

Empowering Our Children's Futures:

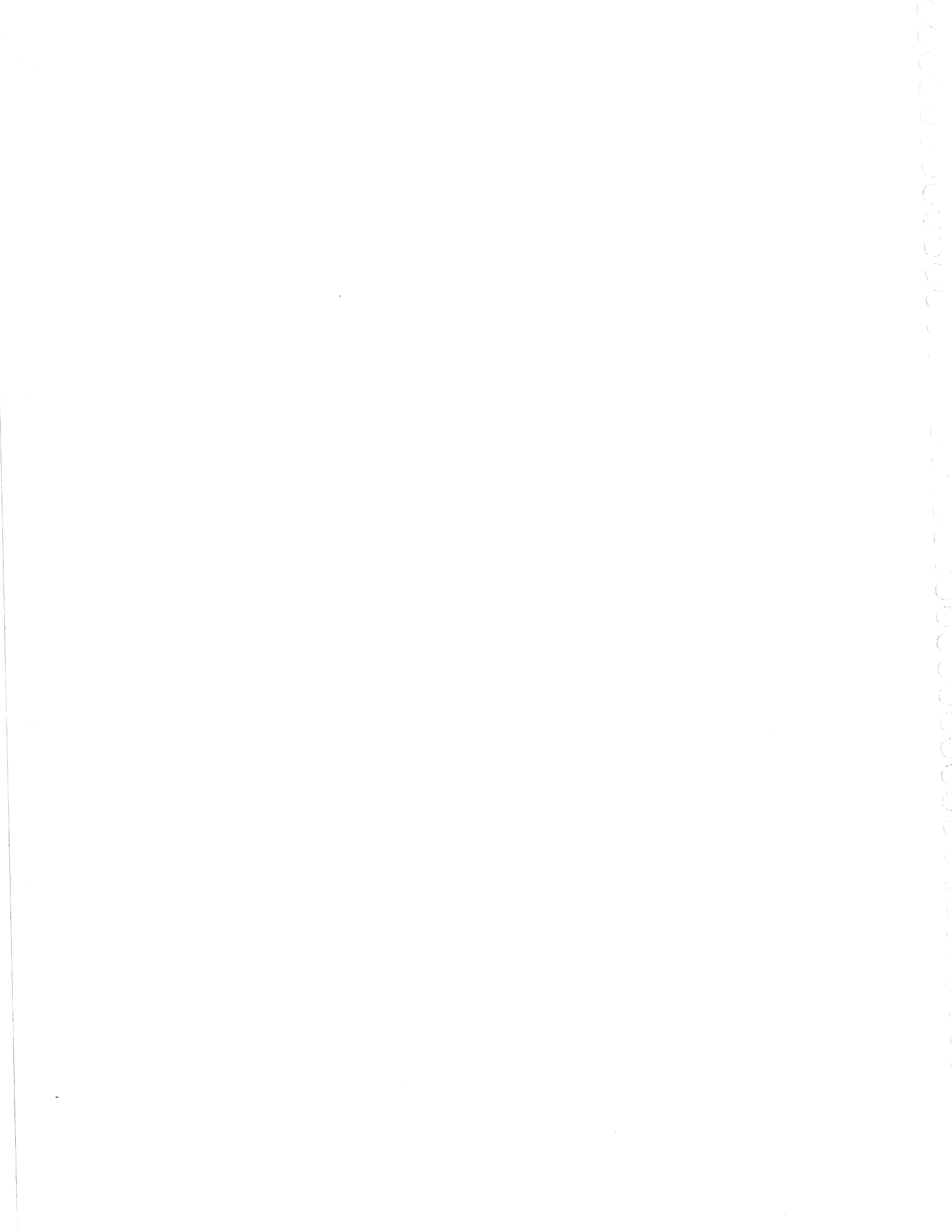
# The First 10 Years of Aboriginal Head Start in Yellowknife and Ndilo



Done Necha-lia Gha Enitl'e Ko- Ndilo Aboriginal Head Start  
Weledeh Yellowknives Dene First Nation  
Ndilo, Denendeh



Tabled  
Doc  
01-16(2)  
c.1





**Empowering Our Children's Futures:**

**The First 10 Years  
of Aboriginal Head Start  
in Yellowknife and Ndilo**

**Authors/Editors:**

**Reanna Erasmus, Tina Zoe,  
Dr. Jennifer H. Chalmers & Liz Cayen**

**Done Necha-lia Gha Enitl'e Ko**  
(“School for Little People”)

**Ndilo Aboriginal Head Start  
Weledeh Yellowknives Dene First Nation  
Ndilo, Denendeh**

© 2007 Yellowknives Dene First Nation  
Box 2514  
Yellowknife, NT X1A 2P8

Material in this publication may be reproduced without permission, with the sole requirement of source credit and citation as below.

Cite this publication in the following format:

Yellowknives Dene First Nation (2007). *Empowering Our Children's Future; The First 10 Years of Aboriginal Head Start in Yellowknife/Ndilo*. Yellowknife, NT: Author.

**Credits:**

Thanks to the children and parents of Yellowknife and Ndilo who have given their permission to share their children's successes, challenges and joys in participating in Aboriginal Head Start in Urban and Northern Communities.

Production of this publication has been made possible through financial contributions from the Public Health Agency of Canada, and In-kind contributions from the Aboriginal Head Start Program in Yellowknife/Ndilo and Chalmers & Associates Consulting Ltd.

**Authors/Editors:** Reanna Erasmus  
Tina Zoe  
Dr. Jennifer Chalmers  
Liz Cayen

**Research Assistants:** Kerry Palmier  
Sharon Snowshoe  
Melanie Palmier  
Lynette Bordass

**Layout:** focus-plus communications

**Printing:** Western Litho Printers Ltd.

**Photos:** Courtesy of Yellowknife/Ndilo Aboriginal Head Start Program- 1999-2007

*The views presented in this booklet are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Public Health Agency of Canada or the participating First Nations communities.*

Done Necha-lia Gha Enitl'e Ko- "School for Little People."

Copies of this publication are available from the Aboriginal Head Start Program in Yellowknife/Ndilo, at the address listed above.

**Acknowledgements & Mahsi Cho** ..... 9  
**Definition and Glossary** ..... 10

**Chapter 1**

**Introduction: Empowering Our Children’s Futures - The First 10 Years of Aboriginal Head Start in Yellowknife and Ndilo** ..... 13  
 1.1 Aboriginal Head Start in Urban and Northern Communities ..... 14  
 1.2 AHSUNC in the Northwest Territories ..... 14  
 1.3 AHSUNC in Yellowknife and Ndilo..... 15  
 1.4 Purpose and Overview of the Publication ..... 16

**Chapter 2**

**Welcome to Our Aboriginal Head Start Program in Yellowknife/Ndilo**..... 19  
 2.1 History of Our Peoples ..... 20  
 2.2 Aboriginal Head Start Comes to Yellowknife/Ndilo ..... 21  
 2.3 Our Community School..... 22  
 2.4 Language and Culture ..... 23  
 2.5 Evaluation Successes and Challenges ..... 24  
 2.6 The School and Community Speaks About Our Program..... 29  
 2.7 Staff Professional Development ..... 31  
 2.8 Highlights of the Program ..... 32  
 2.9 Challenges of the Program ..... 35  
 2.10 Evaluation Continues ..... 38

**Chapter 3**

**Evaluation Design and Methods for Aboriginal Head Start in Yellowknife/Ndilo** ..... 41  
 3.1 Approach to Evaluation ..... 42  
 3.2 Methodology ..... 43  
 3.3 Evaluation Questions ..... 43  
 3.4 Measurements and Procedures ..... 44  
 3.5 Data Collection, Analysis and Reporting of Findings..... 46  
 3.6 Ethical Considerations..... 47  
 3.7 Strengths of the Evaluation Design ..... 48  
 3.8 Limitations of the Evaluation Design ..... 49

**Chapter 4**

**Aboriginal Head Start Program Results in Yellowknife/Ndilo**..... 51  
 4.1 What Does Classroom Quality Mean?..... 52  
 4.2 Program Quality and Yellowknife/Ndilo AHSUNC ..... 53  
 4.3 Aboriginal Culture and Language – Reviving and Respecting Our Ways ..... 54  
 4.4 Education and School Readiness – Building Skills for Lifelong Learning ..... 58  
 4.5 Health Promotion – Contributing to Physical, Emotional, Intellectual, Spiritual and Social Development..... 62  
 4.6 Nutrition ..... 65  
 4.7 Parental Involvement and Social Support ..... 67  
 4.8 Summary of Chapter 4..... 69

## Chapter 5

<b>Aboriginal Head Start Child Outcome Results in Yellowknife/Ndilo – Successes and Challenges .....</b>	<b>71</b>
5.1 Evaluation Questions .....	72
5.2 Children’s Demographics.....	72
5.3 School Readiness – Emerging Literacy and Social-Emotional Development .....	74
5.4 Diversity in Literacy and Knowledge at the End of the AHSUNC Year .....	76
5.5 Emergent Literacy of AHSUNC Children in Yellowknife/Ndilo Compared with Head Start Children who Participated in FACES.....	78
5.6 Similar Early Literacy Scores for Yellowknife/Ndilo Girls and Boys .....	80
5.7 Positive Change in Knowledge and Skills Over the AHSUNC Year in Yellowknife/Ndilo.....	81
5.8 Social-Emotional Development - Prosocial Skills and Internalizing and Externalizing Behaviours. ....	84
5.9 Summary of Chapter 5.....	91

## Chapter 6

<b>Yellowknife/Ndilo Aboriginal Head Start Parents and Community – Proud and Empowered .....</b>	<b>93</b>
6.1 Evaluation Questions for Chapter 6 .....	94
6.2 Parent Survey Demographics .....	94
6.3 Culture and Language is Important to AHSUNC Parents and Families.....	96
6.4 Parents’ Knowledge of Their Own Traditional Culture and Language.....	97
6.5 Parents Want Their Children to Learn about Culture and Language.....	98
6.6 Parents’ Belief about Program Strengths and Areas for Development.....	100
6.7 Parents’ Perception of Children’s School Readiness and Social Skills.....	102
6.8 Parents Approve of the AHSUNC Program in Yellowknife/Ndilo.....	104
6.9 Summary of Chapter 6.....	105

## Chapter 7

<b>Discussion – What Do These Results Mean? .....</b>	<b>107</b>
7.1 Chosen Methodology.....	108
7.2 AHSUNC Program Quality .....	109
7.3 Child Results – School Readiness and Social-Emotional Development.....	112
7.4 Parent Survey Results .....	116
7.5 AHSUNC Girls and Boys: Few Differences .....	117
7.6 AHSUNC Areas for Further Consideration in Yellowknife/Ndilo.....	118
7.7 Partnerships Between Evaluation Personnel and AHSUNC Staff .....	119

## Chapter 8

<b>The Future of AHSUNC in Yellowknife/Ndilo .....</b>	<b>121</b>
8.1 Priority Areas for the Future.....	122
8.2 Final Comments - from the Evaluation Team, the Yellowknife/Ndilo AHSUNC Program Staff and the Parents and Children.....	126

Appendix A: Evaluation Data Collection Tools .....	129
Appendix B: About the Authors .....	135
Appendix C: References.....	139

Exhibit 4.1	Classroom Quality of Yellowknife/Ndilo Aboriginal Head Start 2000 to 2004 .....	53
Exhibit 4.2	Classroom Quality for Teacher-Directed Aboriginal Culture Activities: Yellowknife/Ndilo AHSUNC 2000 to 2004 .....	56
Exhibit 4.3	Classroom Quality for Child-Directed Aboriginal Culture Activities: Yellowknife/Ndilo AHSUNC 2000 to 2004 .....	57
Exhibit 4.4	Classroom Quality (ECERS Ratings) Education/School Readiness: Yellowknife/Ndilo AHSUNC 2000 to 2004 .....	60
Exhibit 4.5	Classroom Quality (ECERS Ratings) Language and Literacy: Yellowknife/Ndilo AHSUNC 2000 to 2004 .....	61
Exhibit 4.6	Health Promotion & Classroom Quality Ratings: Yellowknife/Ndilo AHSUNC 2000 to 2004 .....	63
Exhibit 4.7	Physical Fitness Classroom Quality Ratings: Yellowknife/Ndilo AHSUNC 2000 to 2004 .....	64
Exhibit 4.8	Classroom Quality (ECERS Ratings) Meals and Snacks: Yellowknife/Ndilo AHSUNC 2000 to 2004 .....	65
Exhibit 4.9	Classroom Quality (ECERS Ratings) Parental and Family Involvement: Yellowknife/Ndilo AHSUNC 2000 to 2004 .....	68
Exhibit 5.1	Demographic Characteristics of Yellowknife/Ndilo AHSUNC Children from 2000 to 2007 .....	72
Exhibit 5.2	Yearly Distribution of AHSUNC Children in Yellowknife/Ndilo .....	73
Exhibit 5.3	Descriptive Statistics for Yellowknife/Ndilo PPVT-III .....	75
Exhibit 5.4	Percent Distribution of PPVT-III Standard Scores for AHSUNC Children in Yellowknife/Ndilo: 2004 to 2007 .....	76
Exhibit 5.5	Percentile Rank for Yellowknife/Ndilo (2004 to 2007) .....	77
Exhibit 5.6	Yellowknife/Ndilo PPVT-III Scores Compared with United States Head Start Family and Child Experiences Survey (FACES) .....	78
Exhibit 5.7	Percentile Rank for Yellowknife/Ndilo (2004 to 2007) & US FACES (2000) .....	79
Exhibit 5.8	Distribution of PPVT-III for AHSUNC Girls and Boys in Yellowknife/Ndilo from 2004 to 2007 .....	80
Exhibit 5.9	Brigance Scores of AHSUNC Children in Yellowknife/Ndilo: Fall and Spring of 2000 to 2003 .....	81
Exhibit 5.10	Brigance Scores of AHSUNC Children in Yellowknife/Ndilo: Fall and Spring of 2004 to 2007 .....	82
Exhibit 5.11	Change in Brigance Screen Scores during AHSUNC Year 2000-2007 .....	82

