abuse Community Services  
Sir Thomas Roddick Hospital  
89 Ohio Drive  
Stephenville, NF A2N 2V6  
Voice: 709-643-7279  
Fax: 709-643-2700

**Daybreak** is a family intervention service for low-income families with children who have special needs and/or challenging behaviour. The children's program is a specialized child care program with enrichments. The parents' program focuses on strengthening parenting capabilities and requires parent involvement 75 percent of the time. A separate support program for young pregnant women has been evaluated and shows exemplary results.

Using an holistic approach, Daybreak offers literacy training, budget management and food supplements in addition to the parenting focus. The philosophy emphasizes respect for participants and building self-esteem. Evidence of the program's abilities to facilitate these results is parents' recent lobby of government officials for program funding. Daybreak works with other organizations in two ways: at the program level through cooperative programming, such as literacy training with a literacy organization, food supplements with a service club and nutrition education with public health; and at the individual participant level, through cooperative case planning.

**Contact:**

MELBA RABINOWITZ  
Director  
Daybreak  
3 Barnes Road  
St. John's, NF A1C 3X1  
Voice: 709-726-1921  
Fax: 709-726-1607





## NOVA SCOTIA

### EXAMPLES OF COMMUNITY-LEVEL ACTIVITIES

**The Cape Breton Family Resource Coalition** aims to develop a family resource centre in Sydney with satellite components throughout the Island. The centre will deliver a range of coordinated services that promote the health and well-being of children between 0 and 6 years of age in Cape Breton. Based on an interdisciplinary, family-centred philosophy, the objectives are to establish parent education programs, a toy and resource library, play groups, drop-in programs, and an early intervention program.

The coalition itself consists of an elected board of directors and outreach committees representing the various communities of Cape Breton. The board and committees include parent consumers, professionals and other interested volunteers. The group applies community development principles in forming partnerships with existing local services and agencies. All services are delivered in a non-threatening and non-judgmental manner.

The communities of Cape Breton are characterized by diverse cultural backgrounds and family compositions. Its rural nature and limited resources tend to add increased pressures on family unity. This program is intended to reduce risk factors for young children and their families in an area where such services have not been available.

#### Contact:

KELLY MCNENLY-CHASSON  
Executive Director  
Family Place Resource Centre  
106 Townsend Street  
Sydney, NS B1P 5E1  
Voice: 902-562-5616  
Fax: 902-562-8528

**Atlantic Canada Research:** Dr. Lynn McIntyre, in the Faculty of Health Professions at Dalhousie, is involved in a one-year qualitative research project collecting information on nine feeding programs in the Atlantic Provinces. The programs are grass-roots efforts: neighbours feeding neighbours. They are locally driven and operate with donations from local businesses, schools and other organizations, and limited support from public dollars.

Some programs have one paid coordinator and perhaps a few paid staff. They operate with the assistance of volunteers such as teachers, community workers, church workers and sometimes other children and youth. The feeding programs are generally located in schools and churches.

Some programs are resistant to those outside the community knowing about them. Part of the research agreement with the programs is not to identify them. People are empowered to help themselves and want to keep their efforts private.

Dr. McIntyre has also developed an instrument to assess breakfast skipping in young elementary school children. This tool has been used with a large representative sample of children in Nova Scotia, northeastern Ontario and in some Aboriginal communities.

#### Contact:

DR. LYNN MCINTYRE  
Associate Professor  
Dalhousie University  
Faculty of Health Professions  
5968 College Street, 3rd Floor  
Halifax, NS B3H 3J5  
Voice: 902-494-3327  
Fax: 902-494-1966  
E-mail: llmcinty@is.dal.ca

**Family SOS** is a non-profit organization using a "hands-on" approach to work toward the preservation of the family. The program consists of weekly home visits of an hour or so for as long as the worker and the parent mutually agree to continue. Family SOS is also developing a specialized six-week program in which workers are involved with families 20 to 30 hours each week, a more intensive intervention fashioned after the "Home Builder Program" in the United States.

Family SOS is also providing infant care parent training. Maternity hospitals identify high-risk parents and Family SOS provides staff for long visits each week for eight weeks. It is an attempt to replicate the extended families who are not available to all young parents.

To reconnect extended families and increase the family's role in decision making, Family SOS is interested in testing the "family group conferencing" approach. Started in New Zealand, this approach brings families together to prepare plans and provide supports for a child who is in need of care and protection. The concept is built on the confidence that families can come up with their own decisions and solutions when provided with the opportunity and supports necessary to implement their plans.

The approach is not yet being used in Nova Scotia, but Family SOS has submitted a proposal to the Nova Scotia Attorney General's Department to finance a demonstration project on family group conferencing. Rural areas of Nova Scotia have indicated interest in this approach. In Newfoundland, Memorial University completed a highly successful family group conferencing demonstration project in March 1995. Success has been reported in New Zealand and Britain. British Columbia includes family group conferencing, among other strategies for conflict resolution, in its revised child welfare legislation. In the United States, Vermont and Oregon are considering such legislation.

**Contact:**

CHERYL GILLETT  
Executive Director  
Family SOS (Family Service of Support Association)  
7071 Bayers Road  
Bayers Road Shopping Centre,  
Suite 337  
Halifax, NS B3L 2C2  
Voice: 902-455-5515  
Fax: 902-455-7190  
E-mail: cgillett@ra.isisnet.com

**PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND**

**EXAMPLES OF COMMUNITY-LEVEL ACTIVITIES**

The **CHANCES Inc. Coalition** in the Queen's Region is the largest of the Brighter Futures-funded coalitions. In 1994, more than 100 people who all live or work in the region established the coalition as a non-profit corporation focusing on children 0 to 6 years of age who are having difficulties in their lives.

Consistent with the priorities of the P.E.I. Brighter Futures initiative, the coalition has set up a family resource centre in Charlottetown providing services requested by parents in the Queen's Region. CHANCES is seeking to expand services to other areas of the region, for example, through drop-ins in other locations, such as community health centres.

The specific programs and services provided include Parents Helping Parents to encourage personal growth in order to enhance parenting. Stimulating children's programs are offered simultaneously to help eliminate barriers to parents' participation. The Special Delivery Club provides young women who are pregnant or have babies and have little family support, the opportunity for educational and mutually supportive activities. The first group through the program has developed an ongoing informal network and support group. The goals of the youth component of CHANCES are to help youth become better prepared for parenthood, through youth focus groups and the youth information series. Community kitchens and community sewing are offered in several locations in partnership with the University of Prince Edward Island. The sewing program was developed specifically in response to parents' requests to promote self-sufficiency. Other partners in program delivery include public health and social services.

Parents are recruited to volunteer for a variety of roles in the centre and in all programs. In addition, the Parents' Focus Group provides a monthly open forum for parents to discuss the programs and help evaluate how programs are meeting their needs. The meetings are

intended to be empowering for parents, and to enable them to take the initiative in planning and developing programs that they want. Staff act as resources, helping parents to understand and deal with the realities of funding and to find alternative ways to establish the desired services.

The board of directors and all committees have at least 50 percent parent representation. Parents who have lived or now live in conditions of risk make up this 50 percent. Other community members, service providers and other professionals are also on the board and committees.

#### Contacts:

LYNNE ALWARD AND LESLIE CONDON  
Co-Chairs

BRENDA RIOUX  
Resource Centre Coordinator

ANN ROBERTSON  
Community Development Coordinator

Queen's Coalition for a Brighter Future  
CHANCES  
37 Grafton Street  
Charlottetown, PE C1A 1K6  
Voice: 902-892-8744  
Fax: 902-892-3351

## NEW BRUNSWICK

### EXAMPLES OF COMMUNITY-LEVEL ACTIVITIES

The **Saint John Family Resource Centre** is an expansion of the former Single Parent Resource Centre. Through CAPC funding in 1993, the centre was able to expand its mandate to serve all families in the low-income urban area. At that time, the centre joined with a coalition of service providers to provide services on a collaborative basis. The program

has broad goals that touch on income and employment; family life; physical, social, emotional and developmental needs; housing; physical safety; nutrition; and education. Activities include:

- Building Self-Esteem and Gaining Independence (an intensive program for women)
- workshops on parenting, wellness

- a community kitchen project (menu planning and meal preparation)
- volunteer-led craft class
- Teen Mothers Support Group and Special Delivery Club (pre- and postnatal support)
- Nobody's Perfect (parent education)
- personal growth programs (8 to 10 weeks): grieving, relationships, women and anger, and self-awareness (on an as-needed or as-requested basis)
- supportive counselling and referral available by phone or drop-in
- drop-in (CAPC funded), includes gym on Saturdays
- newsletter (CAPC funded)
- toy lending (CAPC funded)
- a parents' association (a group to identify family needs in the community and work to create services).

With CAPC funding the centre's activities and hours of operation have doubled and week-end activities have been added.

The organizations involved include churches, the Health and Community Services Department (home economists and social workers), community colleges (counsellors), the Learning Exchange (which provides the literacy program), the Community Health Centre, the Human Development Council (which includes business, community, agencies and community people), and a network of agencies serving single parents.

The agency board of directors has nearly doubled from a year ago with the addition of parent participants and a CAPC coalition member. New members have challenged the former board "to learn to share decision making." The original CAPC coalition meets occasionally and makes decisions in consultation with the consultant from Health Canada, staff, volunteers, parents and the board. For each program provided jointly with another organization, there are separate formal management processes that involve both agencies and program participants.

The centre sees success as indicated by two major factors: (1) the increase in people using the centre, and (2) parent participants taking ownership of the centre by working as volunteers in the centre itself and sitting as volunteer board members. As parents gain experience, the community's capacity to tackle community problems is developing.

The development of a shared vision among coalition members is an important factor underpinning this success. This vision includes intersectoral service development, parent ownership, and a focus on both the parent and the child. The principle is that children are only as well as their parents. Other important and practical contributors to the centre's success are various supports which make the centre more accessible to single parents — for example, bus passes and free babysitting for the teen moms' group.

The centre is developing an overall evaluation process, in addition to undertaking evaluations of individual user satisfaction in some programs. To date, users have indicated changes in their abilities to manage stressful situations, awareness of their children's needs and emotional development, and their overall wellness.

**Contact:**

EILEEN McLAUGHLIN  
 Executive Director  
 Saint John Family Resource Centre  
 39 Cliff Street  
 Saint John, NB E2L 3A8  
 Voice: 506-633-2182  
 Fax: 506-633-7417

The **Intrafamilial Sexual Abuse Program (ISAP)** was established in 1988 to provide services to rural families in which child sexual abuse has occurred. An inter-agency, multidisciplinary, community-based program, ISAP also informs and educates a range of professionals and volunteers.

