

play + parenting

FRP Canada



www.frp.ca

Summer | 2011

Early Learning and a whole lot more!

From the pre-conference training workshops on April 26 to the closing plenary on April 29, participants at FRP Canada's 2011 biennial national conference in Montreal enjoyed the many opportunities to enrich their practice around the conference theme: "Early Learning, and a whole lot more." They heard from noted experts about recent research, they shared stories and experiences with colleagues, they

discussed the latest policy developments, they discovered new resources and programs... and of course, since family resource people know the value of play, organizers didn't forget to plan for lots of time to have fun.

Right to play

Sometimes the discussion of "early learning" seems to lose sight of the importance of having fun. This was certainly not the case for the conference's three keynote speakers. Dr. Gilles Julien, a well known proponent and practitioner of social pediatrics in Montreal, gave the conference's opening address. In seeking to improve children's health, social pediatrics looks beyond the individual child to the family and neighbourhood context in which the child lives. Practitioners work to mobilize a variety of sectors—health, social services, recreation, education, child welfare, media, business—to eliminate the inequities associated with poverty. Dr. Julien evaluates inequity based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. How does a child's environment support those rights? For instance, one of the rights is the right to play. When Dr. Julien realized that

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photo: Barb Lillico

Barb Lillico, a member of FRP Canada's Board of Directors, took the stilt challenge, with the help of Guy Marsan from the Ottawa Stilt Union.

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The **pictures on pages 8 and 9** of this issue tell the tale: FRP Canada's Biennial National Conference, **Early learning, and a whole lot more**, was a huge success.

This issue also lists some of the publications and other resources that were available at the conference.

In addition, a number of presenters have generously shared their **notes and hand-outs**. You can consult them at www.frp.ca/program2011.





photo: Betsy Mann

Staff members Jill Heckman, David Bennett and Jackie Scheffel in rare moment of rest behind the registration and information desk at the conference. Once again, participants, exhibitors and presenters all appreciated Jill's outstanding abilities as chief conference organizer.

Congratulations to University of Manitoba professor Joan Durrant who received this year's Humanitarian of the Year award from the Manitoba Chapter of the Canadian Red Cross in recognition of her work to promote nonviolence in families and respect for the rights of children. Order her book, *Positive Discipline: What it is and how to do it* at www.frp.ca.

National Family Week October 3–9, 2011 Turning Your Family's Values into Action

Help spread the word!

Download our prepared ads to use in your own publicity and purchase handy promotional items, available at www.frp.ca/nfw.



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children in the neighbourhood served by one of his clinics lacked a safe place for active outdoor play, his team's answer was to get the community onboard to clean up a local alley. With the cooperation of residents and neighbours, the formerly dodgy alley became a lively and inviting space, an important contributor to children's health.

Love builds brains

Discussions of early learning usually include an emphasis on what neuroscience tells us about the crucial importance of early

experiences in building the structure of a child's brain, along with serious admonishments to provide the "right" kind of stimulation. The keynote address by Dr. Jean Clinton, clinical professor of child psychiatry at McMaster University, gave relevant information from neuroscience research, illustrated with the now familiar coloured diagrams of brains and pictures of branching neurons that look like a thicket of brambles. However, the title of her presentation, "The First R: Relationships, How Love Builds

Brains," was the real clue to her focus. She reassured her audience that the best kind of stimulation for infants is a mother's or father's face, with all its sounds, textures, smells and even tastes. The best toy a child can have is a loving adult to play with, one whose eyes light up when the child comes into the room. She urged parents to aim at progress not perfection, to stop being anxious about whether their children are in the right programs and to start having fun together.

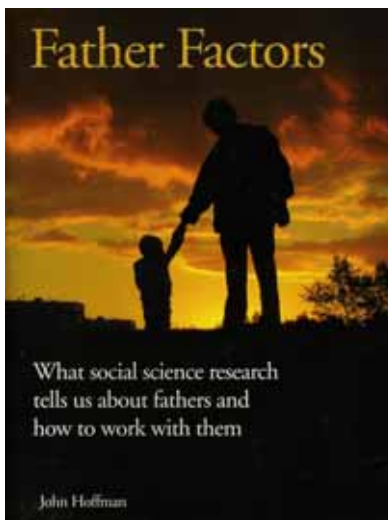
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Working with Fathers

In family resource programs, women are in the overwhelming majority among both participants and staff members. Parenting support and parent education have largely been directed to mothers. However, fathers are increasingly taking on more roles in the home, and research is demonstrating their importance in children's lives. Organizations need to adopt new ways of working that will answer men's needs for support in their parenting role.