## List of Exhibits

Exhibit 5.12	Gains in Brigance Scores for AHSUNC Children in Yellowknife/Ndilo: Fall to Spring from 2000 to 2007.....	83
Exhibit 5.13	AHSUNC Girls Social Skills Scores in Yellowknife/Ndilo: 2000 to 2007 .....	86
Exhibit 5.14	AHSUNC Boys Social Skills Scores in Yellowknife/Ndilo: 2000 to 2007 .....	86
Exhibit 5.15	Social Skills for Yellowknife/Ndilo AHSUNC Girls and Boys .....	87
Exhibit 5.16	Yellowknife/Ndilo Social Skills Teacher Ratings for 2000 to 2007: AHSUNC Girls and Boys .....	89
Exhibit 6.1	Participation of AHSUNC Parents in the Survey.....	95
Exhibit 6.2	Yellowknife/Ndilo AHSUNC Parent Survey: Importance to Family to Support Culture and Language .....	96
Exhibit 6.3	Yellowknife/Ndilo AHSUNC Parent Survey: Knowledge of Own Traditional Culture and Language.....	97
Exhibit 6.4	Yellowknife/Ndilo AHSUNC Parent Survey: Importance of Children Learning Own Culture and Language .....	98
Exhibit 6.5	Parent Reports of Children’s Most Enjoyable Activities in the Yellowknife/Ndilo AHSUNC Program: 2000 to 2007 .....	100
Exhibit 6.6	Summary of AHSUNC Parent Survey Comments in Yellowknife/Ndilo: 2000 to 2007 .....	100
Exhibit 6.7	AHSUNC Parents Social Skills Ratings for Girls and Boys in Yellowknife/Ndilo.....	103



**Done Necha-lia Gha Enit'l'e Ko  
Ndilo Aboriginal Head Start**

We would like to say mahsi cho to the Ndilo Aboriginal Head Start staff past and present who give their heart and soul to make this a successful program. Mahsi cho to past ECE Teacher Lisa Paul and to Tina Zoe our ECE Language & Culture Teacher for caring for our program children and giving them such a positive beginning in their learning.

Mahsi to our program Elder Mary Jane Francois whose love of the Weledeh language and culture gives our children a sense of pride of who they are as Aboriginal peoples. We have so many memories of Mrs. Francois, or grandma as she is affectionately called by the children, as she talks quietly with the children while she cleans fish, skins a muskrat or makes them delicious bannock.

Mahsi to Yellowknives Dene First Nation for sponsoring our project and specifically to Juanita Sangris who keeps us on track financially. Also, to Yellowknives Dene First Nation Councilor Cecilia Beaulieu whose belief in the children of our community inspires us to be the best we can be. Cecilia supports our program because she believes that our children are the richest resource of the North and we need to give them the best. Mahsi cho Cecilia!

The staff of K'alemi Dene School, the Community School of Ndilo has shown us endless support and encouragement. We would especially like to thank the principal Angela James who believes in the importance of community schools and early childhood programs. Angela never fails in promoting Aboriginal Head Start and has provided our staff with resources and endless support. Without her our jobs would be made more difficult.

Mahsi cho to our program evaluator Jennifer Chalmers, she has created an enthusiasm and interest in program evaluation. At the beginning we were intimidated with the process and didn't understand the importance of evaluation. Jennifer has made this complex process simple and created a process which uses our evaluation results to improve our program. The evaluation process has helped our program staff understand evaluation.

Tracy Cameron, our Northern Region Program Consultant has a real belief in Aboriginal Head Start. She has empowered us by giving us the flexibility of making the best decisions for our program. Her continuous support has made this program the best early childhood program in the North!

## Definitions and Glossary

**Aboriginal:**

Includes the Indigenous people of Canada: First Nations, Métis and Inuit people.

**Bias:**

A tendency to produce misleading conclusions because of the use of data that are incomplete or drawn from a sample not representative of the group studied.

**Comparison Group:**

In evaluation or research, a group of participants reasonably similar in characteristics to the group being studied.

**Criterion-Referenced Measures:**

Measures that use established scores or standards to assess performance.

**Descriptive Statistics:**

Statistical measures that summarize data.

**Emerging Literacy:**

Children's early reading, writing and mathematical development.

**Gross Motor Play:**

Involves the large muscle groups, includes some aerobic movement and is generally part of physical health for growing, young bodies.

**Impact Evaluation (Impact Analysis):**

In evaluation research, determining the effects of a program in terms of success or failure in achieving the goals or objectives established.

**Longitudinal Study:**

Evaluation or research concerned with changes occurring in individuals or groups over extended periods of time.

**Mean:**

Arithmetic average; a commonly used statistic for describing central tendency.

**Norm-Referenced:**

A standard or range of values representing the typical performance of a group of people of a certain age, where comparisons can be made.

**Outcome:**

In evaluation research, a process to decide whether the program achieved its stated goals.

**Percentile Rank:**

Percentage of those in the norm sample whose raw scores are the same or below an individual's raw score.

**Pre-Test/Post-Test:**

A measure given at the beginning (pre-test) and following (post-test) a procedure or program.

**Prosocial/Social Skills:**

Acceptable learned behaviours that enable a child to interact with others in an effective way and to avoid socially unacceptable responses.

**Qualitative (data):**

Used in evaluation and research as a means of distinguishing non-numerical and contextual data. Also methods that use inductive and naturalistic observation and interviewing methods.

**Quantitative (data):**

Used in evaluation and research as well-defined numerical values for the purpose of data analysis and/or statistical processing.

**Quartile:**

Each of the four quarters of a distribution of scores.

**Quasi – Experimental (research):**

Evaluation and/or research with intact groups, in which random assignments to experimental and control conditions to address influence is not possible.

**Randomization:**

An experimental design where participants are assigned to a group by chance.

**Reliability:**

A measure of the degree of consistency of sets of variables, such as surveys, instruments or measures.

**Social-Emotional Development:**

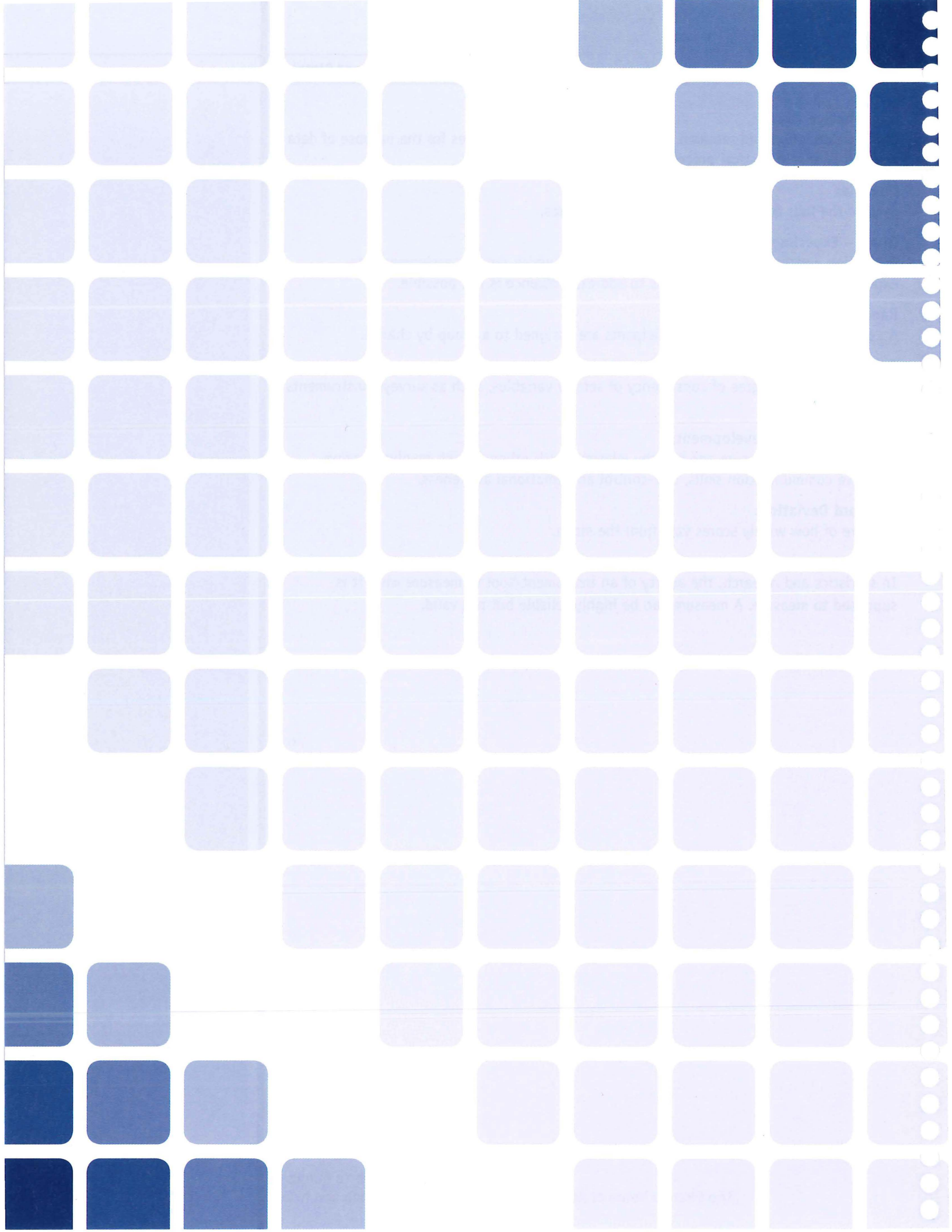
The ability to form secure and healthy relations with others, which involves having effective communication skills, self-control and emotional awareness.

**Standard Deviation:**

Measure of how widely scores vary from the mean.

**Validity:**

In statistics and research, the ability of an instrument/tool to measure what it is supposed to measure. A measure can be highly reliable but not valid.



# Chapter 1



## INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Aboriginal Head Start in Urban and Northern Communities

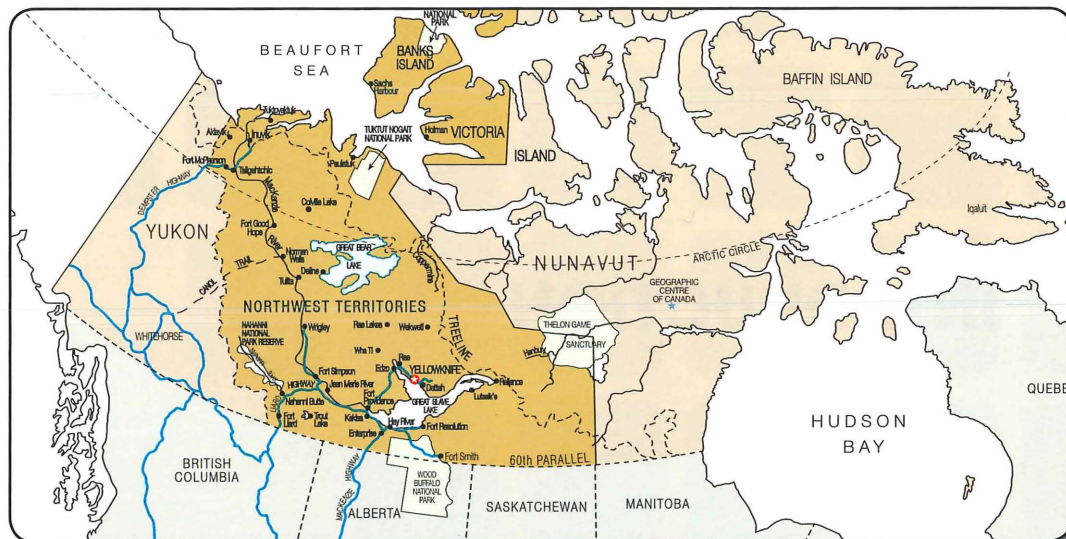
Aboriginal Head Start in Urban and Northern Communities (AHSUNC) is a federally funded early childhood program for Aboriginal children and their families who live in urban and northern communities. AHSUNC was first announced in 1995, with programs starting up across Canada from 1995 through 1997, and Aboriginal Head Start On Reserve (AHSOR) followed in 1998.

The program was designed to build on Aboriginal people's commitment to positive change and programs include the promotion of culture and Aboriginal languages, school readiness, health, nutrition and parental support for children with a primary emphasis on preschool children ages three to five years. Parental involvement is a cornerstone of Aboriginal Head Start.

Ten years after the start of AHSUNC, there are over 4,000 children in 130 sites who participate in programs across Canada in eight provinces and in all three of Canada's territories, the Yukon, the Northwest Territories and Nunavut.

## 1.2 AHSUNC in the Northwest Territories

The Northwest Territories (NWT) is 1.2 million square kilometres, encompassing 33 communities and over 42,000 people, where approximately half are of Aboriginal descent (Statistics Canada, 2007). There are eleven official languages in the NWT and include English, French, Tłı̨chǫ (Dogrib), Chipewyan, Cree, Gwich'in, Inuvialuktun, Inuktitut, Inuinnaqtun, North Slavey and South Slavey.



There are eight AHSUNC programs across the NWT: Yellowknife/Ndilo, Fort Smith, Hay River Reserve, Fort Providence, Fort McPherson, Inuvik and Paulatuk. These AHSUNC programs offer a half day curriculum of early childhood programming that is founded on the beliefs, values and histories of the Dene, Métis and Inuit that live on these lands in Canada's Arctic.

### 1.3 AHSUNC in Yellowknife and Ndilo

Yellowknife is the capital city of the Northwest Territories (NWT) and is located on the shores of the Great Slave Lake and 512 kilometres south of the Arctic Circle. The Yellowknives Dene are the original inhabitants of Yellowknife also known as Somba K'e ("money place") and belong to the Akaitcho Treaty 8 Territory Government.

