

Drawing by Preet, Age 6 from Oliver, BC

The
Action Plan
of the
Okanagan-Similkameen
Region
in
British Columbia,
Canada
December 2008

Presented by *Communities for Kids* and *Understanding the Early Years*



*Understanding
the Early Years*

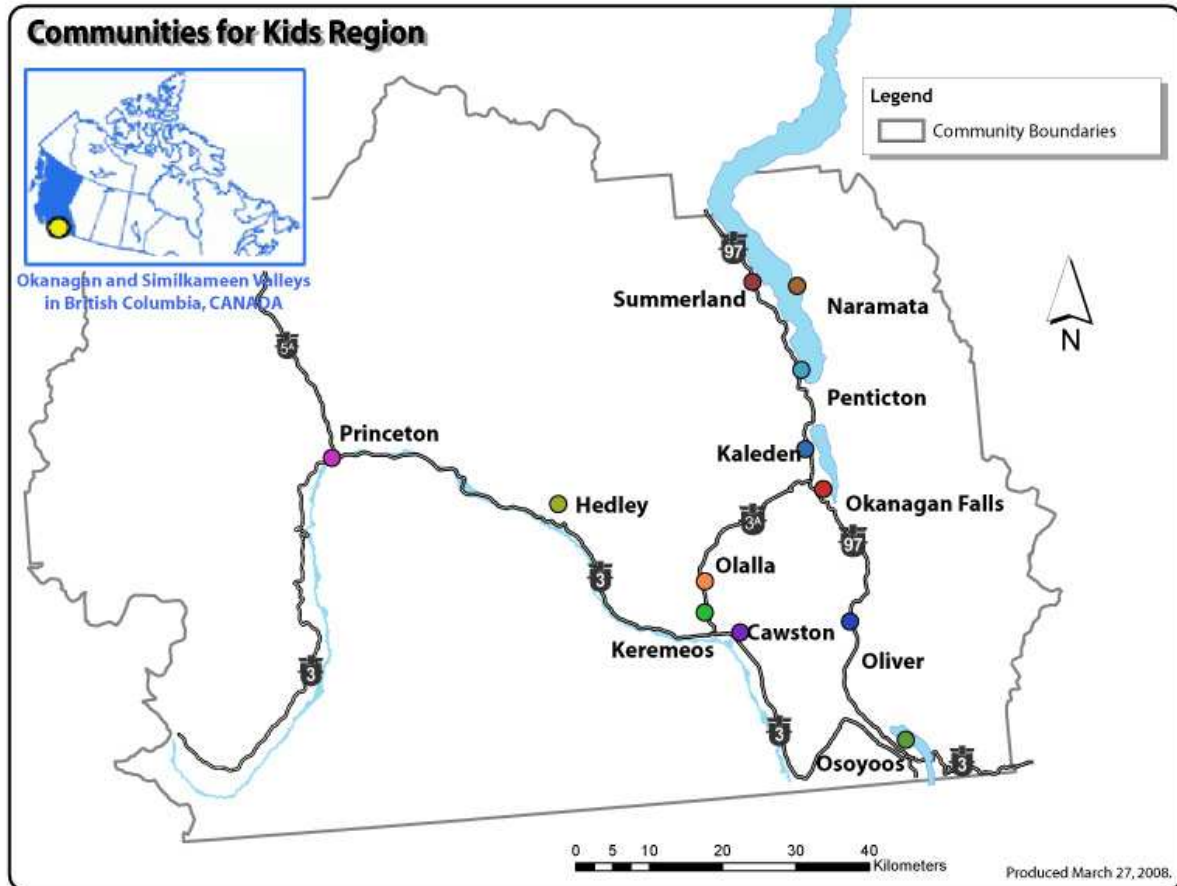
The Understanding the Early Years Initiative is funded by Human Resources and Social Development Canada.
For further information, visit www.hrsdc.gc.ca

**THE UNDERSTANDING THE EARLY YEARS ACTION PLAN
FOR COMMUNITIES FOR KIDS
IN THE OKANAGAN-SIMILKAMEEN REGION
INCLUDING:**

**Princeton,
Keremeos and area,
Osoyoos,
Oliver and area,
Okanagan Falls,
Penticton and area,
and
Summerland,
British Columbia, Canada**