The ISAP Planning and Review Committee meets bi-monthly for case review and to guide the development of the program. Community linkages continue to be critical to the growth, development and maintenance of ISAP. These community linkages include the ISAP Community Support Group; Charlotte County Community Mental Health Services; Family and Community Social Services; Justice Department; Department of Education; Inter-agency Family Violence Committee; Department of Human Resources and Development; the local medical community; and local religious organizations. The collaborative approach built on these relationships has proven to be essential in a small rural community where there are scarce resources.

A process evaluation of ISAP was completed in 1995 and the results are available in a handbook which documents the program's internal organization to allow replication in other rural communities. The ISAP guide is available from: ISAP, P.O. Box 300, St. George, NB E0G 2Y0.

**Contacts:**

JOAN HOLLET  
 ISAP Project Evaluator  
 (private practice)  
 P.O. Box 172  
 St. George, NB E0G 2Y0  
 Voice: 506-755-6309  
 Fax: 506-755-6983

BRIAN THOMPSON  
 ISAP Director  
 Charlotte County Intrafamilial  
 Sexual Abuse Program  
 Mental Health Commission  
 P.O. Box 300  
 St. George, NB E0G 2Y0  
 Voice: 506-755-4044  
 Fax: 506-755-1807

The **Moncton Early Family Intervention Program Inc.** is for environmentally at-risk children, 2 to 5 years of age. Generally, children entering the program have been abused. The program requires parents of children accepted for the program to be involved in at least 75 percent of the parent support and education activities. The admissions committee includes public health, mental health and schools.

Parents attend workshops and groups. In addition, the program addresses parent literacy and provides hands-on experience in food preparation. When parents are ready (for example, when alcohol abuse stops), they can move into one of 12 houses owned by the agency. Parents are often motivated to be involved in the program by their children's progress. In a related after-school program, youth from Headstart in Grades 7, 8, and 9 help tutor children in Grades 1, 2, and 3.

**Contact:**

CLAUDETTE BRADSHAW  
 Director  
 Moncton Early Family Intervention  
 Program Inc.  
 1111 Mountain Road  
 Moncton, NB E1C 2S0  
 Voice: 506-858-8252  
 Fax: 506-857-3170

## QUEBEC

### EXAMPLES OF COMMUNITY-LEVEL ACTIVITIES

#### Community projects and agencies

The projects mentioned in this section represent only a sample of the many innovative activities carried out in Quebec for children, young people, families and communities. These projects offer a range of services, mostly having a preventive nature, intended mainly to enhance the contribution of communities toward solving their problems, and the opportunity for young people to assume responsibility for themselves.

#### Early childhood projects

Project **1,2,3 GO!** is an early childhood assistance initiative supported by United Way of Greater Montreal and partners from various networks — public, community or private agencies, the business community, elected officials and citizens. The mission of this major social project is to bring together the financial, human and material resources to mobilize the community and support its joint activities for children from birth to 3 years of age and their families, particularly those from socioeconomically disadvantaged environments. The welfare of small children and the improvement of their living conditions are the focus of these efforts.

Six neighbourhoods with a high concentration of preschool-age children in the Montreal, Laval and Montréal regions were invited to establish a 1,2,3 GO! project in their own community. A task force was set up in each neighbourhood to support the implementation of local initiatives.

The children will participate regularly in activities that promote their affective, cognitive, social and physical development in a

receptive, warm and stimulating environment. Participation of parents is encouraged and their role is respected throughout the project.

#### Contact:

PIERRE-MARIE COTTE  
Director  
Project 1,2,3 GO!  
493 Sherbrooke Street West  
Montréal, PQ H3A 1B6  
Voice: 514- 288-1261  
Fax: 514- 844-2696

The **Prospères** project in Pointe-Calumet aims to develop a model of community intervention capable of mobilizing the members of a vulnerable community by developing and implementing an action plan. The purpose of this plan is to create, encourage or maintain the commitment of fathers to their small children (birth to 5 years of age). Pointe-Calumet is a rural community with 500 preschool-age children and where there are signs of major problems in parent-child relationships. However, the emergence of a community dynamic around several local and regional organizations is also evident. Action research will be carried out simultaneously in a Montreal neighbourhood with a similar socioeconomic profile for comparison purposes.

Several categories of institutions and persons participate in this project. Of these, the Comité promoteur (extra-community) brings together participants from the regional and local health and social services network (psychologists, social workers, a community organizer). The Comité de pilotage de la collectivité includes parents, community organizers, decision makers from the health and social services system, and researchers. Most members of this committee, which is responsible for implementing the project's action plan, live in the village.

The project receives organizational support from the region's CLSC, which ensures liaison between workers in the field and the research group.

The targeted changes in this community have three major aspects. The project is intended, first, to promote ownership of and responsibility for the problem; that is, to ensure that the community itself can identify the determinant factors and implement activities that promote support for change; second, to strengthen efforts and structures to mobilize and involve the community; and third, to create a local culture of paternal commitment. To this end, the activity consists of five stages: agreeing on a structure for action, achieving consensus on the objectives, developing and implementing an action plan, and evaluating the plan on the basis of results.

Activities are already planned in connection with the project in Pointe Calumet. An exhibition of drawings by children in the Pointe-Calumet primary school will be organized around the theme "Me and My Father," and an improvised show on fatherhood will be presented and involve community leaders.

#### **Contacts:**

GILLES FORGET  
Health Promotion Adviser  
Direction de la Santé publique  
Montréal-Centre  
Voice: 514-528-2404  
Fax: 514-528-2426

LINDA VALLÉE  
Community Organizer  
CLSC Olivier-Chénier  
Voice: 514-491-1233  
Fax: 514-491-3424

#### **Projects concerned with the community in general**

The **Chic Resto-Pop Inc.**, initiated by a group of young adults on social assistance in 1983, constitutes a natural support network

within the disadvantaged population of the Hochelaga-Maisonneuve neighbourhood in Montréal. The neighbourhood has 47 645 residents, 40 percent of whom are below the poverty threshold. Nearly 50 percent of the families are single-parent. In addition, more than 25 percent of young people do not complete secondary education.

In response to the needs of the members of this community, the Chic Resto-Pop offers low-cost meals and a support service for the disadvantaged in the neighbourhood (young people on social assistance, the homeless, single-parent families). A nutritional support service (Pop mobile) has recently been added to this project to combat hunger among poor children by distributing 480 meals to students in primary schools in Montréal and the Hochelaga-Maisonneuve neighbourhood. Funded by the Quebec Department of Education as part of the Pagé Plan, this service has created two jobs.

The Chic Resto-Pop promotes autonomy and self-responsibility. It aims to integrate the community into the neighbourhood's economic and cultural life. The Resto-Pop has created 73 jobs, 16 of which are full time. It also provides training in food service and literacy training and secondary-level French courses (Grades 8 to 12), social training and courses on how to draw up a budget to its employees and the clientele of the Resto.

#### **Contact:**

JACYNTHÉ OUELLETTE  
Director  
Le Chic Resto-Pop Inc.  
3532 Adam Street  
Montréal, PQ H1W 1Y8  
Voice: 514-521-4089  
Fax: 514-521-8774

**PROMIS (PROMotion, Intégration, Société nouvelle)** is an inter-cultural, inter-community and multi-denominational group founded in 1988 to facilitate the integration of refugees and new Canadians into the largely multi-ethnic

neighbourhoods of Côte-des-Neiges and Snowdon in Montréal. The agency, consisting of lay and religious people from these neighbourhoods, relies on the support of 180 volunteers.

PROMIS works in close cooperation with many agencies, including the CLSC Côte-des-Neiges and the Conseil communautaire Côte-des-Neiges/Snowdon, which comprises 45 agencies and a number of schools and neighbourhood agencies. PROMIS is also an active member of some 15 associations and roundtables that work at the community level.

In the past year, 8000 people from 96 countries took part in activities or received services from PROMIS. Of these, 3000 directly benefited from first-line services provided through the group. These include reception, social and psychological guidance, escort, translation, interpretation and accommodation search services. A friendship-twinning service, in which PROMIS serves as an intermediary, promotes integration for new Canadians to develop relationships with families or individuals. Education and facilitation services, information workshops, talks, sewing workshops, community kitchens, a nutritional support program for pregnant women and a food bank service are also offered.

The services for children and youth include an 18-place drop-in day-care centre where educators familiarize young people with the values of the host society. Other educational support includes the involvement of schools, French classes for parents, and assistance to some 150 students (6 to 16 years of age) with learning difficulties. To date, meetings organized between teachers, parents and social workers have been well attended.

The defence of human rights is an increasingly important component of the project's activities. PROMIS familiarizes new Canadians with their rights, supports them in matters

involving discrimination in accommodation, the recognition of equivalencies and equitable access to employment, and refers them to the proper authorities and resources, as required.

**Contact:**

ANDRÉE MÉNARD  
 Director General  
 PROMIS  
 5770 Côte-des-Neiges Road  
 Montréal, PQ H3S 1Y9  
 Voice: 514-345-1615  
 Fax: 514-345-1088

The following projects highlight the partnership between grass-roots agencies and government institutions such as the CLSCs.

In 1989, the resource **Connexion** was added to the Montréal Mouvement SEM (Sensibilisation à l'Enfance Maltraitée) to target the parents of young children (0 to 6 years of age) at risk. Connexion's overall objective to reduce abuse and improve the quality of care provided to children is pursued through family-centred, especially parent-centred, intervention strategies and strategies focused on the surroundings or environment.

The role of the Mouvement SEM is to ensure the effective conduct of this activity in coordination with other services of the agency. The cooperation developed since 1983 with various institutional and community agencies facilitates the realization of the project (family referral, loan of consultants or resource people for training).

In terms of the overall community, the Mouvement SEM aims to alert and educate young parents to the importance of non-violence with children. The agency concentrates on action at various levels: family, relatives, family neighbourhood, school clientele and groups of parents at risk.

**Contact:**

DIANE BÉRUBÉ  
 Director General  
 Mouvement SEM  
 165-A St. Paul Street  
 St-Jean-sur-Richelieu, PQ J3B 1Z8  
 Voice: 514-348-0209  
 Fax: 514-348-9665

The **Programme d'aide à l'enfant et son milieu** is a cooperative effort among 10 or so CLSCs, educators in approximately 40 day-care centres and the parents of children who make up the clientele of these centres. The CLSC La Source, in Charlesbourg near Québec City, is attempting to introduce a regional day-care and parent-support intervention program.

This three-year project provides parents and day-care workers with support designed to curb the behavioral problems and developmental delays that certain children exhibit. It provides training based on the needs of children in difficult circumstances.

Activities to provide stimulation in the day-care setting and meetings to provide support to parents and others involved are part of a structured intervention strategy aimed at reducing behavioral problems among these children.