At the present time there are approximately 3,100 status members that form the Akaitcho Dene First Nations in Dettah, Ndilo, Lutsel K'e and Deninu Kue. The settlement of Ndilo is located on the northern end of Latham Island, just beyond the capital city of Yellowknife. Dettah lies southeast of Yellowknife, and Lutsel K'e and Deninu Kue border the south side of Great Slave Lake.

The AHSUNC program first opened its doors in Ndilo in 1997. The program moved to a temporary location in 2005 in Yellowknife.



## 1.4 Purpose and Overview of the Publication

The purpose of this publication titled: *“Empowering our Children’s Futures: The First 10 Years of Aboriginal Head Start in Yellowknife and Ndilo”* is to summarize the wealth of program information, evaluation results and findings that have been gathered by the Yellowknife/Ndilo AHSUNC site in the Northwest Territories.

The Yellowknife/Ndilo site participated in another publication that was released in February of 2007 to celebrate 10 years of AHSUNC in the NWT, and which included a summary of all eight AHSUNC sites in the NWT, and their respective evaluation results (NWTAHC, 2007). The Yellowknife/Ndilo AHSUNC program decided to highlight its own site information, evaluation results and challenges from the last 10 years in this subsequent publication, and to complete more detailed analysis of their evaluation results.

The Yellowknife/Ndilo AHSUNC has completed seven full years of outcome evaluation data in three main areas: classroom quality, child outcome measures (school readiness, emerging vocabulary and social skills development) and parent satisfaction and perceptions of their children’s social skills.





This publication is a summary of site information, program enhancements that have been done over the last 10 years and a compilation of strength based outcome results and findings from seven years of evaluation data. The intent of this publication is to celebrate the successes of the program and to outline future areas of program growth and enhancement that are needed.

This publication is written to appeal to a wide audience of readers including AHSUNC parents in Yellowknife/Ndilo, community leaders and interested policy and government stakeholders. As well, the evaluation results section will be of interest to research and program development experts who are interested in Canadian results with the AHSUNC program.

This publication is divided into the following chapters:

**Chapter 1** provides an introduction to Aboriginal Head Start in Urban and Northern Communities (AHSUNC), information about Yellowknife and Ndilo and an overview of this publication.

**Chapter 2** takes the reader on a tour of the Yellowknife/Ndilo AHSUNC program. From its starting days to the present, descriptions and pictures of the children are included that highlight the program from 1997 through 2007.

**Chapter 3** provides the rationale and processes used to implement a year to year outcome evaluation in Yellowknife and Ndilo. Evaluation methods, sampling and details of analyses used are outlined here.

**Chapters 4, 5 and 6** provide the results and findings from seven years of outcome evaluation with the AHSUNC program, children and parents from Yellowknife and Ndilo.

**Chapter 7** provides a discussion of the overall results and findings, and integrates these findings within the context of the goals and purpose of AHSUNC and other early intervention programs for children at-risk.

**Chapter 8** provides suggestions for future program development and evaluation activities with the Yellowknife/Ndilo AHSUNC program as well as final comments from the authors of this publication.

To assist the readers, a glossary of definitions and early childhood terminology has been included at the beginning of this publication.

As well, a number of features are included in this publication to provide background information for areas of interest and summary information;

**“Further Information”** highlights background information and areas for further reading - for example results from other early childhood programs;

**“Quotes and Testimonials”** are included in the margins from AHSUNC parents and others from 2000 through 2007;

**“Summary of Findings”** is included at the end of Chapters 4, 5, 6;

**“Appendix”** includes information on data collection tools and information about the authors of this publication;

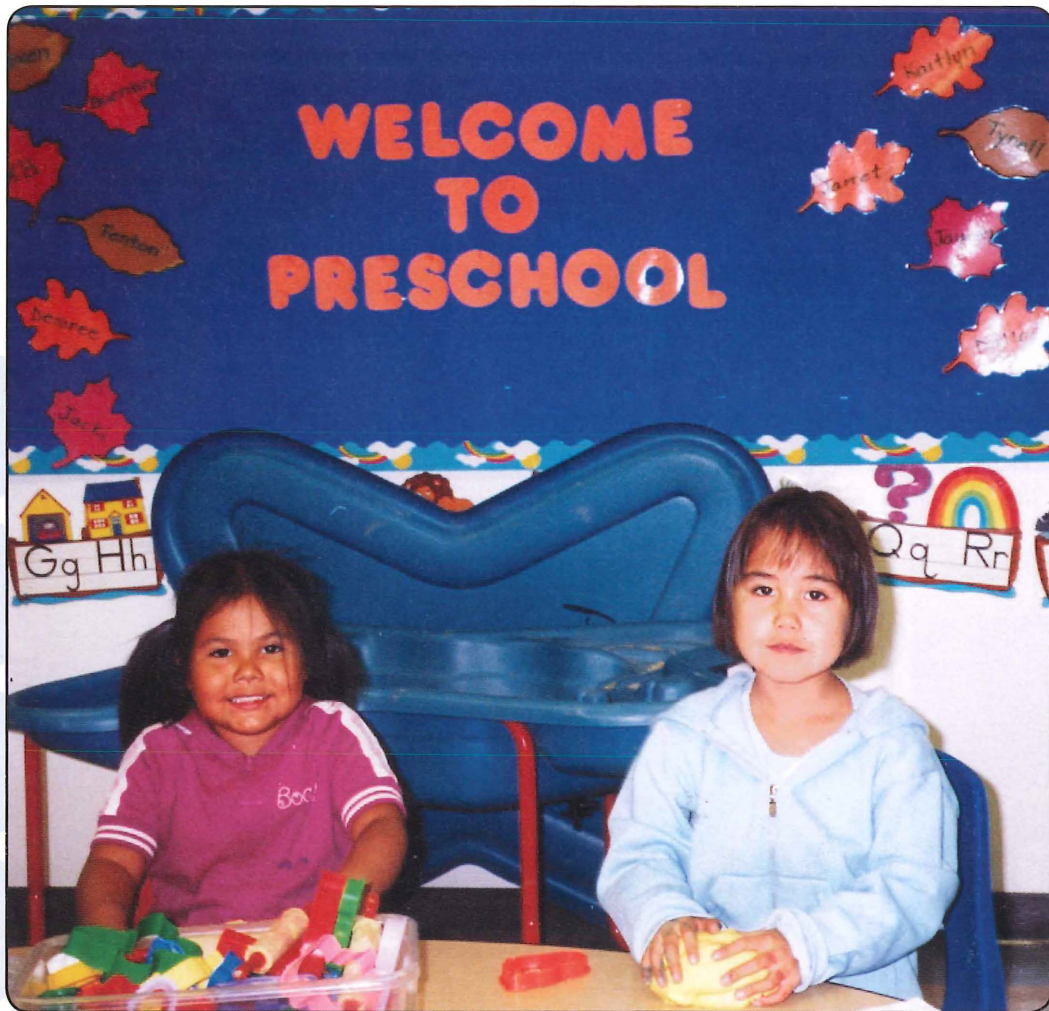
**“References”** are included at the end of the publication.

The spirit of AHSUNC comes through in this publication, which is a testament to the dedication of many people who contribute every day to the well-being of children and families in Yellowknife and Ndilo.

Mahsi (thank you) for taking interest in our children’s futures and we hope you enjoy reading and learning more about the program in Yellowknife/ Ndilo.



# Chapter 2



**Welcome to Our Aboriginal  
Head Start Program in  
Yellowknife/Ndilo**

## 2.1 History of Our Peoples

The Weledeh Yellowknives Dene are the original peoples of these lands, the Chief Drygeese Territory (Yellowknife, NWT). Members live in the communities of Dettah, Ndilo and the urban area of Yellowknife. Since time immemorial, the Weledeh have been living off our lands passed down by our great ancestors by hunting, fishing and harvesting. The Weledeh Yellowknives belong to Treaty 8 and the Akaitcho Territory Government. Weledeh Yellowknives Dene call themselves after the river and bay (Weledeh-Cheh) or as it is commonly known as Yellowknife River. Weledeh translate into Coney River and traditionally in the summer, they would set up a fish camp along Weledeh.



## 2.2 Aboriginal Head Start Comes to Yellowknife/Ndilo

In 1995 when the Aboriginal Head Start program was announced, community members got together to submit a proposal to have this program offered in their community. During the next two years, community members lobbied Health Canada to maintain a nation to nation relationship with the Aboriginal peoples in the NWT and have the funding directed to First Nations' organizations. Health Canada honoured their request and signed contribution agreements with First Nations peoples and Aboriginal Head Start was born in the NWT.



## 2.3 Our Community School

Ndilo has always wanted a school in their community. For many years their community children attended school in Yellowknife with limited success. People believed that if there was a school in Ndilo that offered the Weledeh language and culture and the children knew who they were and where they came from, they would have a better chance at success. For many years community people lobbied the Government of the NWT for a school.

Since our program was such a success, the community members of Ndilo used this example to the Government of the NWT, as they lobbied for a school in their community. As the Aboriginal Head Start Program grew and became successful, the Government of the NWT was not able to ignore their success.

In August 1998, K'alemi Dene School in the community of Ndilo, opened its doors. We believe if we did not have an Aboriginal Head Start program to prove our success, it would have taken us longer to open our community school. Currently, a new school building will be built. All this because of Aboriginal Head Start!



## 2.4 Language and Culture

The Weledeh Aboriginal language and culture component of our program is our strongest point and our parents love it! For some parents, it's the first time they have plucked ducks or been involved in the on-the-land experiences. Our program Elder is an essential component of our program. Mrs. Francois loves the children and they love her; sometimes she sits quietly beading, and the children would approach her to watch what she is doing. Or as Mrs. Francois cleans caribou meat and fish, the children come with lots of questions and comments.



"The cultural teachings are the main reason I enrolled my child in this program."

AHSUNC Parent  
in Yellowknife/  
Ndilo

## 2.5 Evaluation Successes and Challenges

For the past seven years our project has been involved in an evaluation process which shows that our children are learning important skills that they take into kindergarten. We have used our evaluation results to better meet the needs of our program children. After our 2000/2001 evaluation which included an early childhood classroom rating scale, we made changes in the classroom layout based on our results; we lowered our bulletin boards to the eye level of the children and lengthened our child-centered play time to an hour for more language and social development.





Since our social skills scores were low, we removed our computer centre and added a dramatic play centre so the children would learn to interact better with each other. At our listening centre we removed the head phones to encourage children to talk with each other.



### Further Information

#### **“Computers Do not Teach Kids Reading”**

“We have had computers in school classrooms for over fifteen years and this has been long enough to do research to tell us what they can do and what they can’t. Unfortunately, we have found that computers do not teach kids reading. The good news is that computers are useful tools for math once kids get to high school, and they help to increase the amount of time kids write.” (Kropp, 2000).

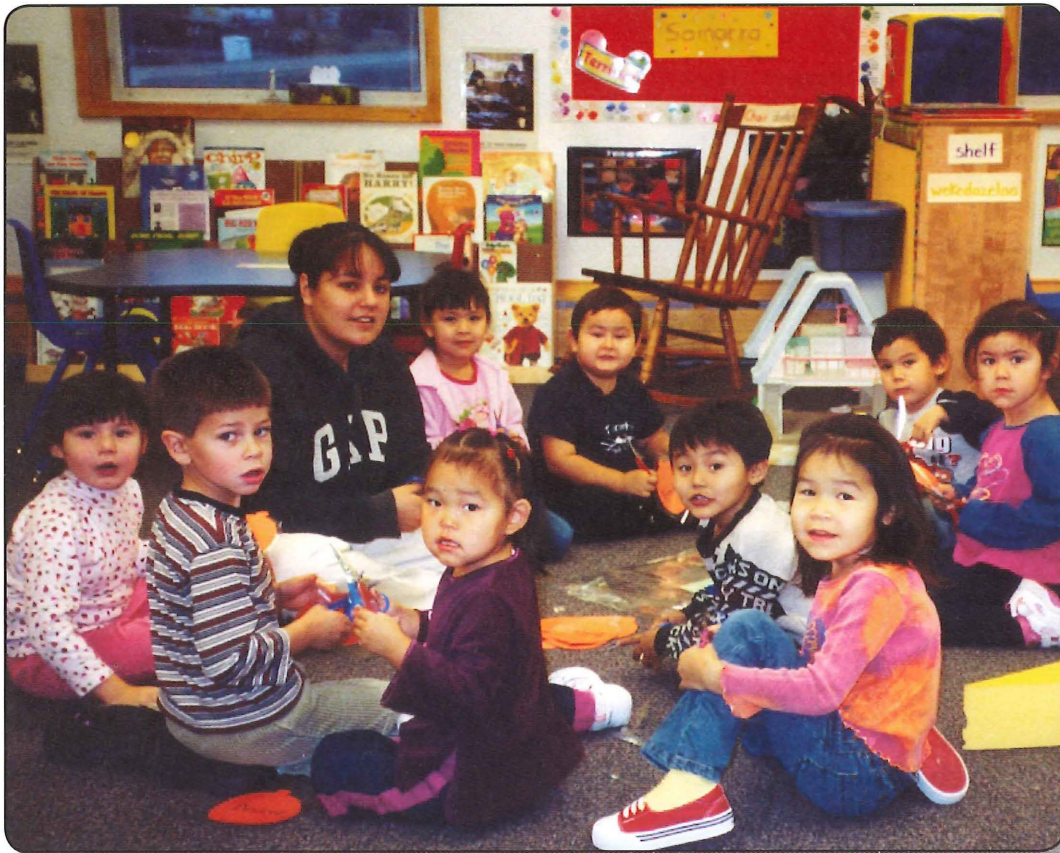
Reading is a people skill which requires committed teachers and parents, as well as quality books. Ironically, today’s computers are not making skills in reading and writing less necessary, they are making them more essential.