Practitioners and decision makers will find guidance for working with fathers in a new report published by the Father Involvement Research Alliance (FIRA) and written by John Hoffman, FIRA's communications coordinator and Canada's leading writer on fatherhood. *Father Factors: What social science research tells us about fathers and how to work with them* is a 64-page booklet which looks at:

- the factors that influence how men undertake the roles and responsibilities of parenting
- the influence that mothers and fathers have on each other
- the father-child relationship and how it is built
- marginalized and vulnerable fathers
- existing community programs and best practices in support and services



In addition to extensive references to studies in the field of fathering, Hoffman also includes some results from the 2011 Canadian Fathers' Program Study undertaken by the Father Involvement Research Alliance, as well as lists of transferable fathers' programs and of service models and programs for separated and divorced fathers. He is at pains to remind readers of the diversity of families and fathers and warns of the dangers of easy stereotyping about any sub-groups of men as fathers. His aim in writing this document is to "get [fathers] involved because it is a worthwhile thing to do right now—fascinating, fun, fulfilling and important."

If your organization shares that aim, you will find *Father Factors* an important addition to your discussion of this aspect of your work. A limited number of paper copies are available from FIRA (www.fira.ca) and the BC Council for Families (www.bccf.ca). The document can also be downloaded free in PDF from the FIRA Website. Click on the link to the research report for practitioners on the home page at www.fira.ca. □

Keep it simple

The final conference speaker, Dr. Carl Dunst, a noted researcher in the field of family support, reiterated the message to keep it simple and fun. Learning doesn't only happen in a context of instruction. His studies have shown that everyday life and the little things that parents do provide numerous opportunities for informal learning. What makes a difference in the outcomes for children's learning is not whether the chosen activity is ballet lessons or going to stock car races. It is rather the quality of the interactions that occur between parent and child during the activity. He advised parents, and those who support them, to stop making things more complicated than they are. Simplicity makes it easier to actually do an activity and then to sustain it. Pleasure makes it even easier.

A full schedule

In addition to these plenary sessions, participants could choose among workshop topics that varied from storytelling to dealing with staff stress, from multiple intelligences to working in rural communities. In between, they could browse through displays from exhibitors such as the Canadian Father Involvement Initiative, Halpenny Insurance, the Psychology Foundation of Canada, les Éditions Midi trente, la Coalition Bambin and HIPPIY Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Children.

Fun was the order of the evening Thursday at the Magic of Play banquet. This year, the Ottawa Stilt Union entertained the audience with an interactive story, complete with acrobatics nine feet in the air. They followed with an invitation to try out stilting, albeit on shorter stilts than the four-foot model used by the

performers. Everyone was also invited to wield a glue gun and fashion a tiara out of "beautiful junk." The fun continued very early the next morning at the royal wedding breakfast of Montreal bagels and cream cheese, served in the hospitality suite with its wide-screen TV for optimal viewing (tiaras optional).

Follow up

The end of one national conference leads right into planning for the next one. Thank you to all those who completed the online feedback questionnaire. Your comments will help make our next national conference even better. See you in 2013! □

Many conference presenters have made their presentations available on FRP Canada's website. Go to www.frp.ca and click on the conference program link.

FutureSave Project Winds Down

In June 2008, FRP Canada received funding from the Government of Canada's Education Savings Community Outreach (ESCO) for its FutureSave project. The aims were: 1) to promote the importance of learning and of saving early for post-secondary education through Registered Education Savings Plans (RESP) among modest and middle income families, and 2) to spread the word about the Canada Learning Bond and the Canada Education Savings Grants.

The project used a train-the-trainer approach to prepare family resource practitioners to provide a series of workshops to parents. By March 2011, the results were as follows:

- involvement of 58 FRPs from eight provinces and two territories
- 83 family support practitioners trained
- at least 1028 families participated in workshops
- many sites made the workshops part of their ongoing programming
- over 200 one-to-one information sessions with families.

The train-the-trainer manual will soon be posted for downloading from a link on the home page at www.frp.ca.



FRP Canada and project coordinator Christine Colbert extend a heartfelt thank you to the facilitators and the FRP Canada member organizations for all their time, effort and dedication to bringing this information to the young families that they serve.

Go to www.canlearn.ca for more information about related federal government programs. □

Family Legacy Awards

Congratulations to the following recipients of FRP Canada's Family Legacy Awards. Their outstanding contributions to the field of family support were recognized at the 2011 national conference.

