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Nurturing and Supporting Children: Connectivity and Isolation for Families in Rural and Urban Communities in BC

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Canada



Michael Smith Foundation for
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**The Early Years Conference
2016: 20 Year Anniversary.
January 29, 2016**

Sp'e'qum Nurturing Developmental Wellbeing.

Strengthening Children and Families

Topic: Practices in Professional Development and Other Related Areas; and Evaluation and Outcomes/Evidence Based research



Objective 1

Expanding knowledge, sharing views on early childhood/early intervention issues in rural and urban communities

- Families (non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal)
- ECE and EI service providers
- Our examples focus on British Columbia, but we will open the discussion to share examples elsewhere in Canada and abroad



Objective 2

- Identify what are issues related to funding services and programs
- The funding model doesn't support the way rural areas function.
- For example, seasonal barriers, travel times
- Jurisdictional divides
- Networked communities
- This model is drawn from services based in urban centres.



Objective 3

- Connect the issues that participants raise (including challenges) and possible solutions that are meaningful and important in delegates' work with families

from two projects

- Words on Wheels
“WoW” Bus (Literacy)

unique and distinct

- Including All Children
and Families-Expanding
Partnerships (Inclusion)



WOW Bus and StrongStart calendars at www.earlylearning.prn.bc.ca
Community Event Calendar at www.familyfriendlycommunity.ca

September

What's On Board!

- For children age 0-5 with their parents/caregivers
- Stories, finger plays, felt stories, circle time and play activities
- Backpack of books to borrow (0-2 and 3-5 years)
- Healthy Snacks
- Toy lending library
- "Bring a book - Take a book" exchange
- Parent Resources
- Information on other early childhood activities in the community

Lots of new activities on the WOW Bus. Come see us!

WORLD OF WORDS

We are sad to announce that Noreen, our fabulous WOW Bus facilitator, has moved to a full-time position at the Northern Lights College daycare.

We are currently looking for a new WOW Bus driver/facilitator. Our fall programming will be delayed until we fill that position.

If you know of anyone who is interested in this opportunity, please call Jaimelia or check out the job posting at www.prn.bc.ca

Something for everyone on the Words On Wheels Bus...

The Words on Wheels Bus is supported and funded by various community service groups. For more information regarding this program, contact Jaimelia Turner, Community Early Learning Coordinator at 250.262.6040.