In the 2000/2001 school year we had a young girl in our program; she was quiet but did well in our program. This spring, a story was relayed to us about this young girl who is now in grade six. Her class went on an overnight trip to Baker Lake for an on-the-land experience. As they were skinning muskrats, the Renewable Resource Officer told the girls that they had better learn how to skin muskrats because they might marry a trapper and would have to skin muskrats for their husbands. This young girl told the officer "What are you talking about? When I get older I'm going to be a trapper!" Talk about good self esteem.



We continue to change our program to incorporate the best practices of early childhood education. When children showed delayed fine motor skills, we added play dough activities to our program to help their manipulations skills. We continue to monitor our classroom layout and the children's skill levels. We have added a visual schedule and timer to help children transition better.

Our circle time area bulletin boards and visual resources are covered in light blue sheets so the children who have a hard time with maintaining their attention are not distracted. All this was done because we continue to evaluate ourselves and do our best to present a top notch early childhood intervention program.



Also from our evaluation results, we have determined that our daily attendance is high because our program has a bus that picks up and drops off the children. Our attendance goes down when the bus is not running, so we have determined that the bus is an integral part of our program. We continue to offer this service even with the high cost of fuel and vehicle maintenance here in the North because it helps the children.

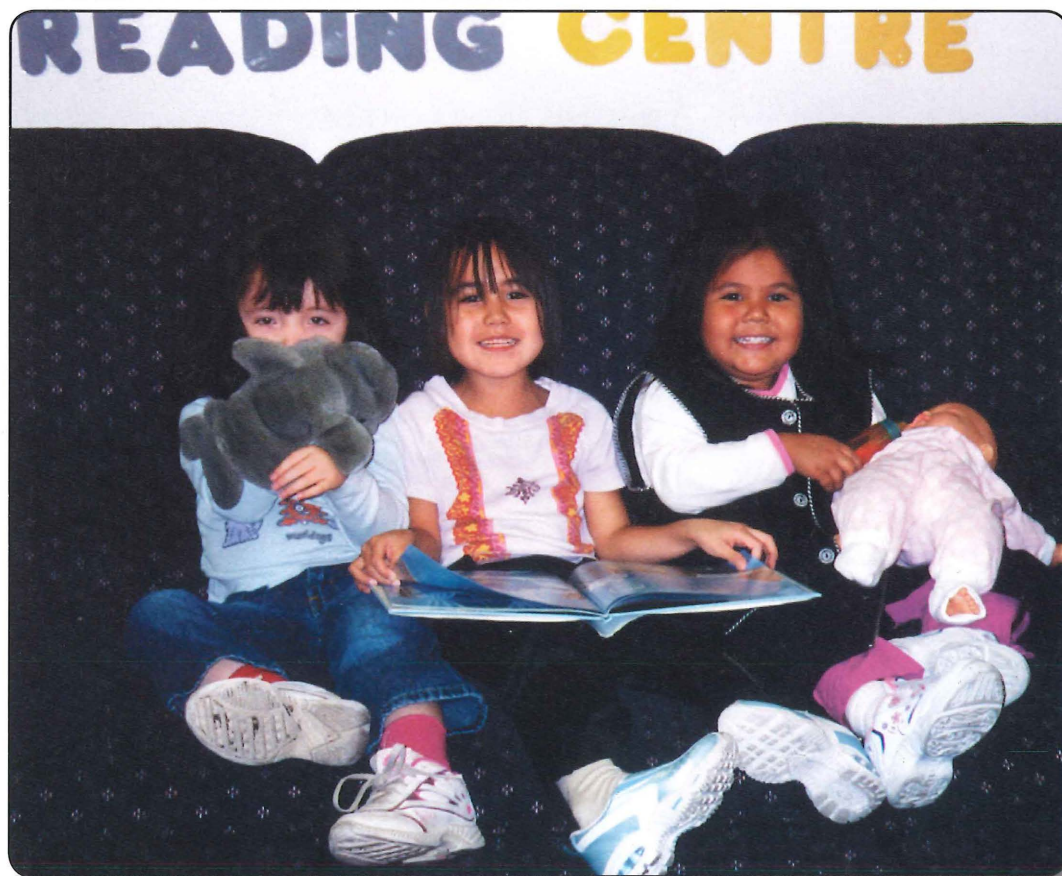


## 2.6 The School and Community Speaks About Our Program

K'alemi Dene School kindergarten teacher Meagan Wowk and Principal Angela James have shared with us that they can tell which children have attended the Aboriginal Head Start program. The children who have attended know how to sit through circle time, are able to cut with scissors, know how to work on crafts and have the beginning skills of writing their names. Children who come into the kindergarten class who do not have these skills lag behind and it takes time for them to familiarize themselves with the kindergarten routine.

### Further Information What is Kindergarten?

Kindergarten was started in the 1830's by Friedrich Froebel, a European educator. Froebel called it Kindergarten, as he pictured the image of a "children's garden" which would nurture the growth of young children. His concept of learning included time in the outdoors and cultivating children's capacities through creative and social play. Today, kindergarten is part of the preschool system in most countries. In North America, kindergarten is the first year of school education (Wolfe, 2000).



The Aboriginal Head Start staff has seen a difference in the community of Ndilo since the beginning of the program. Our children are exposed to activities that they may not have done before, such as, our monthly field trips to the fire hall, airport, horse ranch, nature walks, skating, sliding or swimming pool. These field trips have broadened our children's horizon, and the children like them too!

Our snack program shows the children how to eat healthy (for some of the children who come to school without eating it's an essential part of their day), exposes them to different foods and proper personal hygiene (daily brushing of their teeth and washing their hands).



## 2.7 Staff Professional Development

The Aboriginal Head Start staff members appreciate the ongoing professional development they receive. As they are working with high needs children, they require training to continue to meet the challenges these children bring to the program. They also appreciate the interagency networking that we have developed and we continue to improve those relationships.

All staff members are Yellowknives Dene First Nations community people; working with the program has encouraged staff to learn more about their position. Staff members are working towards their Early Childhood Certificate or Diploma and on their Aboriginal Language and Culture Instructors Program Certificate. One staff member had not traveled on a plane but when an opportunity for professional development in Inuvik occurred, she took the challenge. For the staff it has given them a sense of pride and accomplishment and has given our community a good start in building capacity in early childhood teaching.



## 2.8 Highlights of the Program

Last winter the children went out on the Great Slave Lake, they went by snowmobile with a Dettah elder (Dettah is one of the Akaitcho Dene First Nations communities, and lies southeast of Yellowknife). The children were so excited to see the net being set under the ice and to see fish coming up on the net. The staff cooked the fish on the fire and sent the extra fish home with some of the children. We received a phone call from an excited parent who told us her son came home and could not stop talking about his experience. She wanted to know what kind of fish it was and how to cook it for her son.





During our Spring Culture Camp one of our students, Darian, was excited to pluck ducks. Her mother just had a new baby and Darian wanted to bring home the plucked duck for her mother. That evening the mother called the Program Manager and she was laughing as she told her story. Darian came home and told her mom “I have a surprise for you” and the mother thought it would be a wonderful craft that she normally brought home and anxiously awaited as Darian dug threw her backpack. Much to her surprise, out came a plucked and singed duck ready to be made into a soup! The mom told her daughter “What other school would send home a plucked duck, what a wonderful school!”



The end of the year celebration is a hit with the children and their families. Everyone's hearts melt as they see the children walk in with their cap and gowns. As they sing "you are my sunshine" in Dogrib, parents beam with pride. This is the highlight of the year for all of us who work day to day in the Aboriginal Head Start Program in Yellowknife/Ndilo.

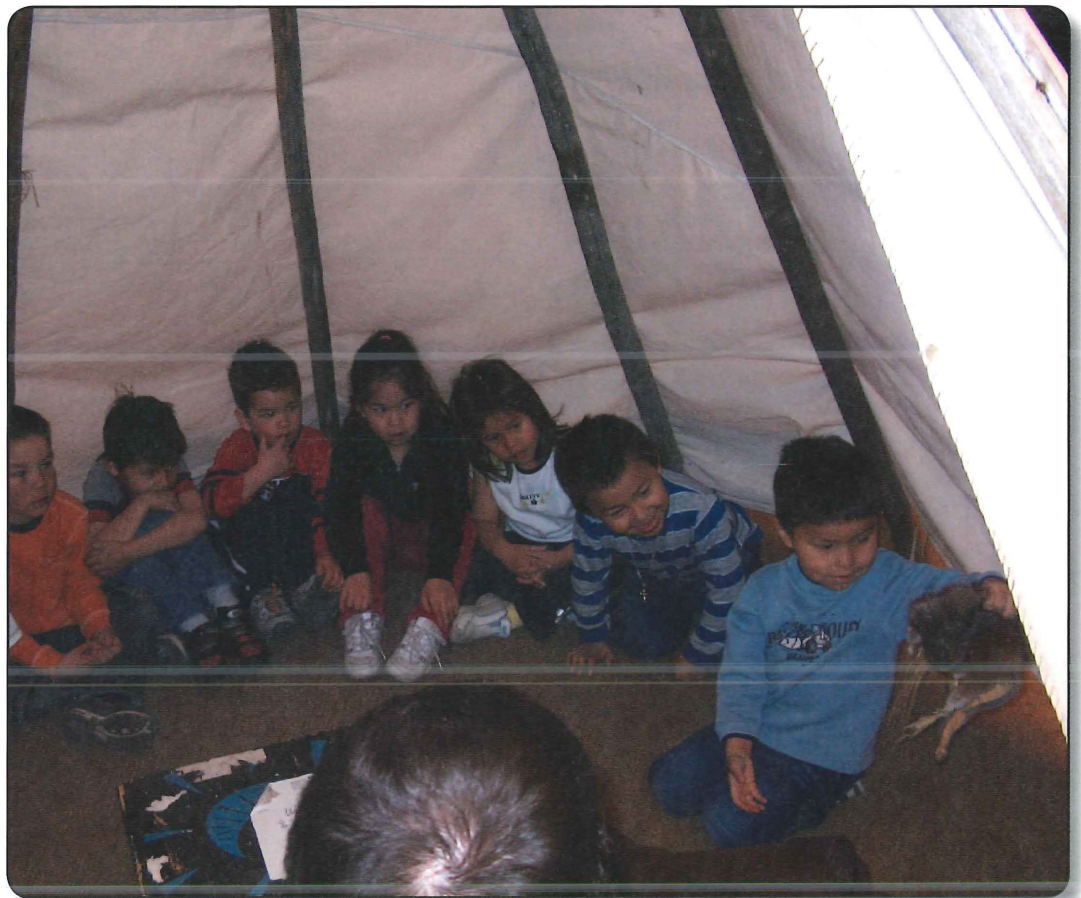


## 2.9 Challenges of the Program

Although our program is doing well, we do have challenges. We have a large number of children coming to the program with speech and language delays. Yellowknife has a shortage of speech and language pathologists and it is difficult for our staff and parents to help these children with their speech delays. Many of the children coming to the Yellowknife/Ndilo program are children in need, as they are delayed, perhaps two to three years as compared to other children.



Another challenge is that Yellowknife is a magnet community and many Aboriginal peoples move here for work or to get away from situations they are in. Therefore, there are more four year old children who could be registered in Aboriginal Head Start. We continually have twenty children on our waiting list. If there was more funding, we could easily run another Aboriginal Head Start Program and meet the needs of all four year old children in Yellowknife/Ndilo. There is a need for a three year old program for those children who need an earlier head start in their learning. Perhaps we could address more of the speech and language delays if funding was available for children to attend the program for two years.



One of the mandates of the Aboriginal Head Start program is parental involvement. This changes from year to year; one year we have lots of parents involved and in others we only have a couple. Parents have various reasons for not being involved in their child's education and we will continue to encourage parents to be involved.

A parent who had her daughter in our Aboriginal Head Start Program in the 2000/2001 school year said she chose to send her daughter to the program because she wanted her to have a good sense of her "Dene awareness." The mother wanted her daughter to have a language and culture-based program that showed Dene people in a positive light. Once in the program the mother saw her daughter's self-esteem soar! As a single parent, she appreciated the extras the staff members provided her and her daughter, the nurturing and caring environment of the program.



## 2.10 Evaluation Continues

The staff of the Aboriginal Head Start Program brought evaluation into the program, even though they were reluctant at first. They have seen evaluation as being “the best that you can be.” The Program Manager assisted in a scientific poster presentation about our “Aboriginal Head Start in the NWT Outcome Evaluation Results 2001” in Washington D.C. in 2004, and we look forward to presenting “10 Years of Aboriginal Head Start in the NWT” at the next National Head Start Research Conference in 2008.

Our next step in evaluation will be to conduct a longitudinal study of the Aboriginal Head Start children, some three to five years after attending the program, now that they are in their middle elementary school years.