**Contact:**

GILLES CHARTIER  
 President  
 Programme d'aide à l'enfant et son milieu  
 CLSC La Source  
 190 - 76th Street East  
 Charlesbourg, PQ G1H 7K4  
 Voice: 418-629-2572

The **La Ruche** project, carried out by the non-profit agency Maison de la Famille Témiscouata, brings together families in the region and operates a services and activities centre. The project purports to prevent developmental delays in young children and promote parenting skills for vulnerable families.

The project has two main partners: the L'Enfant d'Or day-care agency, which offers 20 places for children 2 to 4 years of age, and the CLSC Témiscouata, which offers a support program on parenting skills and follows up on families enrolled in the program.

The objective of the program's activities is to improve the quality of parent-child interactions by helping parents to become more knowledgeable about child development and learn concrete methods of stimulating children to reduce their sense of isolation and thus alleviate problems resulting from poverty. Group activities for families are also planned.

**Contact:**

ALPHONSE DIONNE  
 President  
 La Ruche  
 La Maison de la Famille  
 Témiscouata  
 P.O. Box 160  
 Lac-Des-Aigles, PQ G0K 1V0  
 Voice: 418-499-2092

**Parents-Enfants : l'urgence d'agir** is a project directed by the CLSC Seigneurie in cooperation with the CEGEP de Valleyfield, the City of Beauharnois, the local community centre and the Carrefour du partage. The project offers early stimulation workshops to children 2 to 3 years of age as a prevention tool for developmental delay. Workshops on acquiring parenting skills are also planned.

Most of the families covered by the project are single-parent, poor or victims of violence whose needs are inadequately met due to insufficient community resources.

The CLSC Seigneurie offers the workshop component, while the local community centre and the Carrefour du partage loan the premises for activities. CEGEP de Valleyfield selects the trainees in specialized education and day-care techniques who will assist the staff in holding workshops.

**Contact:**

FLORENCE ISABELLE  
 Relations Officer  
 Parents-Enfants : l'urgence d'agir  
 CLSC Seigneurie de Beauharnois  
 71 Maden Street, Room 200  
 Valleyfield, PQ J6S 3V4  
 Voice: 514-371-0143

Initiated by a community agency concerned with the welfare of disadvantaged pregnant women and their children 0 to 5 years of age, the project **Entraide pour la mère et ses enfants** attempts to improve parenting skills

and further education in socially and economically deprived families through workshops on nutrition, clothing, work, self-esteem, isolation and developmental delays in children.

**Contact:**

ESTELLE MESSIER  
 President  
 Entraide pour la mère et ses enfants  
 Regroupement d'entraide pour la mère et ses enfants  
 52 DuPont Street, P.O. Box 121  
 Bedford, PQ J0J 1A0  
 Voice: 514-248-3484

**ONTARIO****EXAMPLES OF COMMUNITY-LEVEL ACTIVITIES**

The **Sparrow Lake Alliance** is a voluntary coalition of Ontario professionals working with children, senior members of provincial government ministries, and members of other provincial networks and organizations who are committed to improving the lives of children. The group rose out of the growing awareness among child mental health professionals that it was not possible to meet all the needs of children with mental health problems. As a result, the group advocates a focus on prevention strategies, service integration and improvements, and basic entitlements for children.

The alliance is a significant network of practitioners, policy makers and advocates concerned with the health and well-being of children. Its broad and diverse membership includes representatives of parent and youth groups and its flexible structure characterizes the alliance as a forum that shares information, develops policy initiatives and acts as catalyst for other activities, such as the Ryerson Public

School Initiative and Voices for Children (formerly the Coalition for Children, Families, and Communities).

**Contact:**

PAUL STEINHAEUER  
 Chair, Sparrow Lake Alliance  
 Staff Psychiatrist  
 Hospital for Sick Children  
 Voice: 416-813-7532  
 Fax: 416-813-5326

One of the main initiatives of the Sparrow Lake Alliance is the establishment of **Voices for Children** (formerly the **Coalition for Children, Families and Communities**). Voices for Children is an umbrella organization comprising a coalition of associations and individuals based in Ontario that focuses on healthy child and youth development. Dr. Paul Steinhauer chairs a steering committee of 17 organizations, including the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, the Ontario Federation of Labour, the Ontario Teachers' Federation, the Ontario Secondary School Students Association and the Sparrow Lake Alliance. Voices for Children is using public education strategies to heighten community awareness about:

- the number of children and youth whose development and competence are at risk;
- the effects on the future of society and the economy if one quarter of children drift into unproductive and dependent adulthood;
- strategies and programs that have already demonstrated effectiveness and efficiency in promoting healthy child development; and
- changes needed in families, workplaces, communities, universal services, specialized services and various levels of governments.

Voices for Children continues to expand its ties with the media and other organizations and individuals. It provides material and offers support to like-minded groups within 15 communities across Ontario to mobilize locally around the needs and issues of their own children and youth.

**Contact:**

BARBARA KILBOURN  
 Coordinator  
 Voices for Children  
 1200 – 415 Yonge Street  
 Toronto, ON M5B 2E7  
 Voice: 416-408-2121, ext. 269 or ext. 225  
 Fax: 416-408-2122  
 E-mail: barb@opc.on.ca

**The Ontario Prevention Clearinghouse** (OPC), established in 1985, is a resource centre and catalyst for health promotion and community development activities, funded by the provincial Ministry of Health.

OPC has supported electronic networks for a number of government-funded, child-related initiatives, including the Brighter Futures (CAPC) Network for 11 Ontario and 11 Alberta projects; the Better Beginnings, Better Futures Network; and the Best Start Network. These networks have the capacity to link communities, researchers, service providers and advocates focused on community-based initiatives concerned with children.

The Ontario Prevention Clearinghouse and Somerset West Community Health Centre will host the Prevention Congress VII in Ottawa from April 8 to 10, 1996. The congress will draw more than 800 participants representing health, social services, community work, education and environment sectors from across North America and Europe. The organizing theme for the program is "Our Communities in a Global Economy: Under Siege and Taking Charge?"

**Contacts:**

BRYAN HAYDAY  
 Executive Director  
 Ontario Prevention Clearinghouse  
 1200 – 415 Yonge Street  
 Toronto, ON M5B 2E7  
 Voice: 416-408-2121  
 Fax: 416-408-2122  
 E-mail: bhayday@opc.on.ca

SIMON MIELNICZUK  
 Information Systems Consultant  
 Ontario Prevention Clearinghouse  
 #1200 – 415 Yonge Street  
 Toronto, ON M5B 2E7  
 Voice: 416-408-2121, ext. 241  
 Fax: 416-408-2122  
 E-mail: simon@opc.on.ca

General Information  
 E-mail: info@opc.on.ca  
<http://www.opc.on.ca>

The **Children at Risk Program** is an experimental, five-year program of the Laidlaw Foundation, a private Canadian foundation that uses its resources to address issues of broad public interest to Canadians. The program is organized around three major domains of activity — policy, research and practice — each of which has its own unit coordinator and funded projects.

A major project of the Children at Risk Program is the "Community Systems" initiative. (The name is short for "community

systems of support to young people and their families.”) The community systems initiative is a collaborative effort currently under way in four sites across Ontario that links neighbourhood residents, broad community networks, levels of government and non-governmental organizations. The goal of this initiative is to contribute to the improved well-being of people through better use of all resources: public, private and voluntary.

The initiative is testing an approach that includes a set of core concepts, a series of practical steps and strategies to foster environments supportive to change. It is transformative in nature in that it tries to change or transform the use of existing resources; there are no new program dollars for the initiative. The Laidlaw and Lawson foundations are co-funding the four sites with modest annual grants to support the community change process. A research design is currently being developed to study and assess these broad processes and their impact on young people and their families.

Another major area of focus for Children at Risk is reporting on states of well-being of children and youth at the local, provincial and national levels. The foundation's State of the Child research unit had been working on reporting on a local and provincial basis, and the Centre for International Statistics has been given funds to begin work on a national report tentatively called “The Progress of Canada's Children.”

**Contact:**

CRAIG SHIELDS  
 Community Systems  
 Coordinator of Children at Risk Program  
 The Laidlaw Foundation  
 950 Yonge Street, Suite 700  
 Toronto, ON M4W 2J7  
 Voice: 416-964-3614  
 Fax: 416-975-1428

The **Cambridge Community Systems Working Group** is one of four Community Systems sites across Ontario sponsored by the Laidlaw and Lawson foundations. The financial support from the two foundations provides the working group with the ability to develop a local community systems approach. The primary goal is to enhance the life quality of children and youth by making better use of existing resources in the community to create supportive environments for children and family life.

The working group brings neighbourhood residents, broad community networks, and levels of government and non-governmental organizations together with representation from education, the municipality, housing, children's mental health, neighbourhood associations, health, the multicultural centre, community economic development efforts, and other sectors.

The working group has implemented the Community Systems approach by using a planning process. A first step was to engage the neighbourhoods in the activity. Five neighbourhood associations are now participating with service organizations and others in the process. This includes the collection of information about the community and its available resources. It also involves the identification of goals or outcomes of well-being and the creation of strategies to achieve those goals. Ultimately, a unified community strategic plan will be designed to guide how resources are used to meet the goals negotiated by community networks.

The Cambridge Community Systems initiative will be an approach or “prototype” demonstrating how to provide more effective, comprehensive and responsive supports to children and families within a local community.

**Contact:**

LEANNE WAGNER  
 Coordinator  
 Cambridge Community Systems  
 Working Group  
 150 Main Street, 2nd Floor  
 Cambridge, ON N1R 6P9  
 Voice: 519-621-6110  
 Fax: 519-622-5868  
 E-mail: lwd@hookup.net

Several local boards of education have initiated activities and practices to bridge schools with other service sectors related to children. Recognizing schools as a physical presence in neighbourhoods, many boards of education have taken steps to involve community residents in both the schools' daily activities and making school premises more accessible during out-of-school times.

The **North York Board of Education** is an example of a school board working in collaboration with community partners which include neighbourhood residents, social service agencies, public health and the corporate sectors. The Rainbow Connection is an interactive model of coordination and curriculum delivery in child care centres and kindergarten classrooms. It began as a small demonstration project five years ago and presently includes a range of models including simple communication, the extension of activities from one program to the other, networking among schools and child care programs, and an early identification program for schools and child care services connected to a mental health agency. Cities in Schools is a collaborative approach involving businesses and social service agencies which, since 1990, has reduced high school dropout rates among at-risk youth. The North York Board of Education is currently working on a Hubs of Excellence project to link several schools with the Community Systems Alliance in North York.

