



UAKN
Urban Aboriginal
Knowledge Network

RCAU
Réseau de connaissances des
Autochtones en milieu urbain

RESEARCH PROJECT SUMMARY

Western Research Centre

Name of Project:

Creating Effective, High Quality Transition Experiences for Young Aboriginal Children and their Families

Research Start-up Summary and Abstract:

Vancouver Island University (VIU) has established a clear mandate to work in partnership with the First Nation communities and Aboriginal agencies in the region to improve educational opportunities for Aboriginal people and undertake various collaborative educational and research initiatives. Since 1983, Tillicum Lelum Aboriginal Friendship Centre (TLAFC) and VIU have long standing partnership arrangements. TLAFC and the BC Regional Innovation Chair (BCRIC) for Aboriginal Early Childhood Development (AECD) have worked together since late winter, 2010 to undertake a collaborative action-research initiative that includes the design, development, implementation, research and evaluation of a TLAFC AECD program, Qeq (Baby) College. The Urban Aboriginal Knowledge Network (UAKN) funded one of the projects that has contributed to the Qeq College AECD program, “Kindergarten Transitions II: A Scan of Existing Supportive Programs for Aboriginal Children and Families in BC” (2013).

It is well understood that enriching and positive experiences in the early years are critical to healthy, holistic development and set the stage for later learning, life-long productivity and well being (Cottrell, J., Pelletier, T., & Pearce, J., 2008). The importance of the early years is compounded for Aboriginal children. Caring and education is often complicated by issues unique to Aboriginal families, such as the generational impacts of colonization including residential schools on parenting and child-rearing. These issues have often contributed to fear and mistrust of formal schooling and child care settings by parents and other family members (Ball, J., 2008; National Collaborating Centre on Aboriginal Health, 2012). Children with vulnerabilities or who begin life in families experiencing social and/or economic challenges benefit most from quality interventions and environments and are most negatively affected if nurturing and supportive environments are not in place. As a result, a primary focus of Qeq College is to provide a transition program for Aboriginal preschoolers and their families as they move from early childhood settings (including home) to kindergarten. TLAFC believes that supporting children and families early in a child’s educational life will help to build healthier relationships between Aboriginal families and school and positively affect family involvement and engagement throughout the child’s school years.

From the beginning, TL AFC recognized the importance of comprehensive and rigorous child assessment and evaluation programs to validate the efficiency and effectiveness of Qeq College to ensure the plan would align well with cultural values and Aboriginal ways of knowing relevant to both the local First Nation communities and the TL AFC community. Aligning content, teaching methods and assessment tools with cultural values is well supported in AECD literature.

Engagement Objectives:

The goals of the UAKN Funded Part of the Qeq College Transitions project include:

- Culturally and community appropriate and validated child assessment strategies and tools for the Qeq College Transitions programs.
- Culturally and community appropriate and validated program evaluation strategies and tools for the Qeq College Transitions programs.
- Strengthened community relationships and AECD networks across the academic and First Nation/Aboriginal communities.
- Strengthened First Nations/Aboriginal student research capacity (including both undergraduate & graduate) in the area of Aboriginal Early Childhood Development Research and community development.
- Increased opportunities for Elders and other First Nation/Aboriginal agencies to work with VIU faculty in areas critical to local First Nation communities.
- Strengthened opportunities for VIU's BCRIC for AECD and TL AFC to network and share with VIU faculty, other post secondary institutions in BC (and elsewhere) and First Nations communities and Aboriginal organizations regarding project learnings, research outcomes, community development and culturally appropriate assessment and evaluation templates for use by a variety of constituent groups.

Collaborating Friendship Centre and/or other urban Aboriginal organization:

Tillicum Lelum Aboriginal Friendship Centre (TL AFC)

BC Regional Innovation Chair (BCRIC) for Aboriginal Early Childhood Development (AECD)

School District 68

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