



Understanding the Early Years North

How will the UEY North research enhance our community knowledge?

The UEY North project will provide the Northern Region of Ontario with an opportunity to obtain high quality data from multiple sources regarding the development of young children, factors that influence early childhood development, and the community's resources.

The Mapping Study of community resources and services will enable the community to identify key gaps in the services available to our children, community by community, and in the north as a whole.

Neighbourhood specific data from the Census will be mapped to show the different socioeconomic environments in the communities in which young children live.

The EDI and Parent Interview and Direct Assessment of Children Surveys (PIDACS) represent a balance between the collection of subjective data, via questionnaires completed by the parent and teacher, and objective data through the direct assessment of children's skills and abilities.

The **EDI** provides information about the school readiness of five (5) year old children in Senior Kindergarten based on teacher observation. The 2005-2006 EDI data collection was the *first time* that the EDI data was collected in the same year for all Northern region children. This will enable communities to continue with their local analyses, but also provides an opportunity to see how children are doing across northern Ontario.

The **Direct Child Assessments** provide an objective and standardized measure for the actual performance of 5 year old children on language and numeracy tasks.

The **Parent Interviews** provide the perspective of parents regarding strengths and challenges for their own children. The Parent Interviews will mark the first time that the family context has been investigated throughout the Northern region with respect to school readiness. This will provide the social context with which the EDI, Child Assessments and socio-economic data can be understood more completely.

For more information contact:

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The Understanding the Early Years initiative is funded by Human Resources and Social Development Canada. For further information, visit www.hrsdc.gc.ca.



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How will the UEY North research benefit the community?

Evidence based research which identifies the unique needs of children in Northern Ontario will provide governments and other funding bodies with a clear rationale for modifying their funding distribution formulas. By being able to describe with clarity the context within which our children live, funders and services providers can be called on to meet the needs of children in very concrete and specific ways. The research based information can be a particularly powerful tool in convincing decision-makers of the need for new approaches with respect to children's issues.

The reports generated using the research will be used for advocacy purposes to raise awareness of the issues for our Northern children and how these issues differ from other regions of our province and country as whole. The reports will focus attention on the unique geographic, economic and cultural features of rural and remote northern communities and highlight the singular challenges faced by parents and their young children. The particular needs of special populations (ie. Aboriginal and Francophone) will be underscored.

The Community Action Plan developed by thoroughly reviewing and analyzing all the research assembled is one of the most important products for the UEY project area. The Action Plan serves as the community's blueprint for encouraging the whole community to undertake concrete measures to address the needs and problems identified by the research.

The UEY initiative is a community learning process, through which community organizations, local planning groups such as Best Start Networks, educators, parents and other concerned community members benefit from the community research and use it to make decisions based on evidence. It also emphasizes the importance of a coordinated approach to resolving issues at a community level which can result in creative and valuable responses to issues which improve the lives of all the members in the community.

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