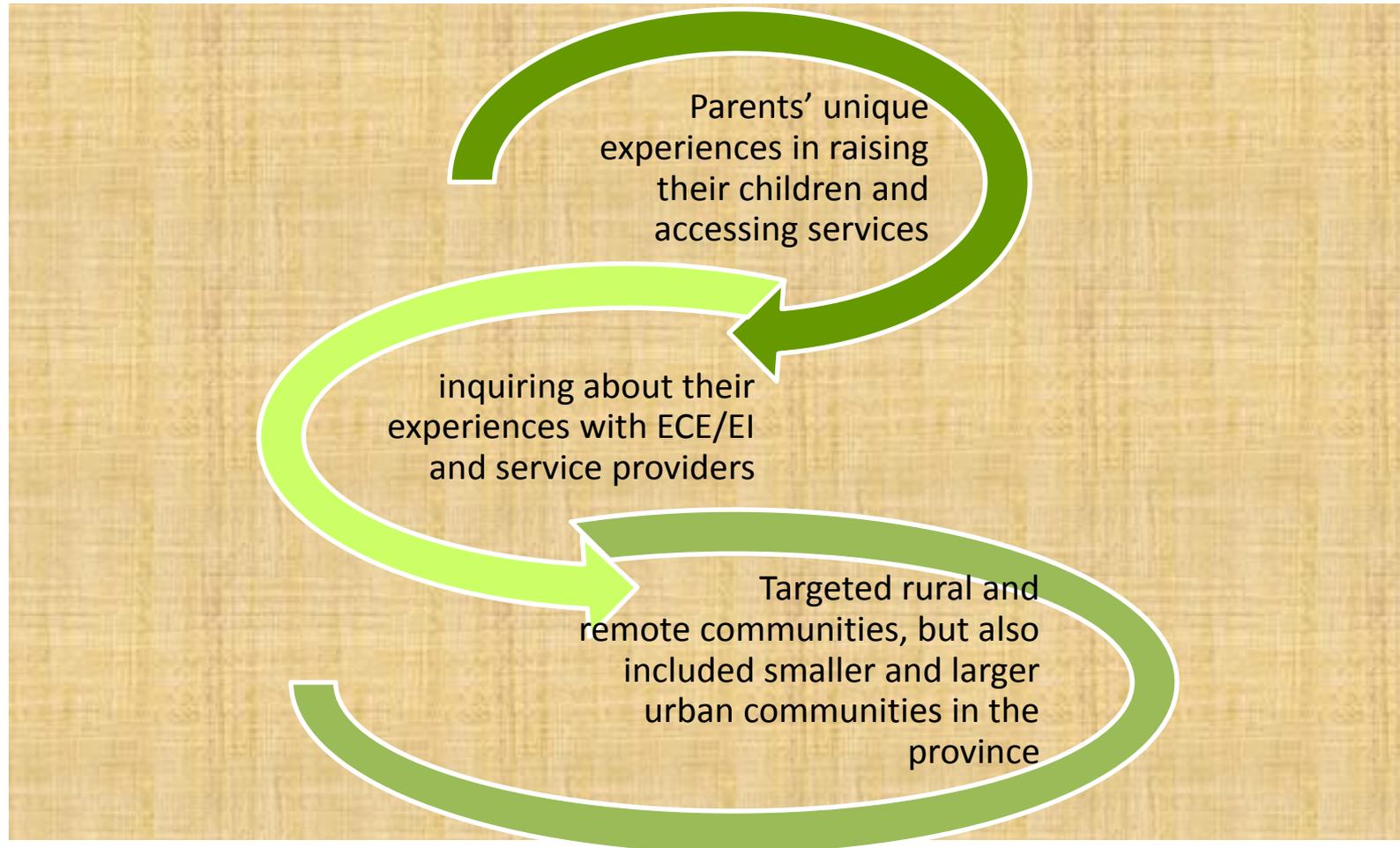
Wow Bus

- Evaluation project for SD60 North Peace focused on the WoW Bus (Vilches 2009)
- Focus group with participating agencies, e.g. library, new Canadians, Friendship Centre, school district, etc.
- Document review; Field site visits (riding the WoW bus, meeting local hosts), program observation (Mother Goose on the bus)
- Meeting parents accessing the WoW Bus

