



northern child and youth

an electronic publication of the UNBC Task Force on Substance Abuse, Centre of Excellence for Children and Adolescents
with Special Needs 2006 Special Edition Anniversary Issue

In this issue:

**CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE FOR CHILDREN
AND ADOLESCENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS**

THE UNBC TASK FORCE ON SUBSTANCE ABUSE:

A FIVE YEAR JOURNEY

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In 2000, the Centres of Excellence for Children & Adolescents with Special Needs, the University of Northern British Columbia Taskforce on Substance Abuse was established. Sponsored and administered by Lakehead University, our centre's national partners (Task Forces) are Memorial University in Newfoundland (Nutrition), Mount St. Vincent University in Nova Scotia (Early Intervention), and the Government of Nunavut (Mental Health). The Centre is also involved with over 300 community, government and corporate partners across Canada.

The Taskforce at UNBC performs research on issues related to substance abuse, particularly how this is related to a variety of special needs such as FASD. Substance abuse is a problem for many young Canadians. Alcohol, drugs, and solvents are a primary concern. In rural and northern communities, substance abuse programs for youth are often limited or unavailable. We need to make available programs that are specific to the needs of youth living in these remote communities.

The Centre of Excellence is committed to ensuring that young people with special needs living in rural and northern communities receive the best services Canada has to offer.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND THE CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE FOR CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

You can contact any Task Force in the Centre of Excellence for Children and Adolescents with Special Needs by visiting the National Website at www.coespecialneeds.ca.

You are also welcome to contact the UNBC Task Force on Substance Abuse.

Our website is www.unbc.ca/centreca

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The Centre of Excellence for Children and Adolescents with Special Needs UNBC Task Force has been active in pursuing the goals of raising awareness of issues of substance abuse as it relates to children's health in northern, rural and remote communities. In northern British Columbia this means there is a strong commitment to Aboriginal families similar to the focus of the University of Northern British Columbia itself.

The Centre of Excellence is active on a number of National and Provincial committees and boards such as the Centre of Excellence Aboriginal Working Group, meetings with the Aboriginal Health Director and CIHR Aboriginal Health Pillar, Western FASD Consortium, BC Aboriginal Child Care Society, BC Early Childhood Development Round Table, Aboriginal Children's Circle of Early Learning, and Canada NW FASD Research Network.

The Centre has been invited to and participated in many conferences, such as the annual BC Aboriginal Child Care Society Conferences, FASD prevention and intervention forums through Northern Family Health society, College of New Caledonia, Northern Health and many others.

The UNBC Task Force has also accepted invitations to be participants as well as presenters in information gathering forums ensuring the issues relating to children with special needs are included in the agenda. In 2005 alone, the Centre participated in FASD Research Network roundtables and forums, Support Childcare and Aboriginal Child Development symposiums. Where ever possible the Centre has attempted to create links and networks to work for the increased awareness of issues related to children and substance abuse.

From the provincial to the national and international level, the Centre has attempted to draw attention to funding and policies for helping children and their families receive the necessary supports to grow and flourish in rural, remote and northern communities.

The Centre of Excellence UNBC Task Force participates in conferences worldwide in order to facilitate awareness and learn different strategies for addressing issues relating to children, youth and substance abuse in the global community. In Iceland, Amsterdam, and New Zealand, the Centre of Excellence has presented papers to standing room only audiences.

Closer to home, the Centre has also been active in building capacity within northern and rural communities for completing their own research. Through participatory action research, members of the community were taught strategies for conducting research. This focus is particularly evident in the publication *Youth Voices on the Prevention and Intervention of Youth Substance Abuse*, a compelling piece of research that trained youth to conduct interviews and draft parts of the document. In this same manner, the Centre of Excellence also offers workshops on how and why to undertake research. One such workshop is entitled “Qualitative Research: Making Meaning from Data” and has been presented to classes at UNBC and other venues.

The Centre’s newsletter *northern child and youth* Fall 2004 discussed conducting research in a community based manner. Our newsletter has addressed other issues; some specifically relating to the northern region such as Spring 2005 Provincial Elections Special speaking to northern BC candidates on substance abuse and special needs. Other newsletters spoke to issues of substance use as it relates to youth use and parental concerns. Two new newsletters are nearing completion for Winter/Spring 2006.