**Contacts:**

VERONICA LACEY  
 Director of Education  
 or JIM GRIEVE  
 Superintendent  
 Community Administrative  
 and Student Services  
 North York Board of Education  
 5050 Yonge Street  
 North York, ON M2N 5N8  
 Voice: 416-395-4661  
 Fax: 416-395-8210

TVO is a public broadcaster licensed as Ontario's Educational Communications Authority. **Get Ready to Learn** is a partnership initiative spearheaded by TVO committed to enriching the learning environment of young children. Traditional approaches such as educational preschool programming designed to promote cognitive and linguistic skills in academic settings do not fully address the potential role television can play in creating a healthy environment for children. Get Ready to Learn is a comprehensive initiative designed to enhance the resources, support and value the efforts of parents and caregivers, build on a community's capacity to create opportunities, and mobilize existing support systems. TVO is bringing together the potential of both broadcast and non-broadcast technology for parents, caregivers and the community.

The Get Ready to Learn project has built partnerships among the various stakeholder groups involved with families, children and caregivers in Ontario. The extensive advisory committee includes representation from all service providers, educators and trainers, professional organizations, and government agencies representing children, families, communities, health, social services, and education. Community outreach strategies include "jam" sessions for parents and caregivers in local communities which provide opportunities for them to express their views and needs in readying children to learn. These sessions will help to develop on-air programming and interactive non-broadcast programming strategies aimed at adult caregivers, with special attention to the "harder to reach" parents and caregivers.

**Contact:**

CHERYL HASSEN  
Project Leader, Get Ready to Learn  
TVOntario  
2180 Yonge Street  
Toronto, ON M4T 2T1  
Voice: 416-484-2600, ext. 2067  
Fax: 416-484-2709  
E-mail: [hassen@tvo.org](mailto:hassen@tvo.org)

The 12 **Better Beginnings, Better Futures** sites include eight prenatal/preschool models for children from birth to 4 years of age. The First Nations communities of Neyaashiinigiing (located near Warton), Long Lake #58 and Ginoogaming (near Geraldton), Walpole Island (situated near Wallaceburg), and Wauzhushk Onigum (located near Kenora) are implementing prenatal/preschool prevention models. Urban settings for the prenatal/preschool project sites include neighbourhoods in Guelph, Kingston, Toronto and Ottawa. Preschool/primary school prevention models are being developed in Cornwall, Etobicoke and Sudbury. All of these projects involve strong partnerships with local school settings.

The Better Beginnings program activities differ from community to community. The project in Sudbury is one example. Sudbury Better Beginnings, Better Futures Association is a non-profit community development corporation committed to promoting a healthy environment in the Donovan-Flour Mill area of the city. The association was initiated as one of the Ontario Better Beginnings, Better Futures seven-year pilots with a primary focus on children 4 to 8 years of age. The original sponsor was the N'Swakamok Friendship Centre and the founding committee included children's services organizations, public health, housing groups, the Sudbury Board of Education and Laurentian University. To date, their efforts illustrate a strong commitment to linking economic renewal and community development to improve circumstances for children. The association membership has grown to include more than 260 individuals and a "council" (board of directors) representing the neighbourhood.

Sudbury Better Beginnings currently provides 22 different programs that fall into four categories: child-focused, parent-focused, school-based and community development. The child-focused and school-based programs include "before and after school" programs and playground peacemakers. Family programs include an alternative school for teen mothers, a travelling toy library, a francophone parent drop-in, family visiting and a summer Nishinabai camping experience. The community development initiatives include leadership training and a community mediation team.

Sudbury Better Beginnings was instrumental in establishing a community economic development initiative that has created a community loan fund (a green dollar barter system) and a community-shared agriculture project. Sudbury Better Beginnings also is a partner in a Green Communities Initiative in Sudbury.

Membership in the association is open to anyone living in the Donovan or Flour Mill area. Current membership is representative of the Native, francophone and English-speaking cultures in the neighborhood. Sudbury Better Beginnings is supported by a community advisory committee which includes the mayor, the chief of police, the healthy communities chair, children services organizations, and designates from the local university and college. As part of the provincial Better Beginnings longitudinal research project, Sudbury Better Beginnings is monitoring the impact of their initiatives on children born in 1989 and on the community as a whole.

**Contact:**

JOAN KUYEK  
Coordinator  
N'Swakamok Native Friendship Centre  
110 Elm Street  
Sudbury, ON P3C 1T5  
Voice: 705-671-1941  
Fax 705-671-1782  
E-mail: [joan@web.uucp](mailto:joan@web.uucp)

## MANITOBA

### EXAMPLES OF COMMUNITY-LEVEL ACTIVITIES

**The Neighbourhood Parenting Support Project** was a four-year (1988 to 1992) research and demonstration project in two inner city, high-risk, multicultural Winnipeg neighbourhoods. The project was located in one neighbourhood, while the other neighbourhood functioned as a comparison or control neighbourhood. The project involved social network intervention which meant focusing on the informal and formal helping systems related to keeping children identified at risk for child maltreatment with their families. The intervention strategy was successful in preventing child maltreatment.

The project intervened in informal personal and neighbourhood networks to strengthen support for parenting. The project also brought together formal services with informal support and helping networks. The social network of each person was mapped and changes or new connections and links were planned and carried out to provide increased resources and supports. Neighbourhood parenting support workers worked with parents to identify social networks, mapping and linking these networks, and providing direct social support and coaching.

The project provided direct parenting support to 100 parents over four years and assisted in expanding social support and parenting support networks. The parenting support networks and use of neighbour-friend support were higher than in the comparison neighbourhood.

Major findings were that:

- social network intervention does improve both informal helping and support; formal systems can be meshed with informal systems; and

- the risk of child maltreatment can be reduced in a neighbourhood by social network intervention.

Since the completion of the project, the Manitoba Community and Family Service Agency has not continued the original intervention. However, in both communities, residents are building on the initiatives started through the project. In Spence community, members and organizations have received CAPC funding for an Aboriginal-based health visitor's program. In the East Broadway neighbourhood, commitment is building through a housing coalition for neighbourhood supports for parents and families.

The original project is now being applied to two other neighbourhoods. The researchers are attempting to replicate the original project to explore its potential for other neighbourhoods.

**Contact:** DON FUCHS  
 Dean  
 Faculty of Social Work, University  
 of Manitoba  
 521 Tier Building  
 Winnipeg, MN R3T 2N2  
 Voice: 204-474-9869  
 Fax: 204-261-3283  
 E-mail fuchs@cc.umanitoba.ca

The mission of the **Andrews Street Family Centre** (ASFC) is to create a supportive and nurturing setting that facilitates the development of children within their families and community. ASFC is founded on the belief that children are reliant on their parents and that all parents, regardless of their life situations, require help and support at times. ASFC uses a family-focused approach based on mutual trust to provide practical supports in the neighbourhood.

The establishment of ASFC and the program development evolved from extensive community consultation, including surveys, large consultation meetings and "kitchen table" meetings. Of 720 surveys completed by community members, 420 respondents volunteered their skills to help develop their community.

Community members are now involved in the board of directors of ASFC — over half are community residents. A separate advisory committee includes schools, a health clinic and the health department, Native women's and other community development organizations, Native Addictions Council for Manitoba, Winnipeg Friendship Centre, Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre, Winnipeg Child and Family Services, Social Planning Council and Neechi Foods. In addition, other organizations are consulted regularly, including other family and children's services, schools, churches, United Way, employment training and educational institutions and Native organizations. ASFC is funded in part by Brighter Futures.

Community residents are involved in more than governance. In addition to volunteering in programs and with other activities, some residents will be hired as employees of ASFC. Over the next few years, the goal is for paid professional staff to "work themselves out of a job," by helping residents obtain the training and support they need to apply for and take on the responsibilities involved in operating ASFC. Current staff will reduce their time to one-half by 1996-97.

As a result of requests and involvement of residents, AFSC operates four main programs:

1. **Andrews Street Family Centre** is a family resource centre offering a parent-child drop-in and support groups; children's programs; prenatal, parenting, nutrition and health programs; fathers' night; food cooperative and community kitchen; washer and dryer and clothing exchange; literacy supports; work experience; workshops; and other community development projects.

2. **Pritchard Place Drop-In** is for children and youth 7 to 17 years of age. It emphasizes cultural and recreational activities and encourages parents to be involved along with their children.

3. **Moms Helping Moms** helps adolescent single parents make connections with each other and with needed services. The goal is to prevent crises and family breakdown by providing practical supports. Some young mothers have received training through the local community college and now support other mothers on a peer support basis. Three positions have been funded by the provincial family services department.

4. The **Andrews Street Community Patrol Co-op** grew out of the community's desire to improve safety in the neighbourhood. Residents are trained as volunteers who act as drivers, walkers and dispatchers to monitor activities. The goal is to reduce vandalism, break-ins and gang-related activities that kept many people from leaving their homes.

**Contact:**

JOSIE HILL  
Executive Director  
Andrews Street Family Centre, Inc.  
220 Andrews Street  
Winnipeg, MN R2W 4T1  
Voice: 204-589-1721  
Fax 204-589-7354

The **Gilbert Park Tenants' Association** is located in northwest Winnipeg. The association aims to help residents work together to strengthen and promote the well-being of Gilbert Park. It also works to promote the rights and responsibilities of residents and the role of the association in the management of the community. The organization has established goals and objectives that include the empowerment of the community and its members, increased participation of residents in the life of the community and development or acquisition of needed resources.

As the community organization of the residents, the association works with the landlord, Manitoba Housing Authority, to improve the housing and general environment, as well as the welfare of the community. All community members belong to the association. Executive officers are elected at an annual general meeting. The executive provides leadership, initiative and coordination of the association and the community centre.

Committees of residents, with the assistance of two staff members and other community organizations, plan and deliver community services and activities. Some of the programs are children's programs, Family Circle, a single-parents' self-help group and other parenting support, a health centre and a food bank. New families are welcomed through the programs and encouraged to become involved in participating, volunteering and working on committees. The association works collaboratively with other organizations to operate some of the cultural, children's and family programs: the Boys and Girls Club, the Manitoba Métis Federation and the Community Education Development Association (CEDA).

The 252-unit community has high unemployment, limited economic opportunities and a high turnover of residents. Many residents are single-parent families with an Aboriginal background. The association has been instrumental in improving the image of the area. It has successfully promoted pride in the appearance of the housing by reporting graffiti and maintenance needs. The development of youth gangs and illegal activities has been curtailed.

The association has helped attract new residents by promoting the area and getting people involved in the community centre; it then plays a role in supporting the application of potential new residents to the Manitoba Housing Authority. Overall, the community is working to secure better physical and social resources to promote the healthy development of children and youth.

**Contact:**

AIME CHARTRAND,  
President  
Gilbert Park Tenants' Association  
45B Gilbert Avenue  
Winnipeg, MN R2X 0T4  
Voice: 204-982-4420  
Fax 204-982-4426

**R. B. Russell Infant Centre** provides support to young, single student parents who are finishing their education. The centre is a non-profit service in an inner city high school of the same name. The provincial government partially funds the program.