Nancy Ship has been a Speech Language Pathologist in a variety of organizations in and around Montreal for over 60 years. A respected advisor, she is passionate about recognizing the individual needs of the child and finding a way to support the family. Nancy's work was never in isolation with a child, but rather in coaching and uniting a team made up of parents, siblings, extended family, daycare workers and other professionals. Her holistic, practical and unwavering commitment to her profession continues to earn great respect and admiration.



Authors Carla O'Reilly and Tania Bird sign copies of their book *The Smiling Mask* after their workshop at the FRP Canada conference.

Carla O'Reilly, Elita Paterson and Tania Bird were honoured in recognition of their work to raise awareness, acceptance and understanding of postpartum difficulties. They have contributed to policy around mothers' mental health and spoken at numerous public events, in addition to

producing a book, a DVD and a workbook on the topic.

The final award recipient this year was **Carl Dunst**. Beginning in the early 1980s, Carl's research, writing, consulting and teaching have transformed the work of early childhood intervention in Canada and the related field of family resource programs. Evidence from his research has helped us show us why it is important to keep families front and centre in our practice. He has provided us with practical suggestions for ways to build partnerships with families, along with a basis for the overall philosophy that directs our programs. Although he works in North Carolina, he has been a good friend to FRP Canada and its members over many years. □

Recent Policy Paper Well Received

FRP Canada recently published *Family is the Foundation*, a position paper highlighting the need to complement school-based programs with a broad spectrum of supports for families and young children. Participants attending the national conference had an opportunity to share their perspectives on how this document can contribute to ongoing discussions in their part of the country.

Keynote speaker and Family Legacy Award recipient, Dr. Carl Dunst, congratulated FRP Canada on the policy statement. He called it "a gem" and "perhaps one of the most clearly articulated frameworks for showing how and why family support must be an integral part of initiatives aimed at improving the well-being of young children and their families."

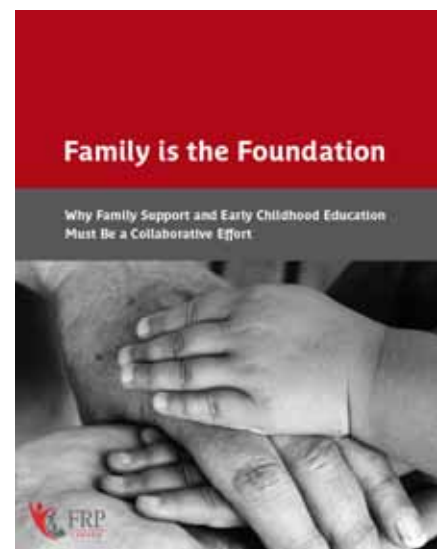
Family is the Foundation has been widely distributed, particularly in BC, Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec and New Brunswick. It has been sent to key decision makers and government leaders in several provinces and to all federal MPs.

Pass it on

FRP Canada members are encouraged to share the position paper with their networks, either the full 20-page version or the executive summary. Both can be downloaded from the Web site. Member organizations can also request up to 20 print copies by sending an e-mail to info@frp.ca.

Let us know what you think by continuing the discussion on the FRP Canada blog. Scroll down on the home page, www.frp.ca, to find the link. It is not necessary to log on as a member to add a comment to the blog.

Find out why Carl Dunst says: "Canadian families are very fortunate to have FRP Canada speak for the betterment of Canada's youngest citizens and their families." □



Download at
www.frp.ca/policypapers

RESOURCES FOR PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Online Encyclopedia Articles and Practical Tips

The importance of physical activity and active free play is the subject of several recent documents published by the Centre of Excellence for Early Childhood Development and the Strategic Knowledge Cluster on Early Child Development.

- an item in the online Encyclopedia on Early Childhood Development which includes a series of papers written by international experts as well as a short synthesis of the topic
- a four-page folder in the Key Message series, written in plain language with colourful illustrations, entitled "Physical Activity in Children: A fun and healthy habit"
- a four-page bulletin in the more text-heavy Parenting Series, with charts and references, entitled "Physical Activity in Early Childhood: Setting the Stage for Lifelong Healthy Habits"

All these documents can be downloaded from www.excellence-earlychildhood.ca. Request free paper copies of the latest folder and bulletin by sending an e-mail to cedje-ceecd@umontreal.ca. □



