

Caring For Our Babies Through Traditional Teachings & Practices

April 9, 2010

In May 2009 we submitted a proposal to REACH requesting funds in the amount of \$5,000.00 to support the ongoing work of our Indigenous Child Welfare Research Network (ICWR). Initially it was reported back to us that our network was not eligible to receive funds. However, since then have been informed that we were eligible to receive funds for the following category from our proposal:

\$2500 for workshop and retreat for Steering Committee and Advisory.

ICWR itself was born out of a one-day forum in February of 2008. At this time, the Faculty of Human and Social Development within the University of Victoria hosted a one-day forum including Indigenous faculty from Child and Youth Care, Social Work, Indigenous communities, agencies and educational institutions to collect ideas about developing an Indigenous Child Welfare Institute in British Columbia. The response was exciting and since July 1, 2008 we have received funds from the Ministry of Children and Family Development to strategize an Indigenous Network, develop two Indigenous Research Training modules, deliver community Indigenous Child Welfare Research training and host a provincial Child Welfare Research Conference.

We would like to come together as a group once again to strategize about the health and wellbeing of children and young children in particular.

The outcome of this retreat will a 3-4 page “think piece” or research plan based on the discussion/outcomes of the retreat, to be made available for circulation within the HELP network and/or posting on the website. This large focus group will be instrumental in guiding us in our future work and ground us in our mandate. It would be an essential part of our project’s goal and vision.

Costs would include travel, food, lodging and coordination/admin costs. This would be organized by our Graduate Research Assistant.

Our steering committee began planning for this event late November 2009. Due to the funding requirements of the REACH network, it was emphasized that the day includes research relevant to early years. Two members of our Steering Committee, Dr. Cathy Richardson, who holds a

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PhD in Child and Youth Care and is a Métis Faculty member at the School of Social work and Dr. Jeannine Carrière, who holds a PhD in Social Work and is also a Métis Faculty member at the school of Social Work were instrumental in planning the day's event. In collaboration we began by planning for a one-day forum to talk about early years from a Métis worldview.

In our proposal to REACH we spoke about the necessity of generating a strategy to create a provincial research network to support Indigenous research that is grounded in the voices of Indigenous children, youth, families and community. More than half of the children in care in BC are Indigenous, but they only make up 4% of the population, and there is little research to support best practices given this systemic issue. In collaboration with REACH our Network delivered a one-day forum to illustrate the effectiveness of our traditional ways of caring for our children. The methods demonstrated in this forum are based on research findings done by Métis researchers, and their unique philosophies, values and approaches to caring for babies. In our planning sessions we discussed research dissemination and recognized that when research is done according to Métis, Indigenous and Inuit worldviews, then, research must be shared in this similar manner.

As such, this one day forum included Métis Child and Family Service staff members, Métis parents and children and other community members who have a vested interested in networking about 'caring for babies' from a Métis perspective. The one-day event included voices from Elders who shared some cultural practices through storytelling, child friendly puppet shows and even family yoga! In addition we had interactive activities to illustrate methods that are effective when working with young children. As importantly, the one-day forum was a place to network with Métis families and community members about various parenting approaches to enrich the lives of their families and to expand their relationship to other community members.

The Expected outcome form this one day forum included the following:

- a) Enhance community and institutional research partnerships
- b) Increase capacity around research strengths in early childhood care and development and early childhood of Indigenous children and families
- c) Increased diversity, social equity and cross-cultural development
- d) Increased front-line experience to determine best practices in order to enhance the lives of aboriginal children and their families.
- e) Strategize about the health and wellbeing of children and young children in particular.
- f) A report will be written and distributed to both networks about the activities, dialogue and suggestions from the one day event.

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The one day forum certainly enhanced community research partnerships. Early Years research was illustrated in a collaborative manner. Dr. Richardson and Dr. Carrière strived to present in a manner that was inclusive by focusing on research findings and practices that have been effective, rather than harmful for Indigenous communities. Dr. Richardson illustrated the importance of 'Belonging, Generosity, Mastery, and Independence', while Dr. Carrière presented on 'Three Generations', which highlighted family history, values and resilience. Dr. Carrière included the voices of her daughter Robin and grandson Carter who shared stories about their roles in their family in her presentation. Through these powerful presentations our goal was to demonstrate research done in a 'good way', and that indeed research can be effective.