The program serves 16 infants and their families. The parents' average age is 16 years. Approximately 70 percent of the school population is of Aboriginal descent. The centre provides breakfast, snacks, cotton diapers, anger management workshops, parenting education and counselling services. Centre-sponsored transportation to the program has promoted stable attendance. Initially, elders were involved in the program, but this component has been temporarily discontinued due to a decline in centre finances.

**Contact:**

JAN RODGERS  
Director  
R. B. Russell Infant Centre  
364 Dufferin Avenue  
Winnipeg, MN R2W 2Y3  
Voice: 204-589-5301  
Fax: 204-586-1817

The **Child/Family Resource Centre** in Cranberry Portage provides support to families through education, Native cultural programs and resources. The centre was established to respond to the needs of isolated families and teens who were pregnant and dropping out of the local high school. The centre is located in an elementary school building and is furnished in a home-like manner to provide a welcoming environment. The

school-based location is a safe environment for families to visit. Services are provided to Cranberry Portage, Moose Lake, Cormorant and Flin Flon, with plans for expansion to other communities in 1995-96. The centre offers a long list of programs: child/parent playgroups; book, toy and adult resource libraries; community kitchens; Muffin/Juice Drop-in, Positive Indian Parenting Program, Mitts for Kids Program, St. John Ambulance Babysitter Course, education about and support for parents and children affected by Foetal Alcohol Syndrome and Foetal Alcohol Effects (FAS/FAE), Nobody's Perfect Parenting Program, and information and referrals about other community and government services and programs.

Parents who use the service are involved on the board of directors and as leaders in parent education programs. They gain self-confidence and extend their knowledge and skills through first co-facilitating groups with experienced leaders. Parents also recruit other parents and are mutually supportive through their participation in programs.

Children in the school where the centre is located also volunteer their time in centre programs, such as the muffin/juice program.

Community members volunteer their time, and are rewarded through a volunteer recognition program. A regular newsletter informs the communities about upcoming programs and recent events, and provides information about child safety and child development. Community members are starting to contribute educational and community event information to the newsletter as well.

Organizations involved with the centre include the local elementary and high schools, the Indian Métis Friendship Centre in Flin Flon, Addictions Foundation, The Pas Family Resource Centre, The Children's Developmental Centre (day-care), Greenstone Business Development, town council, Aurora Crisis Centre, local church groups, and business and service clubs.

**Contact:**

WENDY TRYLINSKI  
 Coordinator  
 Child/Family Resource Centre  
 Box 212  
 Cranberry Portage, MN R0B 0H0  
 Voice: 204-472-3671  
 Fax 204-472-3714

## SASKATCHEWAN

### EXAMPLES OF COMMUNITY-LEVEL ACTIVITIES

Meadow Lake Tribal Council (MLTC) is located in northwestern Saskatchewan. The council began as a development partnership among nine isolated First Nations communities in 1981. Today, the council sponsors economic development projects and operates health and education programs. Recognized as a leader among tribal councils, MLTC wants to get on with the work of implementing plans for a healthy community.

The MLTC recognizes the importance of creating a community for raising healthy children, involving elders to develop healing and wellness activities, encouraging economic development that creates wealth, and distributing wealth in ways that support the community.

The **Indian Child Care Program** was initiated as a step toward developing human resources. Community members provide child care services in the local communities. Training for child care providers in the Meadow Lake communities is accomplished through a partnership

with the University of Victoria's School of Child and Youth Care. Elders share their knowledge with students in the program. Also, elders have been involved in defining the curriculum.

MLTC has determined, in its 20-year plan, that 3000 new jobs will be needed to sustain healthy community development. MLTC is working to develop business and commercial relationships to support economic development. Projects to date include reforestation and logging.

**Contact:**

VERN BACHIU  
 Programs and Policy Director  
 Meadow Lake Tribal Council  
 Bag 8003, Flying Dust Reserve  
 Meadow Lake, SK S0M 1V0  
 Voice: 306-236-5654  
 Fax 306-236-6301

**West Flat Citizens' Group, Inc.** is an example of a broadly based community change process. In cooperation with schools, community organizations, churches and all levels of government, the group has set its overall goal as the improvement of the quality of life for citizens of West Flat.

Activities and directions are community driven based on an extensive survey of the citizens, and administered by a board of directors made up of elected representatives. Up to 120 volunteers participate on committees and work in programs and community activities.

The group has established numerous programs and activities: neighbourhood volunteer police patrols and a neighbourhood crime prevention office; repair of homes for seniors and low-income families with assistance from New Careers Corporation; community economic development in which the talents of the citizens are used to benefit those in need; a community service centre through which needed services are made accessible to the citizens of West Flat; additional housing units;

an adolescent day program; community-based, integrated school-linked services; a preschool service; and a variety of recreation and social programs for all ages and for families.

The **West Flat Community Preschool** is an integrated education, social and health services program for at-risk preschool children and their families. Its five staff members include a support worker to provide support and training to single and young parents. The Adolescent Day Program provides an alternative educational approach for youth between the ages of 15 and 19 who have not been able to function in a normal school setting. The initiative is funded from a number of different sources, including fund raising, grants and donations. Using the resources and talents available in the community is emphasized over fund raising.

**Contact:**

LAURENT FOURNIER  
 Coordinator  
 West Flat Citizens' Group, Inc.  
 1350 - 15th Avenue West  
 Prince Albert, SK S6V 5P2  
 Voice: 306-763-WEST (9378)  
 Fax: 306-953-2529

**Yorkton Region Community Action Planning** arose in response to Saskatchewan's Action Plan for Children. Provincial government staff, community members and agency staff in Yorkton Region held a community meeting which attracted broad representation, including residents, agencies, teachers, police and ministers. As a result of this meeting, a regional steering committee was set up to develop and implement a child action plan for Yorkton Region, building on local priorities. Community action plan committees were set up in each of five geographic areas to determine needs and develop visions of local children's services and action plans toward those visions.

Yorkton Regional Steering Committee and the local community committees are supporting the implementation of the following initiatives and actions:

- community work plans that include the initiatives outlined below and more specific actions, such as the development of family resource and support programs, race relations committees, P.R.I.D.E. chapters, conflict mediation programs and prevention services for youth;
- integrated school-linked services, a rethinking of how services to children and youth at risk are provided;
- regional initiatives, including the Partnership Against Violence, the Community Healing Committee, the Parkland Employment Support Program, and integration of the delivery of social services; and
- support for other key human services strategies that focus on children, youth and families. Such strategies include:
  - Justice 2001, a collaborative effort involving Justice and other government, non-government and community stakeholders in joint planning and program development;
  - health reform, linking planning for children with health reform; and
  - First Nations and Métis Nations services development, promoting partnerships among Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people and organizations.

Some of these initiatives are funded by prevention and support grants, based on recommendations of the Yorkton Regional Steering Committee.

**Contact:**

BERNICE PURICH  
 Community Development Coordinator  
 Saskatchewan Social Services  
 72 Smith Street East  
 Yorkton, SK S3N 2Y4  
 Voice: 306-786-1320  
 Fax: 306-786-1305

The **Princess Alexandra Community School and the Riverside Community and School Association** work closely together to improve the quality of life for all who live and work in the community. Princess Alexandra was designated under the community school program in 1981; the Community and School Association grew out of the original Community School Council to become one of the strongest and most active community associations in Saskatoon.

The achievements of this school and school-community association include:

- a four-year plan for the school, including empowerment of the community;
- work with community groups and agencies to access resources for students and parents;
- an integrated "wellness model" that coordinates community resources required to develop "healthy lifestyles," encompassing students' physical, social, emotional and educational needs;
- completion of a needs assessment, in cooperation with community agencies, resulting in findings such as large numbers of children wandering the streets at night and not registered for school; vandalism; lack of recreation and social opportunities; need for basic living supports; and prostitution involving children and youth; and
- involvement of the school in an inner-city community strategic planning process to address broader issues and establish a broader sense of community.

Specific activities and programs have included re-entry program for drop-outs, a "preschool" to improve preschool readiness, an evening learning resource centre, a hoop dance troupe, an alternative day school, volunteers from a hospital and a retail store, staff delivering program reports to students' homes and the Inner City Police Liaison Program. Changes in the school program itself have involved the use of

clustering rather than single-grade classrooms, and the implementation of the "alternative school day" (a shifting of the school hours to a later start time with a more limited lunch break) with "quality daily physical education" rather than traditional recesses. These strategies are resulting in increased "quality instructional time"; improved attendance, punctuality, attitudes and behaviour of students; decreased stress for staff; positive feedback from students and parents; and the perception of a more positive overall school atmosphere.

Princess Alexandra School's innovative use of technology has been honoured with a national award by Northern Telecom. The school team was one of 15 teams across Canada and the United States to attend the National Institute "Excellence in Education" forum in Toronto this past August. In this project, students in four classrooms, Grades 3 through 8, are linked electronically with adult volunteers, members of the SaskTel chapter of the Telephone Pioneers. The program is similar to an electronic Big Brother, Big Sister concept. Many students have daily contact with their partners and form close relationships. Students show increased self-confidence with technology, as well as improvement in communication skills. For this group of students, half of whom have no home telephones, this is an important achievement. The adult volunteers also benefit by learning about the life of inner-city children and its attendant challenges. The \$3,000 award will be used to extend the program to more students, and the community is fund raising to qualify for an additional \$5,000 matching grant.

The success of the Community and School Association is the result of the efforts of many people and organizations, including school personnel who have taken on responsibilities beyond their traditional roles. Provincial government departments, the City of Saskatoon, the school board and other community groups have participated. Funding comes from provincial government and donations of cash, goods and services.

The staff evaluate the year in relation to the four-year plan. One specific indicator of success is a marked decrease in children leaving the school during the school day and a reported 60 percent reduction in shoplifting in the area. Teachers report students devote more time to academics and learning.

**Contact:**

VERDYNE SCHMIDT  
Principal  
Princess Alexandra Community School  
210 Avenue H South  
Saskatoon, SK S7M 1W2  
Voice: 306-683-7410

**The Circle Project** has a broad mission to build unity and respect among all people, using an holistic approach to human self-development. It is an established Native organization providing a wide range of helping services using traditional Indian culture and teachings. It offers life skills programs and counselling, and provides cultural workshops to schools, government and non-government organizations, and the general public.

A program manual is available from The Circle Project for \$10.00. Specific programs include social services (counselling, food bank and placement agency), workshops, job training, youth groups, recreation, alcohol and drug abuse programs, hot lunch, Native ministry, literacy, corrections and ex-convict self-help programs, cultural camps, research, street workers, and programs for women and children.