Supporting active play

"Families, childcare centres, schools and communities need to provide safe, supervised yet unstructured play spaces for active play, where children and their peers can engage in physical activity of their own design. This will increase physical activity levels and promote imagination, social interaction and the ability to learn and practise skills independently. Exercise play can be enhanced by providing challenging forms of climbing apparatus (always make sure equipment and spaces meet or exceed recommended safety standards). Whenever possible, children should be given access to play spaces and equipment outdoors. Studies have also reported that fewer children per square metre of outdoor space is a factor in promoting physical activity." - from "Physical Activity in Early Childhood: Setting the Stage for Lifelong Healthy Habits." □

Active Start

Resource Sheets and DVD

Canadian Sport for Life (CS4L) is a movement to make sport and activity better and more fun for our kids. Its Web site has information for early childhood educators, caregivers and parents on active play in children up to age six. Ten one-page information sheets cover topics such as activity milestones, play activities and the adult's role. They were created by Dr. Colin Higgs of Memorial University of Newfoundland. In a video clip on the Web site, he introduces the DVD *Active Start: The Importance of Physical Activity in the First Six Years of Life*. □



www.canadiansportforlife.ca/default.aspx?PageID=1004&LangID=en

Physical Activity and Pregnancy

Many women wonder about safe and healthy ways to be active during pregnancy. In the DVD **Move For Two: Physical Activity and Pregnancy**, Dr. Michelle Mottola, Director of the Exercise and Pregnancy Lab at the University of Western Ontario, provides answers. The DVD also includes a workout that can be adapted and expanded based on a pregnant woman's energy and experience levels, along with muscle conditioning, stretch and flexibility segments. Contained in the DVD case is a copy of the *PARmed-X for Pregnancy: Physical Activity Readiness Medical Examination Form* to be completed in consultation with a health care provider prior to use. The Middlesex-London Health Unit is distributing the DVD on a cost-recovery basis for \$5. To download an order form, go to www.healthunit.com/articlesPDF/16571.pdf. □



Resources from Best Start Resource Centre



Participants in an active-play workshop try out indoor skating on sheets of paper, directed by Louise Choquette, health promotion consultant for the Best Start Resource Centre of Health Nexus.

The Best Start Resource Centre has recently updated its “Have a Ball” resources, first published in 2005. They consist of a list of resources and ideas for activities, along with information from research related to physical activity and the early years. These documents are available for downloading in PDF format from the child development section at www.beststart.org.



Also available for downloading from the Website is a series of eight cards suggesting seasonal activities for children and adults together. A printed version comes laminated with a carabiner clip that allows parents to attach the cards to their diaper bag, stroller, backpack etc. They are available in English at a cost of \$2 plus tax and shipping. Four-card sets in French and in a culturally adapted Aboriginal version are available for \$1 plus tax and shipping. □

Physical Activity Report Card

Active Healthy Kids Canada and its partners have published the seventh annual “report card” rating the level of physical activity of children and youth in Canada today. This year the focus is on physical activity in the after-school period between 3 and 6 pm. Not surprisingly, the report gives a failing grade in most of the categories assessed. For instance, only 14 minutes, or 8%, of that period is spent in moderate to vigorous activity, while 59% of the time is spent sitting in front of a computer or TV screen. You can view and download the report card in both a short and long version at www.activehealthykids.ca. You can also download a report card presentation to use in sharing the findings in your own work. □

UPCOMING EVENTS

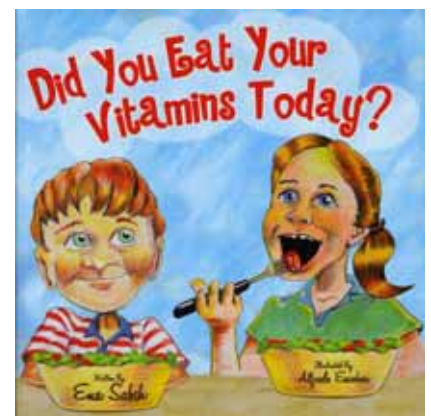
September 21–23, “Prevention Matters Conference: Supporting Children’s Well-Being,” Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. Saskatchewan Prevention Institute. www.preventioninstitute.sk.ca

October 3–9, National Family Week, “Turning Your Family’s Values into Action.” www.frp.ca/nfw

November 16–18, “Be Visible: Connecting Evidence to Action in Injury, Violence and Suicide Prevention,” Vancouver, British Columbia. Canadian Injury Prevention and Safety Promotion Conference. www.injurypreventionconference.ca

February 2–4, 2012, “The Development of Children’s Mental Health: How Do We Become Who We Are?,” Vancouver, British Columbia. The Early Years Conference. www.interprofessional.ubc.ca/Early_Years.htm