In Métis cultural practices, it is customary to begin the day, event or ceremony with a traditional prayer that will ground participants and help all involved to hear, see and do from a good place. The prayer was shared by Elder Fran Baker. Fran is an Elder for Métis Community Services and she has provided support to the development of their agency and to their staff. She also provided support to organizers and participants for this one-day event.

It was important for planners at the onset of the day to also talk about what cultural practices are. Many Indigenous scholars have drawn on teachings and guidance from Gerry Ambers. Gerry is an Indigenous healer who holds teachings from various Indigenous worldviews. She is known by many as a spiritual leader. Gerry shared with participants how families can draw on different aspects such as prayer, ceremony, stories, eagle feather teachings and animal stories. Gerry also stayed at the forum for the day so that families could have a chance to talk to her personally.

One way of sharing Métis ways of knowing and being was delivered through a 'puppet' story called *Maria's Tale*. Rebecca Mabee and Hannah Miller illustrated the importance of connection to self, family and cultural teachings. Not only did these two women provide a puppet show, Hannah also shared how to make puppets and how to teach these skills to families. This puppet show was a unique way to share cultural knowledge and traditional practices. For both of these women, this puppet show was created from their experiences academically, professionally and personally.

Throughout the day Robin Massey, who presented with her mother Jeannine Carrière, shared with participants through different yoga techniques. She shared techniques that involved the self, involved family members and involved the entire group of participants. Her contribution to the day was to illustrate to families different methods of how to connect with one another through exercise and fun.

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It is essential as Indigenous leaders to host events like this, in a community setting. It is also important that food and adequate space is available for children and Elders. Our intention was to keep the activities and discussions interactive throughout the day. One value that is shared among many Indigenous cultures is the process of experiential learning. That is, we teach and learn by interacting with one another, which demonstrates that we are all teachers and learners who contribute in a unique way. Understanding this should be at the forefront of how Indigenous research unfolds.

The goal of our planning committee for this one-day forum was to highlight the ways in which traditional practices might empower families to care for their babies in ways that reflect their own culture and ways of knowing. In addition we hoped to provide a forum for families to network.

In total we had 30 participants for this event. Families and their babies engaged in the activities presented and were receptive of the teachings, skills and stories shared throughout the day. Participants joined the ICWR network and will learn about future training and events.

We have appreciated the opportunity to provide a one -day forum in partnership with Métis Community Services and to be funded by REACH. Attached you will find a participation list and budget for the event. Again, thank you!

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Participation List:

Name

1. *Rebecca Mabee*
2. *Mariana Harpe*
3. *Jenna Simands*
4. *Bev Smith*
5. *Winnie Williams*
6. *Liz Forin*
7. *Michele A Sam*
8. *Lauren Downey*
9. *Cathy Richardson*
10. *Carly Bird*
11. *Jolene Tory*
12. *Glenda-Lee*
13. *Chantal*
14. *Kole Pickit*
15. *Wendy Reaume*
16. *Jaelyn Brayden*
17. *Hannah Miller*
18. *Beverly Ennis*
19. *Brent Deck*
20. *Malachi McDonald*
21. *Paul McDonald*
22. *Tracy Migneault*
23. *Scarlett Thomas*
24. *Suzanne (Fran) Baker*
25. *Julie DeVries*
26. *Elena Vojakina*
27. *Fran Baker*
28. *Gerry Ambers*
29. *Robin Massey*
30. *Jeannine Carrière*
31. *Jesse Lane-Metz*
32. *Jacquie Green*

For purposes of this report I have removed

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emails, address and phone numbers.

Budget

Honoraria:

3 Elders @ \$200.00 per day (Fran, Gerry, Dana Lynn)	\$500.00
Fran & Gerry (full day)	\$400.00
Dana Lynn (half day)	\$100.00
2 Young People @ \$200.00 per day (Robin & Hannah)	400.00
Nutrition breaks (50 people: morning & afternoon)	50.00
Lunch (50 people) 50 * \$7.00	<u>350.00</u>
Total Expenses	\$1300.00

This event has been sponsored by REACH: Research in Early Childhood Care, Education and Health and written by Jacquie Green, Project Manager for Indigenous Child Welfare Research Network.

Hai Hai!

Wa!

Thank you!