**Contact:**

NORMA-JEAN DUBRAY-BYRD  
Project Manager  
The Circle Project Assoc. Inc.  
625 Elphinstone Street  
Regina, SK S4T 3L1  
Voice: 306-347-7515  
Fax: 306-347-7519

**School-Based Family Support Centres** in Regina are examples of integrated school-based community centres for families. These centres involve the community in identifying

service needs, providing services and coordinating school, social and health services. Specific services that have been provided in response to identified needs include drop-ins, family literacy programs, self-help groups, counselling and referral, a newsletter, a clothing bank, community kitchens, social skills groups, recreation and transportation.

The centres began in 1988 as a response to child hunger in Regina. Saskatchewan Social Services provided a social worker with a car, and a drop-in centre with a food and clothing bank was opened in a public school board school. In 1992, the program grew to six schools, including two from the Roman Catholic school board.

The focus is community development and self-help: involve the community in planning, promote self-help activities, prevent abuse and fight hunger. The centres serve the families and schools in the community. Parents come in looking for help and become leaders, helpers or volunteers. Many cannot read and need help in many aspects of their lives.

Recently, temporary funding has been found to pay a community resident as a staff member at each site. This has facilitated more parents using the service and seeking help from each other before they turn to professionals. People are beginning to give back to the program, for example, they volunteer and return baby clothes for use by others.

An inter-agency steering committee offers general guidance and direction to the centre; it includes the Roman Catholic school board, public school board, Child and Youth Services, Saskatchewan Social Services and Regina Health District. Professionals and schools are recognizing the value of the programs and the need to take the time to work together.

**Contact:**

KEVIN MCARTHUR  
Coordinator  
Stewart Russell School-Based  
Family Centres:  
Stewart Russell, St. Catherine and  
Hamilton Schools  
1920 7th Avenue East  
Regina, SK S4N 4N8  
Voice: 306-791-8656  
Fax: 306-791-3542

**Pathways to Wellness** is a community-initiated process to improve the lives and health of residents in the northern community of Beauval. This grass-roots process "involves the community in deciding what needs to be done, how it should be done and evaluating whether it is working or not." (*Pathways to Wellness*, Brochure, 1995). The goals set in 1993 are promoting and improving community relations, personal and community healing, sustainable economic development, youth development, community participation, cultural and spiritual development, and physical health and fitness. The project is addressing a number of issues directly affecting children, including the need for support and education for parents, family violence, alcohol and drug abuse, and apathy among youth.

This developmental process began when a mobile addiction treatment team visited the town in 1989. The team operated a month-long treatment program for people with addiction problems, and asked community residents to help provide alternatives to the use of alcohol and drugs during that period. For one month, community members developed activities and events that involved no alcohol. After the program was repeated again in the spring of 1990, the town was asked if it would participate in an evaluation of the program.

Health Canada provided an evaluator from the Institute of Learning and Development who held a meeting to which all residents were invited; many people attended, including

elders and young people. Participants were divided into age groups to discuss how their town had changed and what they would like it to be in the future. The experience was described as very positive by residents, and provided motivation for further work. A Healthy Communities Grant was secured with the help of the Institute for Learning and Development, and a coordinator was hired and priorities established. Pathways to Wellness is governed by a core group that includes community people and health, social services, recreation, churches, the RCMP, schools and the town government.

Through these developments, the town has gained a full-time addictions counsellor in an outpatient centre and a seniors home. Following a successful youth summer camp in 1995 involving many individuals and organizations, the project is working on securing a youth worker and establishing a youth centre. A New Careers project has started, but the funding is not yet permanent. Although the Healthy Communities Grant has been completed, Pathways to Wellness now has Brighter Futures CAPC funding for a child development worker. This person's role will include coordination for Pathways to Wellness, as well as the development of a day-care centre and parenting education and support.

**Contacts:**

SIMONNE LALIBERTE  
Coordinator  
or ANGIE MIHALIEZ  
Town Counsellor  
Pathways to Wellness  
P.O. Box 19  
Beauval, SK S0M 0G0  
Voice: 306-283-2126

**Peyakowak (They Are Alone) Committee, Inc.** is a working committee of First Nations women which began as an informal self-help group in Regina in the early 1980s. The overall goals are to maintain and strengthen the family unit, and to re-unite families who have been affected by child welfare legislation.

The committee was started by women who were concerned about their children's futures. Many were on social assistance or unemployment insurance, involved with child welfare workers and vulnerable to losing their children. The women began meeting together in response to the death of a toddler in a child welfare receiving home. They recognized a lack of reciprocity and respect in their relationships with child welfare authorities.

The women asked elders and facilitators to meet with them to help them regain a stronger sense of their culture and themselves — to regain a sense of control over their lives. Conferences were held to bring together more concerned women. When one of the women experienced a crisis and was about to lose her five children, the group took action by attending court with her for support. This set the group on a path of offering court-related support to other women, and the formation of Peyakowak Committee, Inc.

The committee's stated goals and objectives include preventing the apprehension of tribal children, returning children to their families, and providing community education for tribal interest groups, families of Indian ancestry, human services professionals and the general public. "Tribal" refers to an identity with kinship-extended family networks unique to Indian, Métis and Inuit people.

The organization also works to raise awareness of the lack of support for natural parents involved in the courts and the lack of preventive and support services for parents and children at the time of crisis. Networking systems are being established in Regina, throughout Saskatchewan and internationally.

**Contact:**

SHIRLEY WOLFE  
Director  
Peyakowak Committee, Inc.  
2833 Dewdney Avenue  
Regina, SK S4T 0X8  
Voice: 306-525-9689  
Fax: 306-525-6164

## ALBERTA

### EXAMPLES OF COMMUNITY-LEVEL ACTIVITIES

**Opening Doors** is a multi-agency initiative in Calgary that is a new way of thinking about how to provide services to children and their families. Initiated in 1991, 14 agencies, including local boards of education, municipal and provincial social services, health services and the police, have come together as partners in designing and implementing collaborative and integrated services. Future action includes providing a supportive role to the provincial government in its efforts to coordinate services for children and their families.

The Huntington Hills community is the site of a community model prototype. Here, Opening Doors partners have worked closely with the local community association. Together, they have faced the very real challenges of integrating planning, reducing duplication, crossing organizational and sectoral boundaries, and increasing awareness of resources. Collaboration, coordination and integration are hard work. Key understandings have been realized about successful partnerships and creating effective collaborative practices in the delivery of services to children. Professionals and administrators from the health, social services, education and justice sectors have worked with community members and families to find new ways of doing business in Huntington Hills. There is now a professional resource group and a family resource centre, have been established to serve the area.

#### Contacts:

BONNIE JOHNSON  
Co-Chair, Opening Doors  
c/o Calgary Health Services  
20 – 17th Avenue SW  
Calgary, AB T2T 5T1  
Voice: 403-228-7557  
Fax: 403-244-3961

GLORIA WILSON  
Co-Chair, Opening Doors  
c/o A.A.D.A.C.  
1005 – 17th Street, N.W.  
Calgary, AB T2N 2E5  
Voice: 403-297-4673  
Fax: 403-297-4668

The learning experiences from Huntington Hills will be extended to other communities in Calgary. Other components of Opening Doors include: liaison with other collaboratives to explore how initiatives' can work more closely together to maximize efforts and share learning and implementation of an integrated information management system to facilitate transorganizational information sharing and service availability.

Opening Doors is in a unique position to promote the establishment of efficient and effective community-based service delivery systems for at-risk children and their families through the development of collaborative and integrated working partnerships.

**Success by Six** is a community-wide effort in Edmonton trying to ensure that every child starts Grade 1 ready to learn. It is not a program or service or agency. It is a collaboration across sectors and services to help children succeed in their first year of school — an important step in improving their life chances.

Partners in Success by Six include governments, non-profit agencies, businesses, police and public health. The initiative is currently involved with eight geographically linked neighbourhoods in Edmonton's inner city area. Individual communities have differing needs and priorities, but the working model is a seamless spectrum of programs bringing together prenatal services, parenting groups and supports, early literacy, preschool education and kindergarten to young children and their families.

Success by Six is helping communities to develop these kind of resources during the early years by building community support, improving service access and expanding collaborations. Although only in operation since January 1995, Success by Six has already made progress in getting service providers to work together.

**Contact:**

DOUG McNALLY  
 Director  
 Edmonton Community Foundation  
 Suite 601 – 1107 Jasper Avenue  
 (Royal Bank Building)  
 Edmonton, AB T5J 1W8  
 Voice: 403-426-0015  
 Fax: 403-425-0121

The **Penbrooke Meadows Community CORE Project** is a three-year community-driven project to improve the health of the community, as well as the physical, social, educational and economic environment. This diverse community of 13,000 residents wants to be identified by its assets, not its challenges.

Started in 1994, CORE stands for Communication, Organization, Representation and Education. It strives for short and long-term change in pride and image, safety and security, family and youth support, multicultural inclusion, economic and education development, and communication. The project plans to develop a sustainable entity, one that emphasizes high levels of involvement, participation and ownership by all members of the community. This innovative approach supports citizens' involvement at the grass-roots level in planning and decision making, while working collaboratively and cooperatively with existing community agencies and associations. Citizen committees for each of the areas for change are supported by an infrastructure and staff to encourage coordination, prevent duplication, support accountability through evaluation, act as a resource and help guide a path toward a common vision of "A Healthy, Safe, Clean Community for All."

The Family and Youth Support Citizen Committee is working to identify residents, agency supporters and youth willing to work on making things better for families and youth in this community. The committee will try to ensure that these are involved in decision making and that issues affecting all ages and cultures are addressed. To involve everyone, the committee has two sets of parallel meetings to accommodate different schedules. A separate youth committee is being planned to build trust and skills so they can participate in other citizen groups. Some initiatives of the committee are a babysitters co-op, toy-lending library, coffee house and teen activity night.

The staff also assist residents to get in touch with the community resources. An inter-agency professional resource team — Boys and Girls Club, Alberta Family and Social Services, Calgary Catholic Immigration Society, Calgary Police Services, local school representatives, Calgary Social Services and CORE — provides an integrated approach to families experiencing difficulties. The staff facilitator is also working with other agencies to maintain the City of Calgary Social Services Young Parent Support Program despite funding cuts, because a number of Penbrooke parents are affected. Efforts are also being made to coordinate local support for emergency food and clothing hampers.

The above are just some of the projects established during the first year of the project's operation. The Penbrooke Meadows CORE Project recognizes that community development is a continuous process whereby new projects, actions and citizen involvement will ensure the sustainability of the initiatives. The project is funded by the Calgary Foundation, Muttart Foundation and a Wild Rose Provincial Grant. Additional support of donations is provided by community project partners. The project is being monitored and evaluated to assess its progress in engaging the citizens of Penbrooke Meadows in this community development process.