**Patricia Gregory
Project Coordinator
Understanding the Early Years
Okanagan-Similkameen
British Columbia, Canada**

Okanagan-Similkameen UEY (Communities for Kids Region) Location in British Columbia



Data Source: DMTI Spatial

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	4
ABOUT THIS ACTION PLAN	5
PREVIOUS ACTION PLANNING	6
<i>Communities for Kids Phase 1 (2000 to 2002)</i>	6
<i>Communities for Kids Phase 2 (2003 to 2005)</i>	6
<i>Communities for Kids Phase 3 (2005 to 2008)</i>	7
A NEW STRATEGIC PLAN	8
<i>Communities for Kids Phase 4 (2009 and Beyond)</i>	8

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ABOUT THIS ACTION PLAN

The views expressed in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of Human Resources and Social Development Canada or the Government of Canada.

Although the views expressed in this document are those of the Steering Committee of *Communities for Kids*, they may not necessarily reflect the views of the partners and associates of *Communities for Kids*.

The reports referenced in this document are available upon request.

All photos in this document are used with parent permission.

More information about early childhood development may be obtained by contacting any member of the *Communities for Kids* Team, or by visiting www.communitiesforkids.ca. This document is also available at www.communitiesforkids.ca by clicking on Understanding the Early Years.



PREVIOUS ACTION PLANNING

Communities for Kids Phase 1 (2000 to 2002)

In the year 2000, the Government of Canada developed The Early Childhood Development (ECD) Agreement. As a result of this agreement, each province and territory was granted federal funding to improve the ECD outcomes for children ages 0 to 6 years.

With this funding, the BC government, through the Ministry of Children and Families (visit www.gov.bc.ca/mcf/) launched the Make Children First Initiative. This Initiative used a community development process to help realize the ambitious goal of a comprehensive, integrated service delivery system that would support young children and their families. There were pilot sites in Eastern Fraser Valley, Port Alberni/West Coast, and Prince George.

Simultaneously, The Human Early Learning Partnership (HELP) was taking an ECD lead role in the province of British Columbia. Their vision was to use high level research to develop a greater understanding of the role of communities in early childhood development (visit www.earlylearning.ubc.ca). Interest within the communities of the Okanagan-Similkameen was sparked when Clyde Hertzman of HELP spoke about research findings of brain development in young children.

School Districts (SD) 53 (Okanagan Similkameen) and 67 (Okanagan Skaha) took an avid interest in the ECD movement, and they agreed to participate in data collection for the Early Development Instrument (EDI) in the 2001-2002 school year.

The grassroots movement began when members of communities in the Okanagan-Similkameen had a vision of optimal health and development for young children in the region, and were willing to come together as a coalition. They saw opportunities for integration of funding, and inclusion of the diverse groups within the region. At the same time, they recognized the need for an infrastructure to sustain its work, and the need for a strategic plan to provide direction as it moved forward. The *Communities for Kids* (CFK) coalition was born on October 9, 2002, during a visioning day which attracted over 40 ECD partners.

Communities for Kids Phase 2 (2003 to 2005)

Communities for Kids became a "Make Children First" Learning Site¹ when funding was received through the Ministry of Children and Family Development. A second round of EDI data collection took place in School Districts 53 and 67, as well as School District 58 (Nicola Similkameen), in the 2002-2003 school year. The third round of EDI data in the Okanagan-Similkameen was collected in SD53 and SD67 in the 2004-2005 school year.

A steering committee for the Coalition had already been constituted. Five contracted personnel were hired to form the original CFK Community Team. A consultant was engaged to conduct community consultations to identify strengths and challenges. The CFK Logic Model, developed after extensive planning, guided the work of the Steering Committee and the Community Team.

An evaluation contractor was hired in 2005 to assess the organizational structure and operational objectives of *Communities for Kids*. The report recommended: changes to the organizational structure of CFK; job description reviews; a review of the logic model; and strategic planning.

¹ The initiative is now called Children First. Visit www.bcchildrenfirst.ca for more information.

Communities for Kids Phase 3 (2005 to 2008)

Extensive re-organization of *Communities for Kids* took place after the 2005 Evaluation. Staffing and job description changes were designed to streamline the work. Success By 6® (SB6) and Understanding the Early Years (UEY) were integrated with CFK. A revision of the Logic Model was completed.