May 6–8, 2012, First National Parental Mental Health Conference. First International Young Carers Congress, Third International World Congress on Children of Parents with Mental Illness, Vancouver, British Columbia. www.interprofessional.ubc.ca



Canadian author Ena Sabih has written a book to help children understand how vitamins, from A to K, work to keep them healthy. Aimed at readers aged four to eight, the text is made up of short rhymes that also tell children what foods contain these vitamins. A food chart and activities at the back of the 40-page book encourage children to identify nutritious food. The colourful illustrations are by Chilean artist Alfredo Escobar. For more information, visit www.enasabih.com. □

Early learning, and a whole lot more, FRP Canada's Biennial National Conference, April 27– 29, 2011



photo: Betsy Mann

Franco-Manitobans chat with representatives of Coalition Bambin who were displaying their resources as part of the exhibitors area during the conference. Coalition Bambin brings together CAPC and CPNP programs in minority francophone communities. See also www.coalitionbambin.com.

Des Franco-Manitobaines parlent avec des représentantes de la Coalition Bambin qui ont exposé leurs matériaux dans le hall des exposants lors de la conférence. La Coalition Bambin regroupe des programmes PACE et PCNP francophones en milieu minoritaire. Voir aussi: www.coalitionbambin.com.



photo: Betsy Mann

Amber Saulnier, Garnett Settlement, NB, is hopeful as she bids on an item in the silent auction.

À l'encan silencieux, Amber Saulnier de Garnett Settlement, N-B, met une enchère sur un objet qu'elle espère acheter.



photo: Betsy Mann

After giving the opening keynote address on his practice of social pediatrics, Dr. Gilles Julien speaks with Cindy Valenti from Ryerson University, Toronto, and Alice Dreimanis from Vision Inter-Cultures, Longueuil, Quebec, .

Après avoir donné le coup d'envoi à la conférence avec une présentation sur sa pratique de la pédiatrie sociale, le docteur Gilles Julien discute avec Cindy Valenti, de l'Université Ryerson à Toronto, et Alice Dreimanis, de Vision Inter-Cultures à Longueuil, Québec.



photo: Betsy Mann

Sharon Babu, Executive Director of South Vancouver Family Place, met a new friend at Greg Lubimiv's pre-conference training session entitled Tool Time: Communicating with children and families through effective play techniques and strategies.

Sharon Babu, directrice générale du South Vancouver Family Place, joue avec un nouvel ami à l'atelier de formation donné avant la conférence par Greg Lubimiv sur la communication par le jeu.



Croqué sur le vif...

Action shots...



photo: Betsy Mann

As well as hearing from presenter Cindy Valenti, participants had the opportunity to share ideas and experiences during a group exercise in a workshop on developing potential in the six core strengths of human development.

En plus d'écouter la présentatrice, Cindy Valenti, les congressistes ont eu l'occasion d'échanger sur leurs perspectives et leurs pratiques lors d'un atelier sur le développement des atouts du développement humain.



photo: Betsy Mann

At the Magic of Play evening, Rhonda Turner and Ruby Manio-Dimayuga from Deep River, Ontario, fashion tiaras from "beautiful junk" in preparation for watching the royal wedding the next morning.

À la soirée de la Magie du jeu, Rhonda Turner et Ruby Manio-Dimayuga de Deep River en Ontario fabriquent des diadèmes à partir de « beaux rebuts », en préparation du visionnement des noces royales le lendemain matin.



photo: Betsy Mann

Janice MacAulay, Executive Director of FRP Canada, and Judith Poirier, from the Fédération québécoise des organismes communautaires Famille, take part in a wide-ranging discussion among participants from across the country about FRP Canada's policy paper, Family is the Foundation.

Janice MacAulay, directrice générale de FRP Canada, et Judith Poirier, de la Fédération québécoise des organismes communautaires Famille, participent à une discussion sur le récent énoncé de position de FRP Canada, La famille est à la base de tout.



photo: Lillian Salowicki-Kieck

Early on the morning of April 29, fans of Kate and William gathered in front of the wide screen TV in the hospitality suite to watch the royal wedding and breakfast on Montreal bagels and cream cheese. Bathrobes and homemade tiaras were optional attire.

Tôt le matin du 29 avril, les admiratrices de Kate et William se sont rassemblées devant le grand écran de télévision dans le salon d'accueil pour regarder les noces royales en mangeant le déjeuner de bagels montréalais avec fromage à la crème. Le code vestimentaire de robes de chambre et diadèmes était facultatif.