**Contact:**

PAITI COBURN  
Project Coordinator  
Penbrooke Meadows CORE Project  
6100 Penbrooke Drive SE  
Calgary, AB T2A 6M7  
Voice: 403-272-1690 or 235-2448  
Fax: 403-272-1966

**Parkland Healthy Families** is an inter-agency, professionally initiated association with many member agencies. Members include education, health and social services, as well as community members. This non-profit association now administers the Brighter Futures Program, a program for families with high-risk children from 0 to 6 years of age. The association also administers the Turning Points Program which is funded by Alberta Mental Health and provides services to individuals in abusive relationships. Both programs are built on ongoing needs assessment and evaluation.

Members represent such agencies as:

RCMP

Victim Services

Mental Health

Foster Parents Association

Family and Community Support Services  
Stony Plain

Family and Community Support Services  
Spruce Grove

Stony Plain Municipal Hospital

Stony Plain Health Unit

Alberta Correctional Services

Parkland School Division

Recreation Services Town of Wabamun

Big Sisters/Big Brothers

Changes

McMann Youth Services

WestView Regional Health Authority #8

Good Samaritan Care Centre

Alberta Social Services

Community Members

**Contact:**

HARRIETT SWITZER  
Chairperson  
Parkland Healthy Families Association  
c/o Big Sisters/Big Brothers  
#208, 4813 – 47 Avenue  
Stony Plain, AB T9Z 1S2  
Voice: 403-987-3376  
Fax: 403-987-2798

**Louise Dean School** has an integrated year-round program for pregnant and parenting teens. The school offers education, day-care, social services and career development. The students can enrol at any time during the year. The staffing model has been designed so that the school runs year-round.

**Contact:**

CORINNE MCGRAW,  
Principal  
Louise Dean School  
Calgary Board of Education  
120 – 23 Street NW  
Calgary, AB T2N 2P1  
Voice: 403-777-7630  
Fax: 403-777-7639

### EXAMPLES OF COMMUNITY-LEVEL ACTIVITIES

**Ray-Cam Co-operative Centre** was established to provide recreational, educational, social, cultural and economic programs to advance opportunities and abilities of community members, especially children and youth. The centre operates as a charitable organization in partnership with two associations of elected community members and the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation.

Operating in a culturally diverse and low-income area, the centre relies on community members who contribute their strengths and talents to improve the lives of children and families. Community residents operate many aspects of the centre: for example, a youth council manages funds from its quarterly budget to hire staff and plan activities; similarly, family and seniors councils have their own budgets. In addition, the centre is involved in research and regular program evaluation and monitoring.

The centre is the base of a wide range of programs planned and delivered by community members and staff: family support and assistance, social and cultural development, educational and upgrading support, and lifestyle and health. Other services involve employment support, advocacy, recreation and community action projects.

One example of community action improving outcomes for children is the foster parent training project called **Inner City Foster Parent**. In 1990, the community tackled the issue of children being removed for protection

purposes. Children were moved two hours from their schools and community, from a multicultural inner-city environment to middle-income suburban families, because local foster homes were not being approved. The result for the children and youth was culture shock. The standards and home study process for foster care were based on cultural values that did not apply to the children's home community. Youth, parents and staff asked for support from Ray-Cam Co-operative Centre. With a Job Development Grant from the federal government, the centre began training foster parents who were approved by Social Services. Over nine months, 100 children and youth were placed in their own community.

Ray-Cam and other downtown community and neighbourhood centres offer foster parents supports such as youth workers and family support workers. These workers can complement the foster parents' work with the children and youth whom the workers already know as members of the community. Three support centres have been set up in connection with community organizations to provide more support (such as drop-ins) to foster parents. Training for respite foster parents is planned, and foster parents are tackling such inner-city issues as HIV-positive children and drug-addicted natural parents. Foster parents have also made a request for a community-controlled fund for respite care and for timely and sensitive emergency response to the needs of foster parents and children.

Plans are under way to involve current foster parents in recruitment and home studies, and to make use of their knowledge and understanding of the community and their sensitivity

to inner-city issues. Foster parents are beginning to see how their expertise can be used for the benefit of their community's children and youth. This growing expertise helps foster parents to gain the respect of their communities, and to promote respect for fostering in general.

Another example of the community's focus on children is the creation of a residents' group to address the lack of child care centres in the Downtown Eastside community. After a series of meetings in early 1993, this group of parents decided to work together to continue a lobby for child care facilities for their community. They now work under the name "**Children Need Care Now**" (CNCN).

CNCN prepares its own reports for use in lobbying, such as the 1994 report, *Your Promises, Our Future*. In addition to child care, the group advocates for other family and children's programs designed in cooperation with community parents, service providers and others in the community.

A current project of this group is the formation of the **Downtown Eastside Children's Coalition**. Working together in partnership with the community and neighbourhood centres, service provider professionals and interested community members, CNCN is involved in the establishment of a parent-directed process to revamp family and children's services to better meet the needs of residents in at least four community sites. Examples include more flexibility as to when and how services (such as home visiting and drop-ins) are provided.

**Contacts:**

CAROLE BROWN,  
Director  
Ray-Cam Co-operative Centre  
920 East Hastings Street  
Vancouver, BC V6A 3T1  
Voice: 604-251-2141  
Fax: 604-251-9973

ROBIN POSCELLA,  
Community Support Worker  
Inner City Foster Parent Project  
c/o Vancouver Native Health Society  
449 East Hastings Street  
Vancouver, BC V6A 1P5  
Voice: 604-254-9949  
Fax: 604-254-9948

GRACE TAIT and COLLEEN TILLMAN  
Co-Coordinators  
Children Need Care Now  
Ray-Cam Co-operative Centre  
920 East Hastings Street  
Vancouver, BC V6A 3T1  
Voice: 604-251-2141  
Fax: 604-251-9973

The **Revelstoke Family and Youth Resources Society** has received Brighter Futures CAPC funding to establish a Family Place Drop-in Centre. The centre will provide resources, materials, formal and informal education, support and referral services for Revelstoke families. Specific programs now include a play group and infant seminar series. The mission of Revelstoke Family Place is to "promote the well-being of families in all their diversity" through access to community resources and supports to help families build on their strengths. The values and goals show an underlying commitment to cooperative family and community efforts, including parent participation in program planning and management of services.

The Revelstoke Family and Youth Resources Society, in concert with the Revelstoke Child and Youth Committee (CYC), provide direction to the Family Place Committee which oversees the project. Representation on these groups includes parents, social agency workers and professionals from family and children's services, mental health, public health, child care, the school district and the Ministry of Social Services.

Revelstoke is an isolated community of about 8000 with a young population compared with other communities. Before the CAPC application, the community had undertaken a number of community-based projects such as establishing the **Community Forest Corporation**.

**Family Place** was developed in response to the realization that parenting and caring for young children is demanding. This role is made more demanding by the stress and isolation that so many parents and caregivers experience. A community survey in 1993 found that the community's prime concerns were children's support services, teenage pregnancy and family violence. Also, the community was concerned that increasing numbers of primary level children in school were showing evidence of social and learning challenges and that one in eight children in Revelstoke were in families on income assistance programs.

**Contact:**

GWEN BUTLER  
Project Coordinator  
Revelstoke Family and Youth  
Resources Society  
P.O. Box 596  
Revelstoke, BC V0E 2S0  
Voice: 604-837-2920  
Fax: 604-837-7696  
(Public Health Unit)

**New Beginnings Program** is a collaborative program of School District No. 34, Abbotsford Community Services, MSA Public Health Unit and the Ministry of Social Services. The program's mission is to provide a "full- and part-time education-based program for young parents, before and after the birth of their child" using a "holistic approach which encompasses education, child care support and health services." The program assists young parents to reach their educational goals and help them develop parenting skills that will strengthen families and promote self-reliance.

The program offers support for participation in the regular school program, the New Beginnings outreach program (course work in the students' homes or on an appointment basis at the outreach centre), day-care for both the outreach and in-school programs, Young Fathers' Outreach Program and public health nursing liaison. Through this combination of programs, students are enabled to complete their high school education. Over the past year students in the program had a course completion rate of nearly 90 percent. About 50 percent of the students were integrated last year. Many of the young parents were 16 or 17 years of age and living at home.

The new **Young Fathers' Outreach Program** provides support for young fathers, using a variety of approaches: one-to-one counselling, advocacy and teaching of self-advocacy, parenting education, recreational activities and a support group. The outreach worker responds to young fathers' many areas of concern, including education, employment life skills, parenting, relationships, stress management, anger management, substance abuse, legal concerns, birth control, and the rights and responsibilities of fatherhood. The worker has developed a Nobody's Perfect resource booklet to highlight the relevance of the materials for fathers.

In addition to the collaborating organizations, other individuals and community organizations support New Beginnings. The organizations include the Ministry of Women's Equality, churches and community clubs. The program aims to maintain a spirit of mutuality at all levels in the organization and in service delivery.

**Contact:**

DEB JARVIS  
Program Coordinator  
Abbotsford Community Services  
School District #34  
3164 Clearbrook Road  
Clearbrook, BC V2T 4N6  
Voice: 604-852-4985  
Fax: 604-859-6334

The goal of **Youth Supporting and Being Supported in Their Families** is to empower them to advocate on their own behalf regarding issues affecting their well-being within families. Recognizing the limitations of parenting courses as a primary model for enhancing families, the project was developed collaboratively with youth involved in the Rights of the Child Project. Project funding is provided by the B.C. Health Research Foundation, Community Research Grants Program.

The project combines various research approaches, including interpretive inquiry and participatory and evaluative research, to enable youth to build on what they already know, to develop new skills and to impart new knowledge and skills to other youth. The research process begins with collecting stories from youth to identify key issues affecting their health and well-being within their families. Both questionnaires and focus groups are then used to allow the youth to reflect on and discuss previously identified issues and share possible solutions.

Youth are involved in this project from its inception to completion. Youth are hired to conduct interviews, develop and distribute questionnaires, facilitate focus groups, analyze data, design publications and organize conferences.

The information will be disseminated in different ways, including a "chapbook," an inexpensive desktop publication using quoted observations, issues and solutions, and an interactive conference. The final report will be made available to other youth, service providers and government offices.

**Contact:**

DR. MARILYN WALKER  
University of Victoria  
Faculty of Human and Social Development  
P.O. Box 1700  
Victoria, BC V8W 2Y2  
Voice: 604-721-6274  
Fax: 604-721-6231  
E-mail: mwalker@hdsd.uvic.ca

**CMHA Action Research:** B.C. youth are involved with youth in Ontario in an action research project developed by the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA). These youth are developing strategies for involving youth in decisions that affect their lives. B.C. Child and Youth Committees and CMHA programs in Ontario are testing the strategies in real-life situations. The product will be a kit that includes guides to identifying and supporting youth participation, including mentoring by adults and experienced youth.