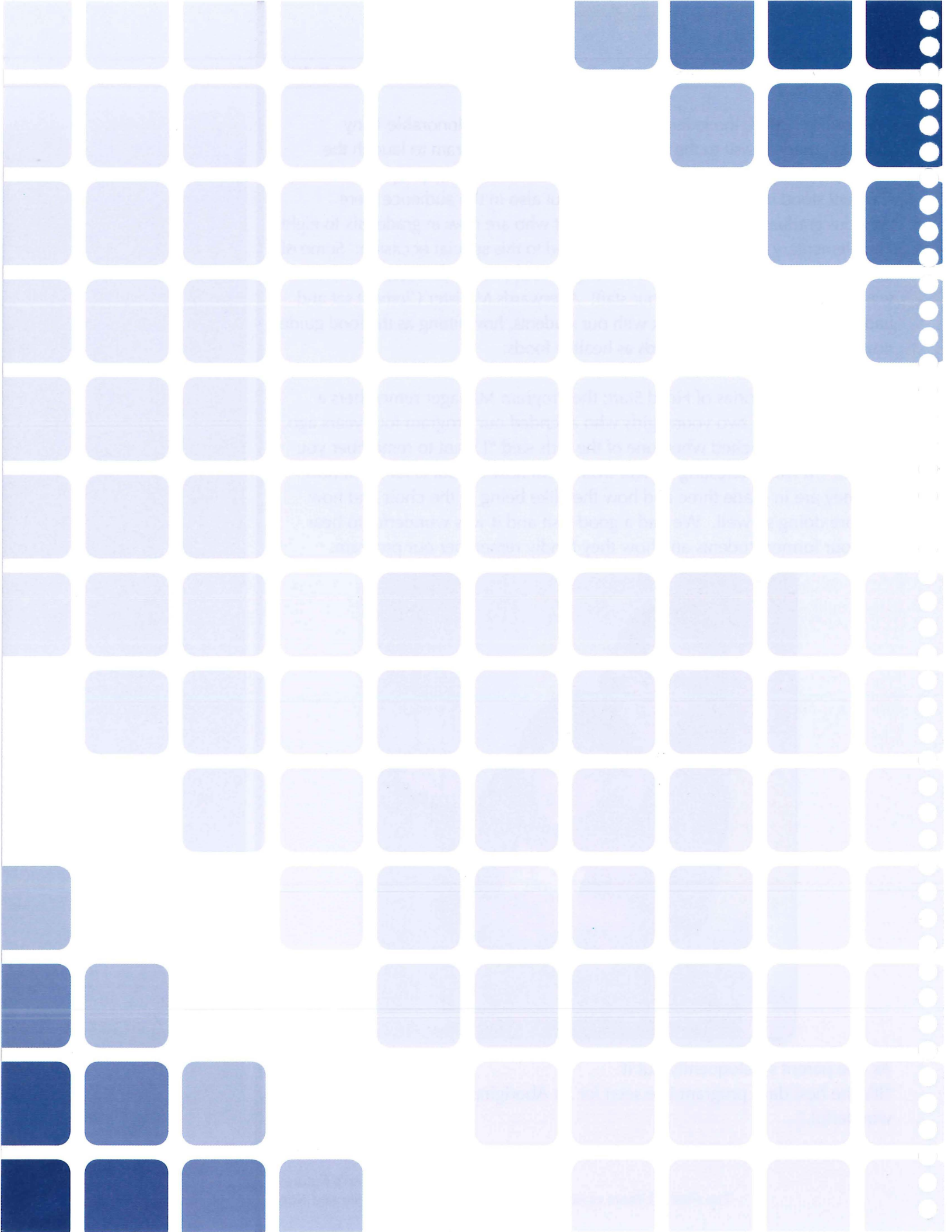


On April 11, 2007, the federal Minister of Health, the Honorable Tony Clement, made a visit to the Aboriginal Head Start Program to launch the new *Canada's Food Guide for First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples*. Minister Clement stood in front of our 2007 class, but also in the audience were previous graduates of Aboriginal Head Start who are now in grades six to eight. The elementary school students were invited to this special occasion. Some of our graduates were in the choir and sang "O Canada" for Minister Clement. It was a very proud moment for our staff! Afterwards Minister Clement sat and had caribou stew and bannock with our students, how fitting as the food guide now recognizes traditional foods as healthy foods.

We have many stories of Head Start; the Program Manager remembers a visit she had from two young girls who attended our program four years ago. Her heart was touched when one of the girls said "I want to remember you forever." It was interesting to hear from them how school is for them now that they are in grade three and how they like being in the choir and how they are doing so well. We had a good visit and it was wonderful to hear from our former students and how they fondly remember our program.



As one parent so eloquently put it:  
"It's the best darn program I've seen for an Aboriginal Head Start Program, wonderful."





# Chapter 3



**Evaluation Design and  
Methods for Aboriginal Head  
Start in Yellowknife/Ndilo**

### 3.1 Approach to Evaluation

The methodology was developed from best practices in early childhood education and evaluation from across North America and from the extensive literature base from the US Head Start movement. Following a summary report of the AHSUNC programs in the NWT in 1998, the sites decided to embark on a path of outcome evaluation that included greater accountability for Aboriginal children, parents and communities.

This path of evaluation, as started in 2000, was developed from the interests, beliefs and values of the Northwest Territories Aboriginal Head Start (NWTAHS) personnel in providing the best possible AHSUNC program in the NWT. In addition, developing AHSUNC site capacity in evaluation, monitoring of program outcomes and accountability became important for all involved. The Yellowknife/Ndilo AHSUNC site took full advantage of the outcome evaluation approach and integrated yearly outcome measurement results with its program structure and content.

The approach used for the Yellowknife/Ndilo AHSUNC evaluation is best described as participatory action research. A participatory action research approach includes the participants and/or interested persons in all aspects of the evaluation design and implementation of the study. Also, a participatory action approach emphasizes sharing the results with all interested persons and groups, including those most influenced by the study (Kirmayer, 2003).

"I think it is important to learn about different cultures."

*AHSUNC Parent  
In Yellowknife/  
Ndilo*

#### Further Information The Original Head Start Program

Head Start was started in the United States in 1962 to address the school performance of disadvantaged children, and continues today as one of the most successful educational interventions for children and families most in need of support and encouragement. As a federal initiative that is represented in all states and territories, the Head Start program costs approximately \$ 8,000 per child, for a total of 7 billion dollars per year.

65% of the children attending US Head Start programs are from culturally distinct groups.

There have been more than 24 million children who have participated in its 40 year history, with more than 50,000 Head Start classrooms across the United States and over 900,000 children enrolled each year (ACF, 2007).

## 3.2 Methodology

The evaluation studies used in Yellowknife/Ndilo are best summarized as quasi-experimental with a pre-test/post-test and no randomization of participants, as each participant acted as their own control. A number of qualitative measures were used to complete the picture in Yellowknife/Ndilo. This is a type of mixed method approach with quantifiable results and qualitative information that provides results within a community context.



## 3.3 Evaluation Questions

A number of broad questions guided the evaluation from 2000 through 2007 in Yellowknife/Ndilo. Collaboration was continuous throughout the evaluation design, implementation and reporting timelines with input from program personnel from the Western Arctic Aboriginal Head Start Council or WAAHSC, Yellowknife/Ndilo AHSUNC staff, parents and community members, and from evaluation experts who worked with the Yellowknife/Ndilo program.

- 1) How is the Yellowknife/Ndilo AHSUNC program meeting the six core areas: culture and language, education and school readiness, health promotion, nutrition, parental involvement and social support?

- 2) What skills and knowledge do Yellowknife/Ndilo children have when they enter and leave the program?
- 3) What are the strengths of the Yellowknife/Ndilo program and what areas could be further enhanced?
- 4) What do parents think of the AHSUNC program in Yellowknife/Ndilo?
- 5) How effective is the AHSUNC program?

### 3.4 Measurements and Procedures

The measurements, data collection procedures and analysis were developed from a participatory action approach. Measurements are tools to answer the evaluation questions, and were chosen by the AHSUNC personnel in consultation with evaluation experts. The chosen measures are inclusive of principles of standardization, which was an important criteria for the Yellowknife/Ndilo evaluation studies from 2000 to 2007. Although the measures were quantitative tools, they are consistent with an Aboriginal perspective in measuring strengths from a criterion-referenced perspective.

The Yellowknife/Ndilo AHSUNC evaluation had three areas of measurement: classroom quality, children and parents/community. A brief description of each measurement is included here and in Appendix A.

#### *AHSUNC Program Measures*

- The Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale or ECERS (Harms, Clifford & Cryer, 1998) has 37 sub-scales of classroom quality. AHSUNC teachers/evaluation team members rated the Yellowknife/Ndilo program.
- Classroom observations regarding structure, classroom content and schedules such as teacher-child interactions.

#### *AHSUNC Child Outcome Measures*

- Tools administered by the AHSUNC teachers to assess motor skills, language skills and general knowledge: the Brigance Screen (Brigance, 1998) and the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test or PPVT-III (Dunn, Dunn & Dunn, 1997).

- AHSUNC teacher and parent ratings of prosocial skills such as cooperation, assertiveness and self-control done with the Social Skills Rating Scale (SSRS)-Preschool Form (Gresham & Elliott, 1990).
- AHS progress reports and records for each AHSUNC year.
- *AHSUNC Parents/Community Measures*
- Yellowknife/Ndilo year end parent/guardian survey.
- Yellowknife/Ndilo parent feedback, informal and formal.

## Further Information

### What are Standardized Measures?

A standardized measure is any measure used to evaluate skills or characteristics, with specific procedures for administering, scoring and interpreting the results. There are two types of standardized measures that are used for individual assessment or group evaluation purposes; norm-referenced and criterion-referenced (Harris, 2002).

*Norm-referenced* measures use a comparison with a sample of people's scores who completed the measure during standardization. Currently, norms are determined with a sample of people that includes minority groups, including Aboriginal people. Most measures used in program evaluation and research are norm-referenced and are costly to develop. Examples include the PPVT-III and the Woodcock-Johnson Revised Tests of Achievement.

*Criterion-referenced* measures are compared against an indicator for assessment or evaluation purposes. Criterion-referenced measures help determine what specific skills students have mastered. Many criterion-referenced measures are developed for early childhood programs and schools, as the assessment processes are linked to the curriculum, individual progress of the child and individual education plans or IEP. Criterion-referenced measures are less costly to develop. Examples include the Brigance Screens, the Work Sampling System or WSS (Jablon, Marsden, Meisels & Dichtelmeiller, 1994).

### 3.5 Data Collection, Analysis and Reporting of Findings

A schedule of timelines to collect data in each of the three areas was developed by the AHSUNC program team and in consultation with the evaluation team. Timelines were structured to maximize data quality, to answer the evaluation questions and to minimize the interference with the daily program. The chosen measures were field tested with Aboriginal children in the NWT, prior to their use. Measurement administration training was provided to the Yellowknife/Ndilo AHSUNC staff for each measurement, with ongoing assistance.

On a yearly basis, the Yellowknife/Ndilo AHSUNC program set aside timelines for the teachers to collect child data such as the Brigance and PPVT-III. Informed consent forms and procedures were completed for each new group of children and parents, and kept on file. The parent forms were conducted by a local research assistant, who would complete these forms with the parent/guardian in a private and confidential setting. The evaluation was integrated with the program registration procedures for each child and family who participated in the program.

At the end of each program year, copies of the data forms were made and provided to the evaluation team for analysis. No child was identified in the evaluation findings, as group scores were used. Where there was concern regarding an individual child's results, these were discussed with the AHSUNC team. All data was confidential and used as outlined by the informed consent.

"My son is learning about his culture and is interacting with others."

*AHSUNC Parent  
in Yellowknife/  
Ndilo.*



The analysis of the descriptive, qualitative and quantitative data is done by the evaluation team, with consultation from the AHSUNC program staff. Analysis includes descriptive and inferential statistics, and qualitative data analysis methods such as triangulation, theme summaries and survey summary methods. All analysis is consistent with established research and evaluation principles.

The reporting of the yearly findings was done through verbal and written formats of group summaries and qualitative information regarding program strengths and challenges. The AHSUNC program staff reports the findings to their parents, stakeholders and others at their discretion. As funding permits, findings are summarized for broad distribution, such as this publication.

### 3.6 Ethical Considerations

The approach, methodology, data collection procedures, analysis and reporting were conducted within the guidelines of the codes of ethical practice for psychologists, evaluation consultants and within the OCAP (Ownership, Control, Access and Possession) principles for Aboriginal research (National Aboriginal Health Organization, 2002).

The core features of the ethical considerations include accountability, collaboration, safe and caring practice in working with children, ownership of data by Aboriginal parents and programs, and informed consent.



## Further Information

### Critique of the Methodology

There is debate about how to conduct evaluation activities with culturally diverse groups, such as Aboriginal communities (Canadian Council on Learning, 2007). The approach used in Yellowknife/Ndilo is consistent with program evaluation with culturally distinct groups of United States Head Start children (ACF, 2001). The Head Start movement was started in 1962, and continues today as the largest and oldest early intervention program for young children and families.

In Canada, there have been concerns with evaluating AHSUNC type programs with standardized measures. Consultations with a variety of groups including community perspectives, policy makers, leaders, and personnel in Anthropology, Indian Studies and Education have recommended the development of new research models and Aboriginal specific measures (Palmantier, 2005).

Alternatively, other experts believe in evidence-based practice that incorporates standardized evaluation methods. Furthermore, culture-biased measures that are in the hands of well-trained multicultural practitioners are preferred over culture-fair methods that are minimally represented in the literature, according to these evaluation and research experts (Ponterotto & Alexander, 1996).

## 3.7 Strengths of the Evaluation Design

- The Yellowknife/Ndilo AHSUNC program integrated the evaluation measures with its program structure and administration procedures.
- The evaluation design allows for longitudinal evaluation as baseline data is available on school readiness indicators and social skills.
- The evaluation design provides feedback for program enhancements.
- The evaluation design is respectful, inclusive and open regarding its methods, choice of measures and findings.
- The evaluation design was developed from the direction of Aboriginal people who were concerned about the future of the AHSUNC program and accountability to parents, children and communities.
- The evaluation results are de-limited where necessary in terms of limitations of the findings.



- Issues of reliability and validity are addressed through the use of standardized instruments and adherence to principles of assessment with diverse populations.
- Appropriate training was provided to AHSUNC teachers and program coordinators on the administration of the evaluation measures.
- Bias is managed throughout all aspects of the evaluation work and through adherence to ethical standards for conducting evaluations.

### 3.8 Limitations of the Evaluation Design

- It is challenging to attribute causality to the findings, as methodological limitations were evident such as a lack of randomization and the influence of participant variables that were not controlled for, such as, family income, demographics and other family variables.
- The school readiness measure is an abbreviated measure. Although psychometric properties for this abbreviated measure are sound, there is a possibility of bias being introduced.
- The Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test or PPVT was added to the battery of measures in 2004.
- Data collection was completed by different personnel in some program years and there may be differences in administration procedures.
- The measures used in the Yellowknife/Ndilo evaluation are standardized with North American norm-reference populations that are based on census population figures, which are inclusive of minorities and Native Americans. No equivalent measures have been published that have been solely standardized with Aboriginal Canadians.
- Participant sample sizes limited the scope of statistical analysis.
- The ECERS ratings for 2000 to 2002 were completed by the evaluation team, and the 2003 to 2004 measure was completed as a self-assessment by AHSUNC teachers.