Ensuring that relevant information reaches our communities is one of the foundations of the Centre of Excellence. With this in mind, the UNBC Task Force created a website with a searchable library database in order to increase accessibility for communities to pertinent information related to a wide variety of topics on special needs and substance abuse. The website includes links to relevant websites and the other Centres of

Excellence as well as copies of our reports available for download.

The goals guiding the research for the Centre of Excellence for Children and Adolescents with Special Needs specific to the UNBC Task Force on Substance Abuse were to:

- Identify and define substance abuse issues in rural, remote northern communities
- Research and describe current services and resources available
- Evaluate existing services for gaps, challenges and barriers to availability accessibility and quality of services
- Identify and examine programs that are sensitive to the diverse needs of northern communities
- Analyze historical, social, cultural and economical determinants of substance abuse
- Examine federal, provincial and territorial legislation and policy related to substance abuse or its contextual determinants
- Develop and promote existing educational strategies targeted at substance abuse
- Determine how contextual factors impact substance abuse
- Identify and describe “best practice” for service delivery including the role of technology

The following published reports are the result of striving to meet these research goals. Other reports are still pending peer review and approval from the National office at Lakehead University.



Inclusive Child Care in Northern British Columbia: An Inquiry into the Successes and Challenges.

Betsabeh Parsa-Pajouh, Jillian Stockburger, Margo Greenwood, & Anne-Marie Prediger

Through a review of the literature, focus group discussions, and associated survey data, this report aims to ascertain the methods and practices that ensure the successful integration of and service provision to, children with special needs in child care settings throughout northern British Columbia.

Youth Voices on the Prevention and Intervention of Youth Substance Abuse

Jillian Stockburger, Betsabeh Parsa-Pajouh, Sarah de Leeuw, and Margo Greenwood

This report examines the voices and views of youth in a northern British Columbia city regarding substances and substance abuse. At risk youth between 15 and 19 discussed their perceptions about substances, what it means to be 'clean', and offered their stories and experiences with drugs and alcohol.

Substance Abuse Related Special Needs in Canada: Best Practices for Prevention.

Jillian Stockburger

This report provides an overview of the research and findings regarding substance abuse related special needs including a synopsis of the physical and developmental effects of the prenatal consumption and 'best practices' for the prevention of substance abuse related special needs. This review is framed by a critical examination of the cultural and societal factors that can influence perceptions toward women who use substances.

Children and Adolescents with Special Needs: A Review of Provincial British Columbian and Canadian Federal Law and Policy Direction.

Mary MacDonald, LL.B

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of British Columbian and federal government legislation, regulations, and some policies that exist within the two levels of

governments and which have the potential to affect the lives of children and adolescents with special needs

Recognizing Strength, Building Capacity: Addressing Substance Abuse Related Special Needs in First Nations Communities of British Columbia.

Sarah de Leeuw and Margo Greenwood

Findings of this research draw attention to the desires of Aboriginal peoples to have meaningful input into any process that impacts, concerns, or affects their communities, specifically with regard to children and adolescents with special needs related to substance abuse.

The Faces of FAS/FAE in Two Northern British Columbian Communities: Characteristics of Children.

Sandra Ollech

This report describes and compares the demographic and health characteristics, and living arrangements of 83 children with FAS/FAE who reside in Prince George and Fort St. James, British Columbia. The primary disabilities of children in this study include attention deficit and hyperactivity, delayed development, speech and language deficits, physical problems, and learning disorders.

Rural, Remote, and North of 51: Service Provision and Substance Abuse Related Special Needs in British Columbia's Hinterlands.

Sarah de Leeuw, Jo-Anne Fiske, and Margo Greenwood

Based on consultation with community groups and agencies in northwestern British Columbia, this paper discusses and identifies research recommendations and gaps in services pertaining to substance abuse related special needs.

Addictions among Children and Youth: An Inventory of Resources.

Martin Spigelman and Associates

A comprehensive, briefly annotated inventory of print, internet and audio visual source material relating to substance abuse among children and youth.