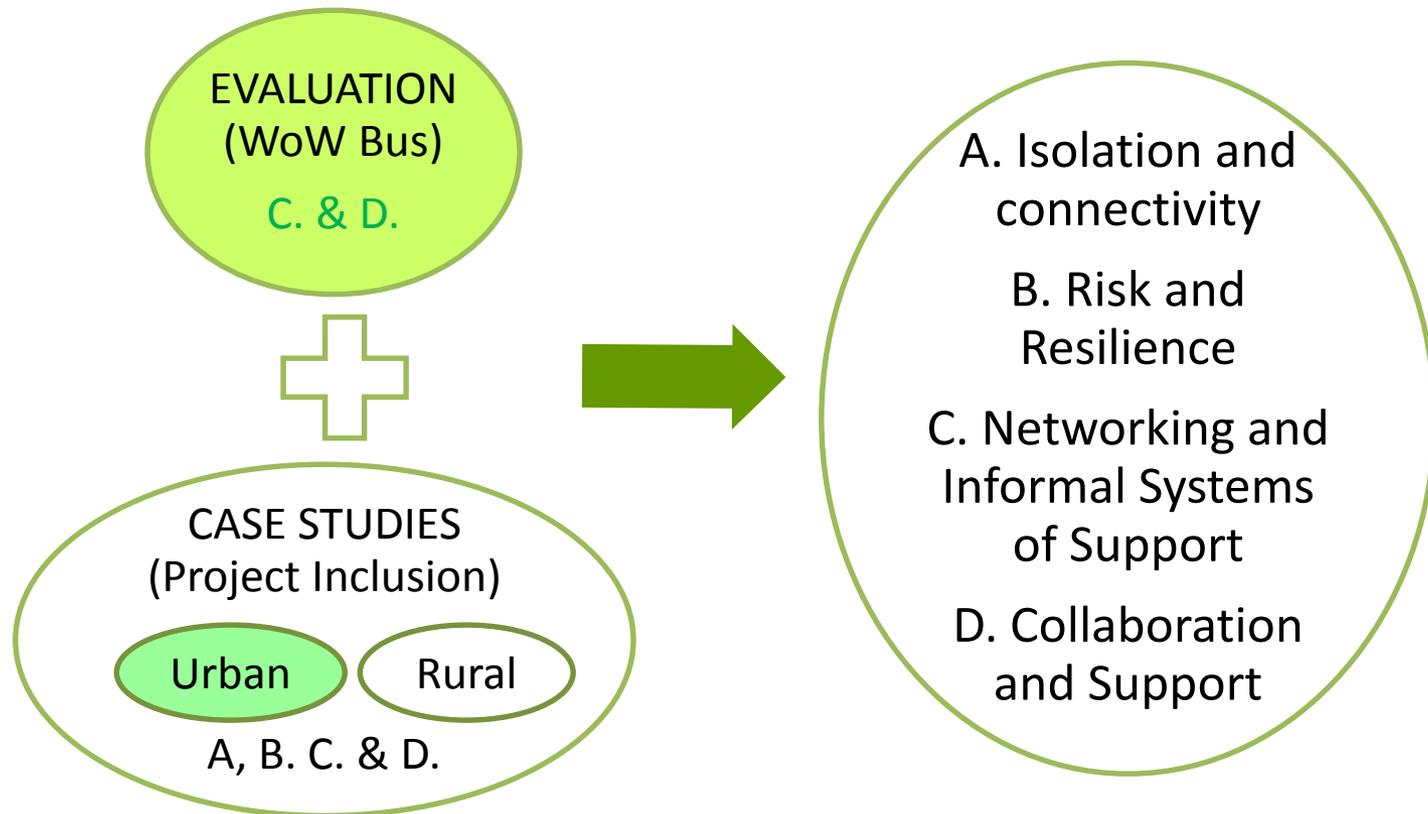
Including All Children and Families

- Multiple Case study 1-Urban
 - Focus groups and home-based interviews with participant parents; IDP records
 - Open ended questions
- Multiple Case Study 2-Rural
 - Home –based interviews with participant parents
 - Open ended questions
 - Artifact s (data collection)

Diverse in Methods ~ Yet Purposes Connect



Different Structures, Common Themes



Illustrating Themes from the three studies/projects

QUOTES

Isolation and Connectivity

“Betty described her community as ‘safe’ and she liked the fact that if she broke down on the side of the highway she would know who was going to drive by depending on the time of day.
“(Betty, Rural Case Studies)

“.. .like when you are from a small town, like our doctors are.... They deliver all your kids, you establish more of a relationship there than in the city because you get to see them in the grocery store, on the ski hill, maybe their kids at school if they have kids... they are just other people in the community, they are not really like “I’m the doctor.” (Sally, Rural Case Studies)

Isolation can be felt within a hospital setting, when parents are left with insufficient, or conflicting information: *“The one thing that was pretty difficult for us was...Well...We had interns coming in and out to check Robby all the time...while at the hospital’ We kind of thought it was a bit of an experiment...We had a constant derange, just with people coming in and out...a bit like an experiment.”* Martin, Urban Case Study.” *So I think that this whole thing...like the lack of everybody communicating...like they should have...like just one person in charge...like everybody...even the GP should be like involved in this...If you have a kid (Robby) like this, right?* Olga, Urban Case Study

Risk and Resilience

“I am considering staying a little bit longer because, you know, I am a bit nervous because he was sleeping in a little bit later and I want to see if there is any infection or anything and it would be easier to stay down here if anything comes up even though I know they can take of things there but so I just looked into it this morning to see how much it would be to change the tickets and it’s 200 bucks to change to tickets and there is only one night available here so we would have to go and stay in a hotel so its add up to maybe it’s a thousand bucks for me to go home on Monday instead of tomorrow. I just... so I don’t know what the right thing to do is cause now the money thing kind of clouds the decision... but I think we will just head home tomorrow then. “(Sally, Rural Case Studies)

...had it not been for that nurse [who came to check on younger son], then I wouldn’t have known...then my older son, Charlie, could have a consultant lined up early on; you look at him, and he looks fine all other than he’s not talking; Charlie, we go to the doctor; the doctor would say “Charile, he IS a boy, just wait”...Charlie, [we] wait, but how long we are going to wait?, I don’t know: Is this fortunate or unfortunate that we have a [younger] son with light birth weight?(Serena, Urban Case Study)..