"I want my children to learn their traditional language."

AHSUNC Parent  
in Yellowknife/  
Ndilo

- There was very limited funding available for data collection procedures, monitoring and analysis. This publication was summarized with limited resources and does not include all possible findings, analyses and discussion of the findings.

“For the past seven years our project has been involved in an evaluation process which shows that our children are learning important skills.”

*AHSUNC Program  
Manager in  
Yellowknife/Ndilo*



# Chapter 4



**Aboriginal Head Start  
Program Results in  
Yellowknife/Ndilo**

This chapter focuses on the classroom quality of the Yellowknife/Ndilo AHSUNC program from 2000 through 2007.

The Yellowknife/Ndilo program provides programming in the six AHSUNC program component areas: culture and language, education and school readiness, health promotion, nutrition, social support and parental involvement.

The evaluation of these areas of the AHSUNC program in Yellowknife/Ndilo was assessed with the ECERS, an observation measure that quantifies quality from inadequate to excellent. The use of the ECERS is through the lens of the evaluator and classroom observer and their cultural frame, as well as through the guidance and scoring scale of the measure.

## 4.1 What Does Classroom Quality Mean?

Results from longitudinal evaluation and research on the effectiveness of early childhood intervention programs, such as the Perry Preschool and Head Start, are widely accepted as promising initiatives that support investments in early childhood education (Barnett, 1995).

Economic analysis in the last 30 years has demonstrated from these model programs that for every dollar invested in preschool programs, significant returns are seen from reduced costs from education, crime and social program dependency. These findings of effectiveness and savings have come from the study of high quality early childhood programs (Scheinart, 2004).

As a result, program quality has become a priority for program administrators and evaluation/research personnel who work with early childhood programs.

Program quality encompasses every aspect of the preschool program and includes: the physical structure of the classroom, equipment and materials, layout, group sizes, staff-child ratio, staff qualifications, staff training, parental input and management systems. Also included, and of great importance in measuring program quality, is the classroom environment, program content, scheduling, incorporation of local culture/traditions and use of proven early childhood curriculum concepts such as child-centered learning and learning through play (Ramey & Ramey, 1998).

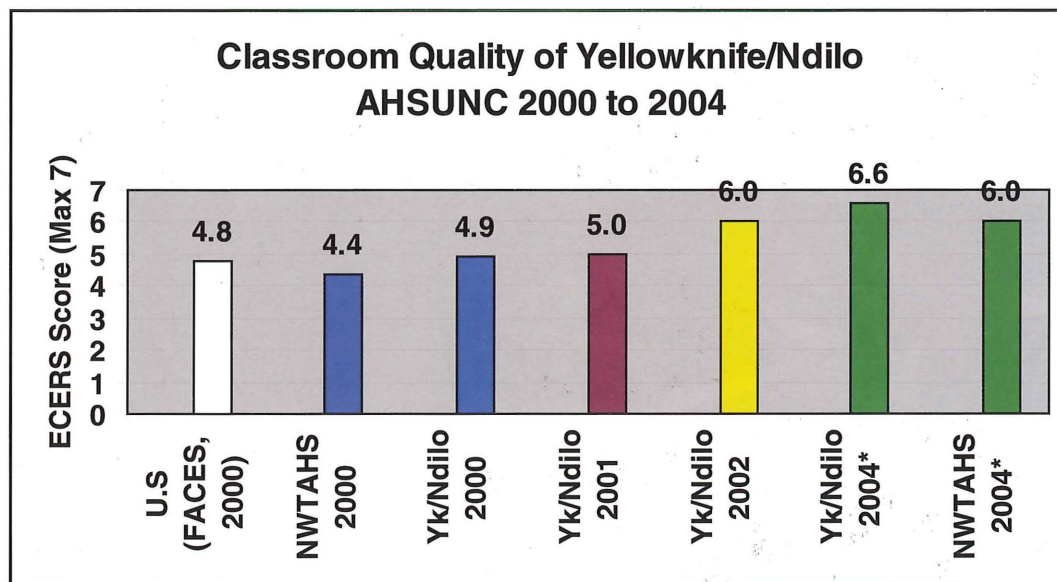
## 4.2 Program Quality and Yellowknife/Ndilo AHSUNC

The Yellowknife/Ndilo AHSUNC program has addressed program quality issues from the first day it opened its doors in 1997, through continued attention to high quality and culturally relevant equipment, trained personnel and appropriate management systems for the program. From 2000 to 2004, the program and classroom quality were measured four out of five years. Community resource persons were also consulted to assist with program improvements.

The classroom quality of the Yellowknife/Ndilo AHSUNC program has consistently been greater than the Family and Child Experiences Survey or FACES study of over 250 American Head Start programs. Closer to home, the Yellowknife/Ndilo overall classroom ratings have been higher than other AHSUNC programs in the NWT. The overall scores in the last two study timelines were in the “good to excellent” range, as determined by the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale or ECERS (Harms, Clifford & Cryer, 1998).

Exhibit 4.1 reveals improvement in the overall ECERS ratings from the first evaluation in 2000 where the program scored “average to good quality.” In 2004, the Yellowknife/Ndilo program was assessed to be of “excellent quality.”

**Exhibit 4.1**



\*Yk/Ndilo 2004 ECERS ratings was a self-evaluation  
 ECERS ratings are coded as follows: 1-Inadequate quality, 3-Minimal quality, 4-Average quality, 5- Good quality, 7- Excellent quality

### 4.3 Aboriginal Culture and Language Reviving and Respecting Our Ways

The culture and language program in Yellowknife/Ndilo has been evolving over the last 10 years. It is a challenge to reflect and document the planning, time and effort, as well as program content that encompasses the Aboriginal culture and language program. The findings described below are just one line of monitoring of this most important area of the AHSUNC program.

The indicators from the ECERS ratings provide an overview of key program areas that reflect the Weledeh Aboriginal culture. The ECERS indicators that measure activities that reflect culture and language are as follows: promoting diversity, use of music, activities to learn about animals, the weather and one's environment, and learning about nature and science.



Culture and language activities occur in the program through teacher-directed activities, such as learning with the local elder, Mrs. Francois, to clean caribou, make bannock and, a favourite activity of the children, plucking the feathers from ducks. In addition, the AHSUNC teacher(s) will take the children on nature walks to see local animal tracks in the snow or look at the changing weather patterns.

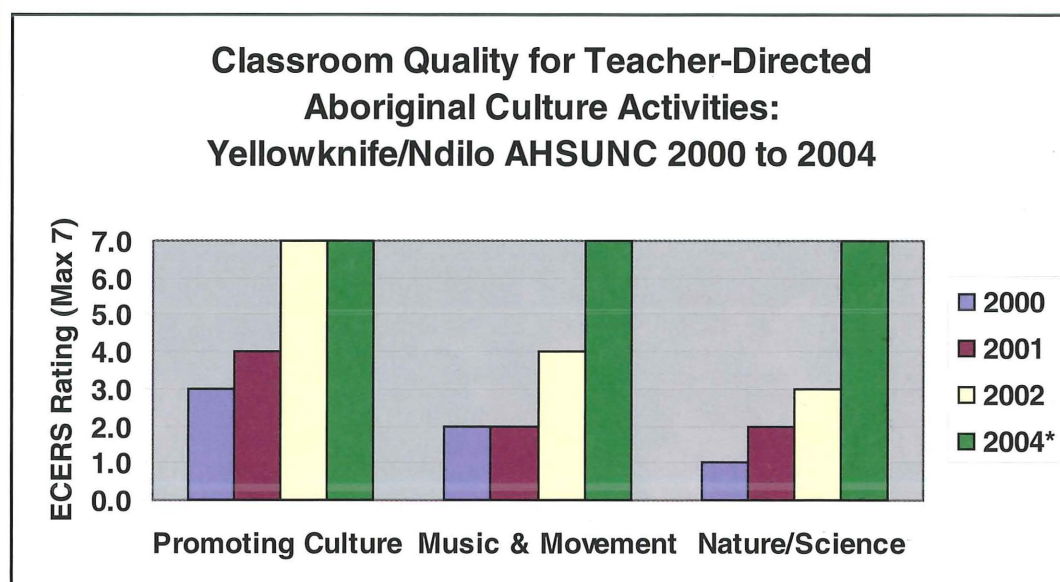


There are many special culture and language activities that are held on a yearly basis, such as culture camps, outdoor exploration activities where children learn to skin animals, learn about their habitat and the traditional ways of working with animals, presentations by renewable resource officers about hunting and trapping and drum circles.

Exhibit 4.2 compares the Aboriginal culture activities that are teacher-directed, as evaluated from 2000 to 2004. Three key areas of the ECERS are inclusive of the cultural activities that are teacher-directed and include promoting culture and diversity, use of music and movement, and learning about nature and science. The ECERS scoring provides a score of 1 as indicating inadequate quality and a score of 7 as excellent quality.

In Yellowknife/Ndilo, improvement was noted in the scores of the culture activities, with a score of 7 or excellent on the most recent ECERS monitoring.

### Exhibit 4.2



\*Yk/Ndilo 2004 ECERS ratings was a self-evaluation

ECERS ratings are coded as follows: 1-Inadequate quality, 3-Minimal quality, 4-Average quality, 5- Good quality and 7- Excellent quality

ECERS scores in child-directed play activities that are consistent with Aboriginal culture include the following: (1) art centre, where children can use art materials such as those found in nature, beading and the use of paint and textures that promote local traditions and symbols, (2) sand and water centre, where children can use a variety of materials found in their local environments to build and interact with, (3) block building centre, where children construct and interact with structured materials, and play figures that represent traditional construction and (4) dramatic play centre where children use traditional clothing and props seen in traditional and modern-day homes.

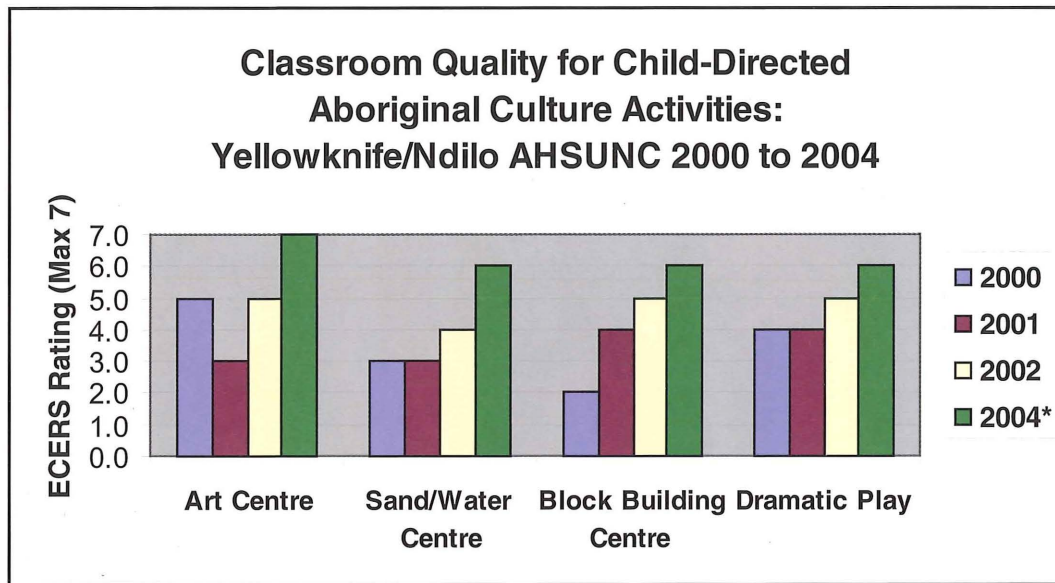
“The Aboriginal Head Start program has helped my daughter by understanding and teaching her culture.”

AHSUNC Parent in Yellowknife/Ndilo



Exhibit 4.3 provides a pattern of improvement in the quality and interaction of Aboriginal cultural activities with child-directed play within the Yellowknife/Ndilo AHSUNC program. Scores of the child-directed cultural activities in 2000-2001 ranged from “minimal to average quality.” In 2004, the child-directed activities for Aboriginal cultural activities improved to “good to excellent quality.”

**Exhibit 4.3**



\*Yk/Ndilo 2004 ECERS ratings was a self-evaluation  
 ECERS ratings are coded as follows: 1-Inadequate quality, 3-Minimal quality 4-Average quality, 5- Good quality and 7- Excellent quality

**Further Information**

**What is Dramatic Play?**

In an early childhood program, dramatic play is a learning centre that emphasizes child-directed play, emotional development, symbolic thinking, language development and social interaction. This centre is also where children can express feelings about their own life experience, use role play to learn about concepts that relate to everyday life and where children practice make-believe decision making and problem solving.

The dramatic play area is a play centre that can integrate local customs, traditions, everyday clothing and other traditional props and recognizable items from the specific community and culture of the early childhood program (Shiple, 1998).

## 4.4 Education and School Readiness - Building Skills for Lifelong Learning

School readiness is a broad term that includes motor development, language skills, thinking and problem solving skills, social knowledge and competence, and emotional and spiritual health (Piotrkowski, 2004).

The integration of culture and language, with education and school readiness, is what makes Aboriginal Head Start in Canada unique as an early childhood intervention program for Aboriginal children. The integration of culture and early childhood learning is empowering for Yellowknife/Ndilo children, their parents and the community, so as to learn from old and new bases of knowledge.



Education and school readiness are among the most frequently cited reasons Yellowknife/Ndilo parents send their children to the program. A core principle of the program and overall mandate of AHSUNC is to support and encourage each Aboriginal child to enjoy life-long learning and to focus on early childhood development, including physical, spiritual, emotional, intellectual and social development (Health Canada, 1998).