Three years of stable funding and a productive Community Team of five individuals allowed *Communities for Kids* to make great strides in enhancing ECD in the Okanagan-Similkameen Region. SB6 Strategic Implementation funds and SB6 Aboriginal Engagement funds resulted in regional and community projects which directly benefitted young children and their families. SB6 Marketing funds and UEY funds allowed regional ECD promotion in the form of brochures, posters, T-shirts, child development wheels, and an Early Years DVD, to name just a few. UEY funds supported: three parenting conferences; construction and maintenance of a website; newsletters; community maps and community resource directories; and research.

Understanding the Early Years will sunset on December 31, 2008. While the “UEY years” saw re-invigorated investment in the work of ECD in the Okanagan-Similkameen, a significant source of funding which supported the work of *Communities for Kids* will be lost. As well, the CFK Community Team will lose one member.

To assist with the next steps for ECD in the Okanagan-Similkameen, a consultant was hired in October 2008 to complete an evaluation of the work of *Communities for Kids* from 2005 to 2008. In the resulting Evaluation Report, the consultant lauded the accomplishments towards fulfilling the four objectives of the Logic Model. He noted, however, that there were two predominant challenges:

- The tension between aspiring to be a grassroots movement, and the reality of needing to adhere to the directives of the funding bodies
- The need for streamlining the focus and work plan of the coalition

Recommendations of the Evaluation Report included: addressing funding and communications, key issues identified during the Focus Group session; strategic planning based on core values, vision, mission, and meaningful outcome-focused goals and action; and the creation of a strategic planning document that is simpler and more concise than the current Logic Model.



A NEW STRATEGIC PLAN

Communities for Kids Phase 4 (2009 and Beyond)²

The termination of the Understanding the Early Years project requires that *Communities for Kids* address the reallocation of resources in a manner which will maximize the impact of its ongoing efforts. This will require consideration of funding challenges and a reassignment of workload, duties and responsibilities. This occasion may present an opportunity for a reassessment of how staff time is allocated regionally, and by community. Any consideration for change will be considered within the framework of an overall strategic planning exercise.

To help CFK build upon its many successes to date, the coalition will revisit its strategic plan based on the core values upon which the coalition is based. This will occur within the context of the vision which CFK has for the “community of communities” and in fulfillment of its mission, which must be revisited and perhaps reframed. The work will then proceed toward the identification of meaningful, outcome-focused goals and the actions necessary to accomplish them. Documents to be considered in determining future action include, at a minimum, the results of the Children First and Success by 6[®] Provincial Evaluation, as well as the UEY Community Mapping Report and the UEY Community Research Report.

As a tool to help CFK move forward, consideration will be given to a strategic planning document that is simpler and more concise than the current Logic Model. While the Logic Model is highly comprehensive, it is also somewhat overwhelming, contains areas of overlap and duplication, and is difficult to manage.

The strategic plan should address, at a minimum, the key issues identified during the Evaluation Focus Group session; Funding and Communications with an emphasis on Public Awareness. The strategic plan will chart the path for ongoing ECD work within the Region, based on the priorities identified.

Some structural change is inevitable, possibly including more community representation at the Steering Committee Table together with ongoing involvement at Community Tables. There would be some advantage in having community voices at the regional table and, if it can be achieved, some parental involvement on the Steering Committee. It may also be worthwhile to consider a regional staffing model such as that employed in other, similar ECD organizations.

In summary, strategic planning will consider:

- Fund Development
- Communications and public awareness
- Core values, vision and mission
- Current Logic Model
- Children First/Success by 6[®] provincial evaluation results
- UEY Community Mapping and UEY Community Research Reports
- Evaluation Report of November 2008 by *Building Better Boards*
- Meaningful outcome-focused goals and action

Actions which emerge from Strategic Planning will be aimed at sustaining community capacity to use knowledge to improve outcomes for children from 0 to 6 years in the Okanagan-Similkameen. Three phases of CFK history have formed the successful foundation upon which the *Communities for Kids* Steering Committee and Community Team will build an effective plan for the future.

² With thanks to Michael Loewen of *Building Better Boards*