



UAKN
Urban Aboriginal
Knowledge Network

RCU
Réseau de connaissances des
Autochtones en milieu urbain

RESEARCH PROJECT SUMMARY

Atlantic Research Centre

Name of Project:

Creation Stories: Urban Aboriginal Early Education and Literacy Intervention

Collaborating Friendship Centre and/or other urban Aboriginal organization:

Lennox First Nation
Holland College
University of Prince Edward Island

Research Start-up Summary and Abstract:

The purpose is to promote better health and educational outcomes for individuals and families and enhance well-being of urban aboriginals by developing an early education and literacy program. The research objective is: **To establish a culturally grounded curriculum for a pre-natal and early year's program for expectant or Aboriginal parents (newborn to 3 years of age) in urban settings.**

This project aims at combining traditional ways of knowing and teaching with relevant and effective research, our team hopes to create a model to empower and enrich the lives of urban aboriginals during the early period of parenthood. Not only will this support cultural identity during a critical period of transition, but it will be another step in creating a community that supports culture and knowledge.

Rationale

Narrative Integration is a skill that enables us to weave together the story of our lives. Siegel (2007) states that, "the mindful telling of our tale can be greatly healing of unresolved issues in our life". In addition, early experiences help to shape our stories and contribute to the development of personal narrative. The goal of this project is to establish a program grounded in our stories, the latest research, and best practice models of prenatal and early childhood development that can be delivered and received within an urban Aboriginal context. *Creation Stories* aims to be an urban Aboriginal-based curriculum to help parents, communities, and service providers create a sound start to a child's life.

The provision of appropriate early "learning and literacy" experiences during the prenatal, newborn, and toddler stages are vital ingredients for a healthy and prosperous individual, community and society. Wadsworth and Butterworth (2006) believe a successful

adult life is dependent upon early life wellness. Not only do investments in early wellbeing benefit the child on an intellectual, physical, emotional, and spiritual basis, promoting early literacy in children is the gateway to future harmony for entire communities. It is also critical to building a foundation for future educational success. However, for families and communities that lack a tradition and comfort with formal educational systems, creating household “stories” that foster a positive attitude toward education can be difficult. A lack of such positive “stories” during the early years may result in educational disadvantage for children. By empowering families with simple skills and practices, we can help them take control of their “creation story” (narrative), and re-frame their lives, beliefs and practices to create a new story for their children.

There is a significant need within the urban aboriginal population, the benefits of appropriate programming are large, and there is a need to embed key components of a program in a culturally appropriate context to maximize benefits. This project will build a curriculum that is relevant and appropriate to the urban aboriginal community by listening to and learning from the stories of others. We will accomplish this through an iterative, multi-stage process of collaborative consultation with our community, research team/partners

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