### Further Information

#### Success of the Perry Preschool

There is good research regarding the effectiveness of preschool education programs. Several key programs such as the Perry Preschool have demonstrated positive success rates later in life for adults who have been to preschool such as improved education, good employment, reduced criminal involvement and overall physical and mental health (Schweinhart, 2004).

The Perry Preschool was started in the 1960's, and continues today to be the gold standard early intervention program across North America. This most successful program has demonstrated the cost-benefits to governments of prevention type programs for children and families.

Educational programming tailored to Aboriginal children through teacher-student interactions are key aspects of the AHSUNC program that can influence the quality of the preschool education program. The ECERS measures the quality and educational components of an early childhood program, and there have been important relationships reported between ECERS scores and child outcome measures of school readiness (Harms, Clifford & Cryer, 1998).

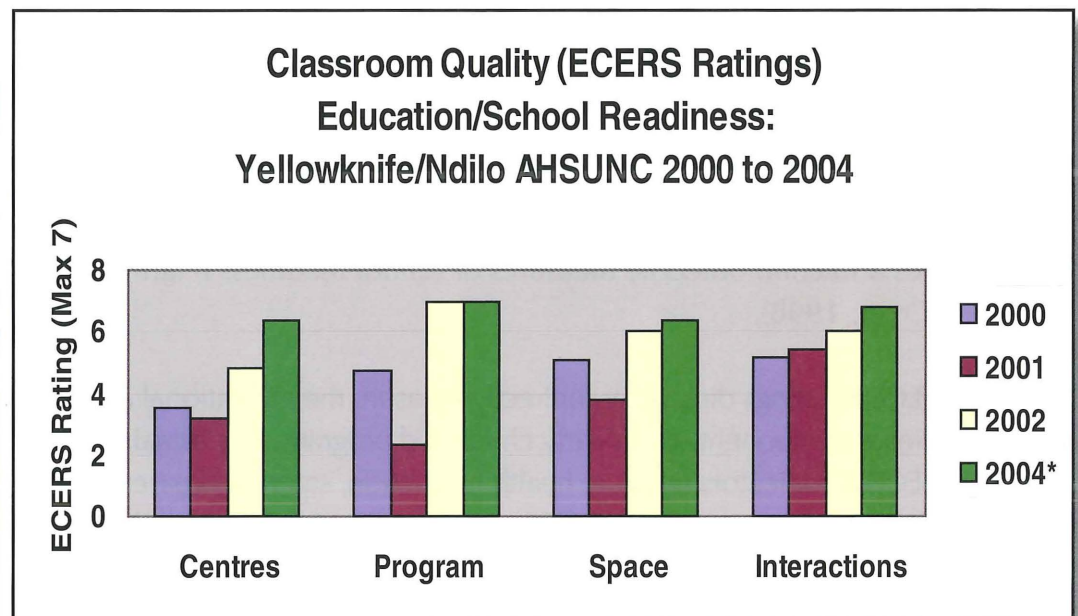
72% of the ECERS ratings directly or indirectly measure the educational and school readiness components of an early childhood program. The remaining 28% of the ECERS indicators measure health promotion, safety and parental involvement. Five core areas of the ECERS ratings evaluate the early childhood program's overall fit with a quality preschool education and are described below.

- (1) **Space and furnishings** are important for the layout of child learning centres, equipment and the overall running of the program.
- (2) **Child-centered learning and centre-based learning** that include play and learning that is encapsulated within an interest centre, and that is self-directed by one or more children or assisted by a staff member.

- (3) **Language-Reasoning** aspects of the AHSUNC program include print materials that are culturally relevant, encouraging formal and informal use of language, language interaction to encourage cognitive flexibility and reasoning and children using language spontaneously and as a means to express emotions and thoughts.
- (4) **Program structure and interactions** include educational interaction with staff and balance of free play, group play and self-directed play with small groups of children.
- (5) **Support for AHSUNC teachers and parents and guardians.**

Exhibit 4.4 indicates that the Yellowknife/Ndilo AHSUNC program has improved its program in the areas of education and school readiness, from “minimal to average quality” in 2000 and 2001, to “good to excellent quality” in 2004.

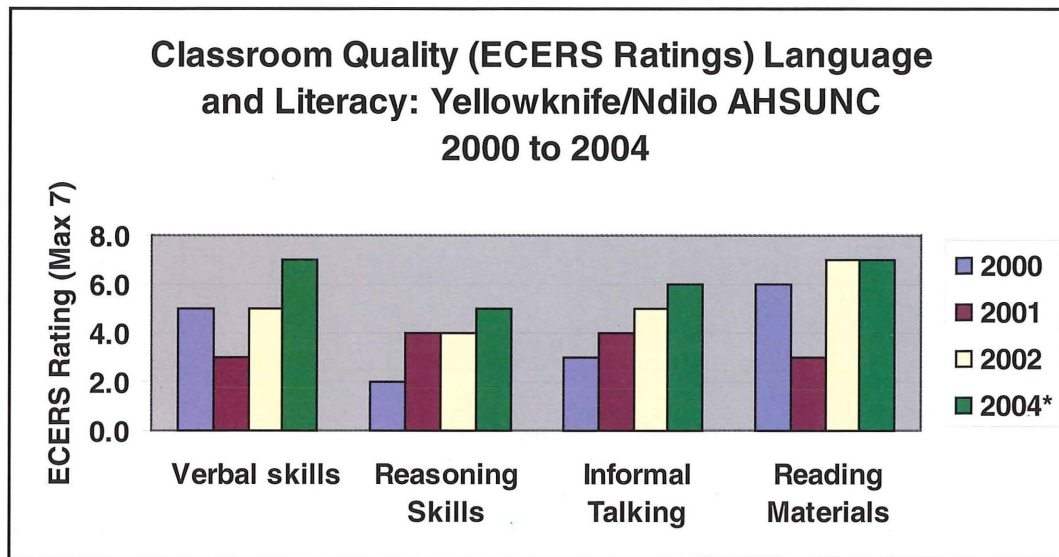
**Exhibit 4.4**



\*Yk/Ndilo 2004 ECERS ratings was a self-evaluation  
 \ECERS ratings are coded as follows: 1-Inadequate quality, 3-Minimal quality, 4-Average quality, 5- Good quality and 7- Excellent quality

Exhibit 4.5 indicates a wide variation in the ECERS ratings for language and literacy activities over the years of evaluation. Consistent improvements have been noted with the 2004 ratings falling into the “good to excellent quality” range.

**Exhibit 4.5**



\*Yk/Ndilo 2004 ECERS ratings was a self-evaluation  
 ECERS ratings are coded as follows: 1-Inadequate quality, 3-Minimal quality, 4-Average quality, 5- Good quality and 7- Excellent quality

**Further Information**

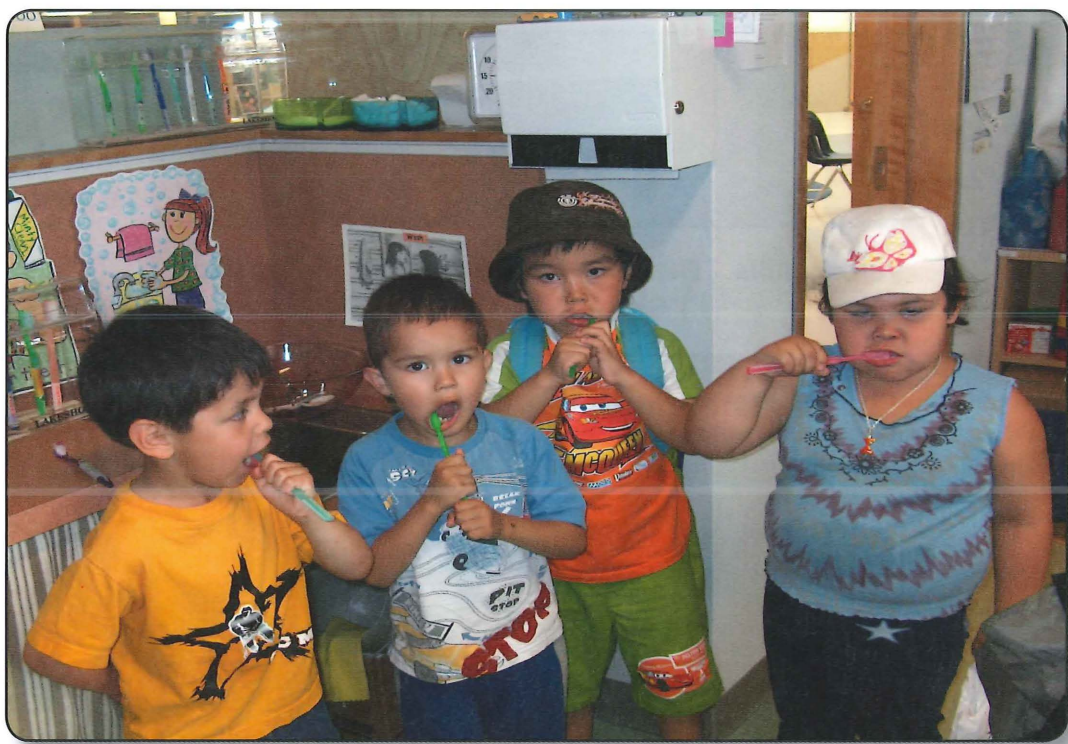
**What are Language and Reasoning Activities in an Early Childhood Program?**

A children’s ability to speak, reason and read emerges in a natural way from birth onwards. Culture and social context shape the characteristics of each child’s language systems and a supportive literate environment at home and in an early childhood program supports language and reasoning abilities (Shiple, 1998).

Play with literacy and thinking materials such as puzzles, magnetic letters, flannelboards, blocks, card games, sorting toys and a variety of reading materials provide a well-rounded sensory, intellectual and affective experience for young children.

## 4.5 Health Promotion – Contributing to Physical, Emotional, Intellectual, Spiritual and Social Development

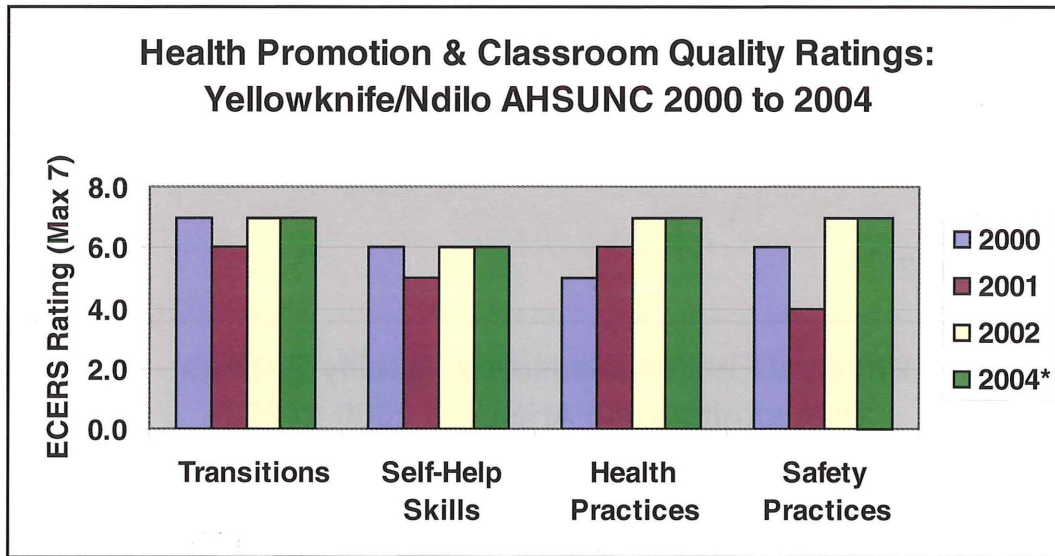
The AHSUNC principles and guidelines outline the purpose of the health promotion component of the program to empower parents and teachers to improve their health (Health Canada, 1998). In Yellowknife/Ndilo, the program integrates health promotion activities throughout each and every day of the program, as well as providing presentations from community resource groups such as the fire department. All of the health promotion activities are within the cultural context of the community in Yellowknife and Ndilo.



The ECERS ratings highlight four key areas of an early childhood program in the area of health promotion and include transitions from home, self-help routines, health practices such as hand-washing and safety practices such as following rules, watching for vehicle traffic and staying away from dangerous areas such as maintenance rooms, cleaning supplies and other hazardous materials.

The overall ECERS scores for Health Promotion activities have been consistently high since the beginning of the evaluation activities in 2000, and remain in the “excellent quality” range in 2004 (Exhibit 4.6).

Exhibit 4.6



\*Yk/Ndilo 2004 ECERS ratings was a self-evaluation  
 ECERS ratings are coded as follows: 1-Inadequate quality, 3-Minimal quality, 4-Average quality, 5- Good quality and 7- Excellent quality

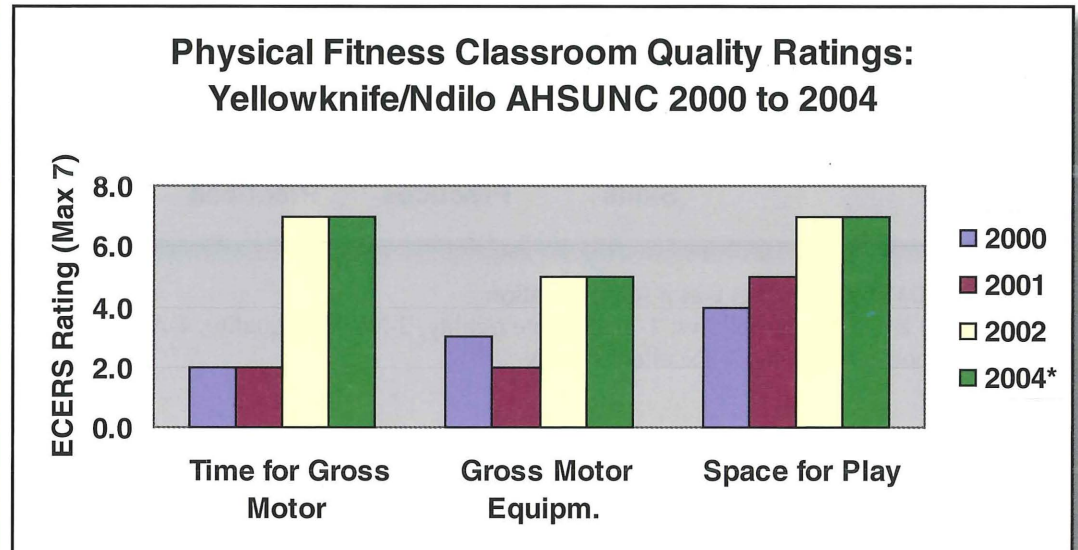
One area of the Health Promotion program area that remains a challenge for all AHSUNC programs in the North is physical indoor/outdoor play, also referred to as gross motor play. Gross motor or physical play involves the large muscle groups, includes some aerobic movement and is generally part of physical health for growing young bodies.