Networking and Informal Systems of Support

(P) *“When I was in (a larger urban center) you didn’t sit in the waiting room talking to other moms because you didn’t know them so you didn’t get in to that. Getting to know the nurse, why get to know her, next time you were going there was probably going to be someone else.”* (Wilma, Rural Case Studies)

(P) *“If we need to ask something we always just go to [the infant consultant] cause she is an old friend of Larry’s too, they already know each other from a long time. So she saw me working at the 7-11, she told the manager, don’t be mean to her, this is my daughter... She’s like really, really nice. She thinks of me as her daughter”* (Tala, Rural Case Studies)

(P) Yenny talked about their ongoing network of support for childminding and transportation logistics with friends in their immediate neighbour *community* *“we ask from friends, we do it for them too.”* Yenny also described their financial struggles as she and her husband raised a child with Down’s syndrome with complex health/medical needs, and how they would not qualify for additional funding (supplement) even when their social worker (involved with SCD) tried to help *“. . .no, we tried everything else, but we don’t qualify, we just. . . Some other organizations; they do have a higher cutoff for funding for programs and stuff like that so that’s a possibility...Mind you we did go once to [a community, non for profit family services agency] and did say “we need help” So we did get help from them.* Explained how they asked for support, access for more recreational services, e.g, to go an *“work out”* *“That was the kind of thing, so if we needed a membership to be able to go and get access, for the kids program in the summer and stuff like that. . .”* (Yenny, Urban Case Studies)

Networking and Informal Systems of Support

(SP) Why the Friendship Centre is involved: (line 264-268, Part 2) *One of the things I want to say about the Friendship Centre is the way we did programs, we have such a small staff, we're a nonprofit organization, the only way that we can do what we do is with our amazing staff that overlaps. But we also had the realization, we can't be everything and do everything for everybody, so how can we make our jobs simpler with each program[to] make it as comprehensive and enhanced as possible? And the whole idea with the mobile outreach unit, was another opportunity for us to extend our services out and building on that, and that whole idea is bringing community partners into that [mobile homeless service]. And so I guess what I'm saying is I'm always looking at different ways to figure out how to market stuff...and we can get more awareness of what's out there, it isn't going to be the parents walking by and wondering what that is, it's going to be "Hey, come on let's go! It'll be so much fun! Mom, let's go on that bus. It's boring watching." You know? WoW Bus Project,*

Collaboration and Support

(P) Parents explained they valued that the infant consultant just stopped in to see how they were doing; that she called and checked in on us; that she asked others in the community about the family if they had not seen them for awhile. Betty commented, *“Not being intrusive but just concerned”* She reported that she valued that the consultant was looking out for the whole family not just Kelly when the consultant assisted the family in obtaining recreational activities for the teenage children.” (Betty, Rural Case Studies)

(P) *“Our consultant she helped us a lot; she asked us to see the doctor, and the doctor would say “Wait” and our consultant said, “Why don’t you go and see to this doctor” as she recommended us a different doctor, this doctor she knows that would help. I go to my doctor and say: “Can you recommend me to this doctor?” and she says: “How do you know that doctor?” ...In fact I didn’t know whether, Charlie, how we know that my son is in the spectrum. So she told us “Charlie, do this, tell your doctor to make referral to Children’s Hospital. ” I didn’t even know about this hospital at this time, and then we got there our consultant came to the meeting. If not for our consultant, my son would not be diagnosed, and then nothing would have happened ...”* ?.(Serena, Urban Case Study)