**Contacts:**

PENNY PARRY  
Child and Youth Advocate  
Social Planning Department  
City of Vancouver  
250 West Heritage Building  
City Square, P.O. Box 96  
555 West 12th Avenue  
Vancouver, BC V5Z 3X7  
Voice: 604-871-6048  
Fax: 604-871-6032  
E-mail: penny\_parry@mindlink.bc.ca

MARYLYNNE RIMER  
Director  
Child and Youth Secretariat  
333 Quebec Street, Suite 200 A  
Victoria, BC V8V 1X4  
Voice: 604-356-1947  
Fax: 604-356-0837  
E-mail: marimer@ssrv.gov.bc.ca



## YUKON

### EXAMPLES OF COMMUNITY-LEVEL ACTIVITIES

The **Skookum Jim Friendship Centre** developed and operates a program called the Traditional Parenting Program (T.P.P.). The program arose in response to the community's request for a First Nations parenting program. Funded as a CAPC project, the program offers separate modules for mothers and fathers.

The goals of the program are threefold: (1) to encourage First Nations parenting practices and values, and First Nations culture; (2) to promote positive health behaviours; and (3) to improve the usefulness of and access to parenting programs by First Nations peoples.

The program is for women, men and children who are identified as "at risk" because of alcohol or drug abuse and/or a poor living environment. The program is intended to prevent FAS and other problems. Strongly community-based, the program's teachers are elders who use a traditional circle teaching approach. The teaching is all oral, and recordings are being made so that the teachings can be transcribed. Participants have reported high satisfaction with the program, according to an April 1993 report.

#### Contacts:

KALA CRAFT  
Office Manager  
Skookum Jim Friendship Centre  
3159 – 3rd Avenue  
Whitehorse, YK Y1A 1G1  
Voice: 403-633-7688/7689  
Fax: 403-668-4460

MARY JANE JIM  
Program Director (T.P.P.)  
Skookum Jim Friendship Centre  
3159 – 3rd Avenue  
Whitehorse, YK Y1A 1G1  
Voice: 403-633-7688/7689  
Fax: 403-668-4460

The **Child Development Centre (CDC)**, in partnership with Kwanlin Dun First Nations (KDFN) and Dawson City Inter-agency Committee, has expanded infant and early childhood intervention services for at-risk and special needs children, from birth to 6 years of age, as well as their families. The CDC serves the KDFN community, and Dawson City and surrounding area.

The project enhances the CDC's current outreach capacity by enabling KDFN and Dawson City to develop local resources, while providing other rural Yukon communities with additional support and potential models to initiate their own solutions. The CDC is responsible for the overall administration, service delivery, coordination and evaluation of the program. KDFN oversees the Ashea Preschool. The Dawson City Inter-agency Committee works in partnership with the CDC to consult about service development and hire on-site staff. This inclusive child care model incorporates child development services and preschool programming.

#### Contact:

IRENE SZABLA  
Director  
Child Development Centre  
P.O. Box 2703  
Whitehorse, YK Y1A 2C6  
Voice: 403-668-4386  
Fax: 403-633-2039

The **Teen Parents Access to Education** initiative was established in 1990 by the Department of Education and a private, non-profit society to enable teen mothers to complete their education. Administered by a volunteer board, the program is funded jointly by the departments of Education, and Health and Social Services. The initiative supports teens to finish their education, provides day-care and development for babies, and offers

parenting education and counselling for teen mothers. In 1994, eight teens graduated with a high school diploma while participating in the program. The program's success has led to a recent expansion.

**Contact:** DONNA WHITE  
Teacher-Director  
Teen Parent Access to Education  
Society  
P.O. Box 3984  
Whitehorse, YK Y1A 5M6  
Voice: 403-667-3421  
Fax: 403-667-3423

## NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

### EXAMPLES OF COMMUNITY-LEVEL ACTIVITIES

The mission of the **Gwich'in Healing Program** is to "encourage and support individuals to initiate and continue the healing process that will enable them to regain their power and take control of their own lives." The program focuses on addressing addictive and destructive behaviours by supporting people to confront their emotional or spiritual crises.

The Gwich'in are the northernmost American Indians in Alaska, Yukon and Northwest Territories. Their culture is built on the extended family unit which has allowed them to survive in an isolated and harsh physical environment. The Gwich'in successfully negotiated a land claims agreement in 1991; it was signed by the Gwich'in Tribal Council and the governments of the Northwest Territories and Canada in April 1992. The agreement provides the basis for the Gwich'in to become an assertive and progressive Aboriginal organization in Canadian politics and business. The Gwich'in Tribal Council is committed to self-government and to developing business, employment, training and education.

The healing program actively addresses some of the results of the 1970s' and 1980s' mini-boom caused by oil exploration which resulted in a major lifestyle change for the Gwich'in from hunting, fishing and trapping to a wage-based economy. This lifestyle

change was accompanied, for some, by alcohol abuse and other destructive behaviours. The program is based on the premise that the whole family must heal as a unit. It takes place in a healing camp specially constructed for the purpose using the resources of the Gwich'in. The camp is staffed and consists of a lodge, kitchen and client cabins. It opened in April 1995.

The Gwich'in Healing Committee, established in 1994, developed and now administers the healing program. Community members make up the committee. The committee also assists clients to develop coping skills for re-entry into their communities, provides community after care, and works with other caregivers in the communities from which the individuals come.

### Contacts:

DOUG SMITH,  
Executive Director, or  
ROBERT ALEXIE, JR., Chairman  
Gwich'in Healing Society Program  
P.O. Box 30  
Fort McPherson, NT X0E 0J3  
Voice: 403-952-2025  
Fax: 403-952-2212

The **Dene Cultural Institute** sponsors several programs directed at children and their families. The **Healing Program** includes Aboriginal awareness, personal development, team building, family dynamics, sexual abuse,

spousal abuse and grieving. Through a mobile "healing team," specific workshops are made available to groups or communities at their request. Available workshops include leadership training and strategic planning. Some communities focus on developing healthy leadership and the role of culture in achieving health. This project is funded partly through the Government of the Northwest Territories and the federal government, including Brighter Futures.

The **Dene Yati** project is a family-based, language development project that teaches members of the Lutsel'Ke community the Chipewyan language. The Dene Cultural Institute worked with the community, including children, parents, teachers, the school principal, social worker, language program worker, elders, the Band Council and the Community Education Council to develop a commitment to the program and implement it.

The project involves families spending time together in picnics and camping. These events become an immersion experience in which only Chipewyan is spoken. The project is intended to strengthen the culture, support healing and provide emotional support.

**Contact:**

JOANNE BARNABY  
Executive Director  
Dene Cultural Institute  
P.O. Box 570  
Hay River, NT X0E 0R0  
Voice: 403-874-8480  
Fax: 403-874-3867

The **Children's Healing Centre** in Yellowknife involves parents in a team to help children and families heal from sexual, physical and emotional abuse or neglect.

Using an holistic approach, the program supports parents in affecting the child's home, school and community environments. Parents lead the decision making about the counselling they receive and how they use other community resources to support their child. The team

may include the child's teacher, principal, consultant in special needs, social worker, and workers from community agencies such as the Women's Centre or YWCA Women's Shelter.

Services include individual and group counselling, and information and workshops for parents, caregivers and professionals. Training for caregivers on prevention and treatment of abused youth is also offered.

A program of N.W.T. Family Services, the centre is a three-year pilot project funded by Brighter Futures. It also receives support from McDonald's Restaurants for play therapy tools.

**Contact:**

GILLIAN ENRIGHT  
Program Coordinator/Clinical Supervisor  
Children's Healing Centre  
N.W.T. Family Services  
5012 Forrest Drive  
Yellowknife, NT X1A 2A9  
Voice: 403-873-8420  
Fax: 403-920-7110

The **Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA)/N.W.T.** Division believes in enabling individuals, groups and communities to increase control over and enhance their mental health. To put this belief into practice, the association conducts research, advocates, educates, informs and facilitates the effective delivery of services.

Locations in Yellowknife, Inuvik and Iqaluit offer a range of services from one-to-one counselling, family services, food and clothing depots, HIV/AIDS projects and other community services.

In 1994, CMHA completed an assessment of the needs of young children (ages 0 to 6) in eight communities throughout the Northwest Territories. The needs assessment was conducted through visits and interviews in these communities. The report Building Bridges Self-Esteem Project Needs Assessment recommended a broad range of services to support

young children and their families, including training for community members to work with children and parents, day-care and preschool programs for modelling parenting skills, elder involvement, cultural awareness training for staff, adaptable programs appropriate to community needs, and the use of the Nobody's Perfect program for parent training. CMHA is working on ways to implement these services.

**Contacts:**

Baffin Branch  
Canadian Mental Health Association  
P.O. Box 1492  
Iqaluit, NT X0A 0H0  
Voice: 819-979-5077  
Fax: 819-979-3373

DOT BOOSE  
Executive Director  
Family Healing  
Canadian Mental Health Association  
P.O. Box 1915  
Inuvik, NT X0E 0T0  
Voice: 403-979-3141  
Fax: 403-979-2235

BARBARA HOOD  
Executive Director  
Canadian Mental Health Association  
P.O. Box 2580  
Yellowknife, NT X1A 2P9  
Voice: 403-873-3190  
Fax: 403-873-4030

The **Toy Library and Play Centre**, operated by Yellowknife Catholic Schools, provides an informal setting to support families with young children between 0 and 5 years of age. Funded by Brighter Futures, the program aims to strengthen families to enhance the emotional, physical, social and cognitive development of their children; to introduce families to the separate elementary schools before the children's formal school entry; and to encourage parent participation and partnership with the schools.

The centre operates a play centre, toy library and monthly mini-workshops in two locations. In these settings, staff model positive interaction with children and promote stimulation,

including structured activities for the children, such as music and story times. A FAS/FAE (Foetal Alcohol Syndrome/Foetal Alcohol Effects) home-based worker participates in the program. A literacy group is using the play centre weekly. The children attend a play group while their parents are in the literacy program.

Members of the Catholic School Board have established this service in response to an increasing number of at-risk children entering school. They recognized that some parents find schools to be intimidating and therefore have difficulty becoming partners with the school in their children's learning process. Having a toy library within the school attracts parents and their preschoolers and promotes their comfort and knowledge about the school setting, in addition to providing the children with a stimulating early intervention experience.

About half of the program members have attended the program through an invitation from other community agencies such as public health or the schools, as a result of their children being identified as "high need." For some this means the family has a low income or is in crisis; for others the child has a special need. Parents may also attend from the general community.

The program's ultimate goal is for community parents to operate the services themselves. In the short term, parents are becoming more involved as volunteers in the program.

**Contact:**

LIZ BAILE  
Student Support Consultant  
Yellowknife Catholic Schools  
P.O. Box 1830  
Yellowknife, NT X1A 2P4  
Voice: 403-873-3572  
Fax: 403-873-2701



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