Collaboration and Support

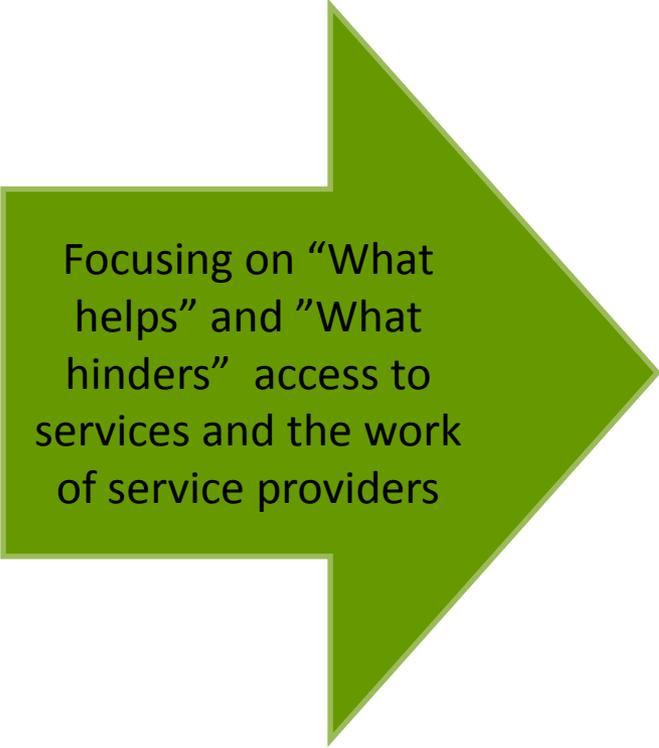
(SP) *“My continuing role is ... Success by Six is, continues to be a funder, so there’s a role there... Also, why I like to support the [WoW] bus, personally, as the Success by Six coordinator, [I see] how it can help support the implementation of our community action plan. This is what I’m responsible for, facilitating with the partners.”*

(WoW Bus Project, Success by Six Coordinator, line 79-84)

(SP) *About initiative and creating a new model: “If we do have joint initiatives, what type of protocols need to be in place so that it works for every agency, including what are common outcomes that we need [in order] to be accountable to our individual funders? And how [can] we count clients and what resources are we providing to that? All of those issues need to be considered. So the WoW Bus is an opportunity for us to start building, [to] have those types of things in place so that it can be utilized for all the other common initiatives and programs.”(WoW Bus Project ...Line 157-159, Part 2)*

What we focus on to understand families' and service providers' needs and realities

INTERPRETING OUR FINDINGS



Focusing on “What helps” and “What hinders” access to services and the work of service providers

- The people / services available
- Regional topography
- Weather related issues impacting transportation and driving/travelling conditions
- Complex support needs
- Family income sources and logistics challenges

Presenting situations that you could encounter with the families with
whom you work

CASE SCENARIOS

Preschool age child (girl), complex medical needs

- Only child of family in rural community in Northern BC
- Father works in Alberta's oil fields
- Mother expecting second baby
- Closest hospital is 50 K away
- Commuting to community for school, groceries and other services

Twin infants, one of them with motor developmental delays

- Lone parent (Mother) with two babies in large urban coastal community in BC
- Public transport available
- Home visits work (AIDP); appointments to centre within 15 km distance are complex with two babies

School-age boy, (age 5 1/ 2) assessed for ASD (autism spectrum disorder)

- Blended parent family in suburban community near a small urban community (Interior BC)
- Child received EI services with IDP
- Language delay – continues to receive Speech Language therapy
 - in addition to emotional/ behavioural needs (difficulties with self-regulation)

Your turn to integrate, connect, and propose solutions

YOUR TURN

1

Specific Questions

For each scenario:

- As a parent, how do you approach this situation?
- What do you bring (skills, knowledge, talents) that enriches the current (or past) situation(s)?
- As a service provider. What can you do as the local EI specialist?
- What should you do? What resources are you aware of ?
- What do you think in terms of possible strategies or ideas to share with the parent?

2

Overarching Considerations

Given some of the considerations we have discussed earlier, what do you see as being some of the major challenges for this family, for each scenario:

- What do you see as being some of the major benefits and main challenges as a family (for parents) or, for families (for service providers) in your own community/ies?

3

Think Solutions and Approaches, or “Working with what we have”

- Hubs of local agencies partnering under one umbrella
- Mobile programs and home-based service provision
- Existing informal networks (intersectoral)

SUMMING UP!

- Aspects we may consider as “common ground” for all delegates?
- Aspects or issues that are unique and that require a creative/ diverse approach?
- Aspects where we find a (healthy) disagreement?

FINAL REFLECTIONS AND COMMENTS



With strong communities backing them up through the network of services...

"Growing in well-supported families"

"Planting a garden where children need to show their beauty and pride"

Sharing your thoughts and ideas: What is the garden you envision?



References Available Upon Request

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