Preschool age children, ages 3 to 5 years, require 90 minutes of physical activity each day

(Health Canada, 2007).

The Yellowknife/Ndilo AHSUNC has improved on the physical fitness area of its program, mostly through feedback from the initial ECERS ratings in 2000 and 2001 that were in the minimal and inadequate ranges (Exhibit 4.7). Since 2004, program reports indicate that “physical play is here to stay” in the Yellowknife/Ndilo AHSUNC program.

Exhibit 4.7



\*Yk/Ndilo 2004 ECERS ratings was a self-evaluation

ECERS ratings are coded as follows: 1-Inadequate quality, 3-Minimal quality, 4-Average quality, 5- Good quality and 7- Excellent quality

## Further Information

### Gross Motor Play and Physical Health

Physical development and health and well-being are linked together through large muscle and motor play, otherwise known as gross motor play. Physical development for young children is linked to cognitive, emotional, and social development, through indoor and outdoor play. The world beyond the boundaries of the early childhood setting is a rich learning environment, where children experience their environment and community (Shiple, 1998).

Creative physical programming improves body strength, coordination and fitness, and facilitates children’s social needs, emotional well-being, spiritual growth, creativity, and overall growth.



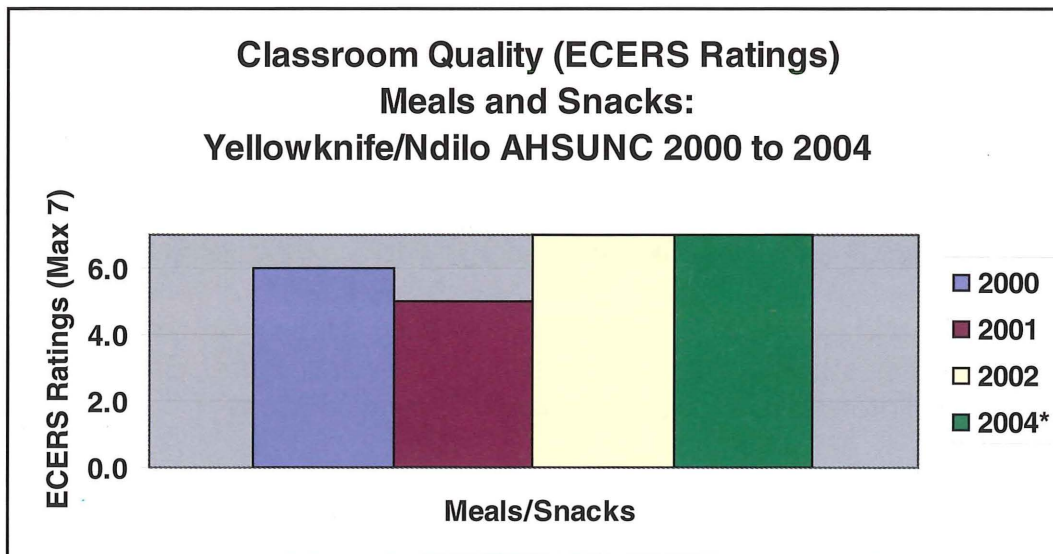
## 4.6 Nutrition

The purpose of the nutrition component of AHSUNC is to ensure that Aboriginal children are provided with food which will assist in meeting their nutritional needs, and to provide children and families with opportunities to learn about healthy eating habits (Health Canada, 1998).

The Yellowknife/Ndilo program provides a daily snack program that is suited to the half day schedule, as well as within the financial constraints of the program. In addition, the program provides regular activities that promote the traditional foods of the Weledeh people and also the preparation of modern day foods that provide good nutrition for growing bodies. These activities include making bannock, working with various animals and fish, and learning about plants and berries that grow in and around the Yellowknife/Ndilo area.

Exhibit 4.8 indicates ECERS ratings in the “good to excellent quality” range for 2000 to 2004. These ratings include activities such as providing nutritious meals/snacks, teaching healthy food habits, providing a pleasant social atmosphere around food and adults modeling healthy food habits.

**Exhibit 4.8**



\*Yk/Ndilo 2004 ECERS ratings was a self-evaluation  
 ECERS ratings are coded as follows: 1-Inadequate quality, 3-Minimal quality, 4-Average quality, 5- Good quality and 7- Excellent quality

There are classroom activities that emphasize healthy nutrition such as puzzles with food items, grocery play areas in the dramatic play centre and stories about traditional foods. Teachers have also used growth charts to teach the children about healthy food choices for optimal growth.

“ My child is always reminding us as parents about healthy eating habits.”

AHSUNC Parent  
in Yellowknife/  
Ndilo



### Further Information

#### Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide-First Nations, Inuit and Métis

In 2007, the first national food guide for First Nations, Inuit and Métis was released as a tailored guide that includes traditional food from the land and water, and which provides the most current information for eating well and living healthy.

The design of *Canada's Food Guide-First Nations, Inuit and Métis* is an inner circle reflecting the role of traditional food as a link to the land, to family and community. The outer circle of the guide shows common market food choices available in most Aboriginal communities. The food guide was developed in consultation with scientific reports about food and chronic disease, as well as with Aboriginal people and groups who would be using the guide (Health Canada, 2007).

## 4.7 Parental Involvement & Social Support

The parental involvement and social support component of the AHSUNC program provides a foundation for parents to play a central role as their children's primary teachers and to encourage them to access community resources.

Parental involvement is the foundation of AHSUNC. There is extensive research that when parents acquire new skills and are involved in their children's early education, children and parents live healthier lives both socially and economically (Marcon, 1999). Parental involvement is inclusive of the extended family, elders, cultural teachers and community people in Yellowknife/Ndilo.

In Yellowknife/Ndilo, a variety of activities reflect the social support and parental involvement area. First, AHSUNC teachers work with each individual family and child, to best meet their individual needs, and to seek additional resources, when needed. Second, the Yellowknife/Ndilo's cultural and language activities are inclusive of several traditional and community people, who come regularly to the program and work with the children.

The AHSUNC program works to be inclusive of parents in the program through special days, individual meetings, graduation ceremonies and other informal and formal means of communication. Also, program evaluation results for each individual child are reported to the parents. Parents are also interviewed at the end of each year to get feedback about the program.

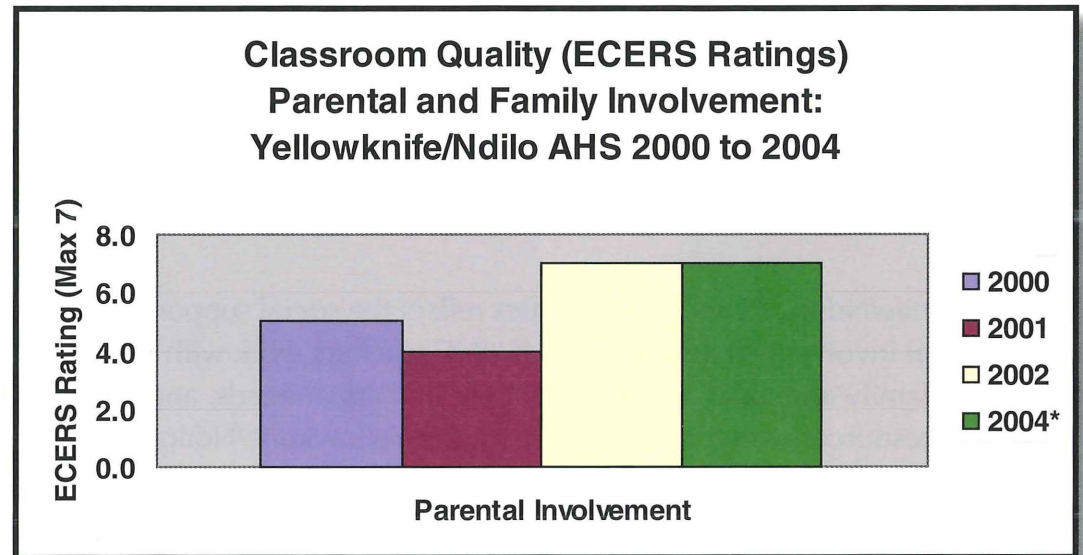


"He likes going to school and playing more with kids his own age."

AHSUNC Parent  
in Yellowknife/  
Ndilo

Exhibit 4.9 indicates ECERS ratings in the “average to excellent quality” range for 2000 to 2004, with a pattern of improvement. The indicators reflect areas of the program where parents and community members have the opportunity to assist and be involved with the program in Yellowknife/Ndilo.

**Exhibit 4.9**



\*Yk/Ndilo 2004 ECERS ratings was a self-evaluation

ECERS ratings are coded as follows: 1-Inadequate quality, 3-Minimal quality, 4-Average quality, 5- Good quality and 7- Excellent quality

### Further Information

#### Importance of Parental Involvement

A child's experience with an Aboriginal Head Start (AHS) program is brief before entering the school system. How can AHS best prepare a child for entering school?

One answer to this question is through parental involvement at the early childhood or preschool level. Through parental involvement in AHS, parents are encouraged to become involved in their children's learning, and their entire school experience (Sones, 2002).

## 4.8 Summary of Chapter 4

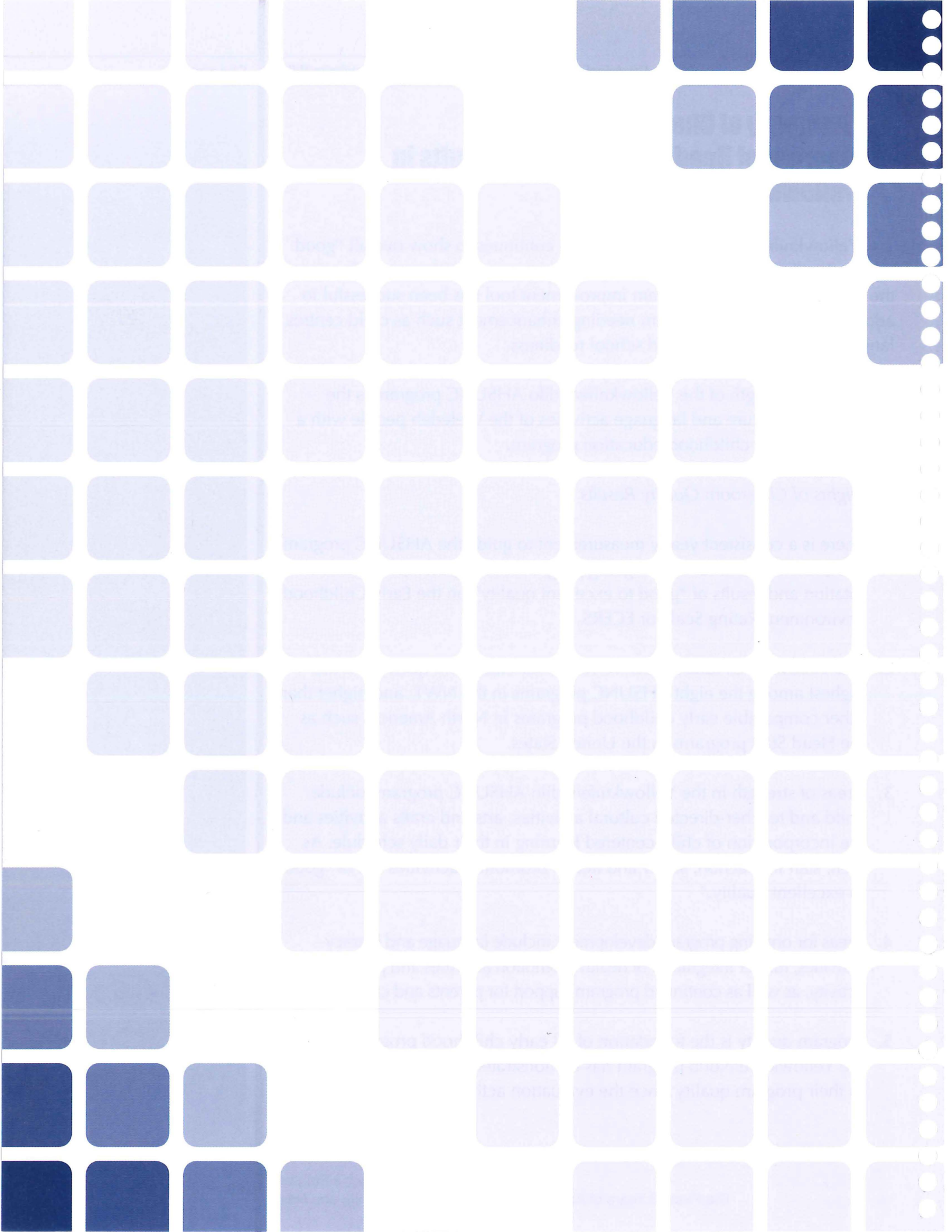
### Aboriginal Head Start Program Results in Yellowknife/Ndilo

The Yellowknife/Ndilo AHSUNC program continues to show overall “good to excellent” classroom quality ratings in most areas. Furthermore, the use of the ECERS measure as a program improvement tool has been successful in addressing areas of the program needing enhancement such as child centres, language/literacy activities and school readiness.

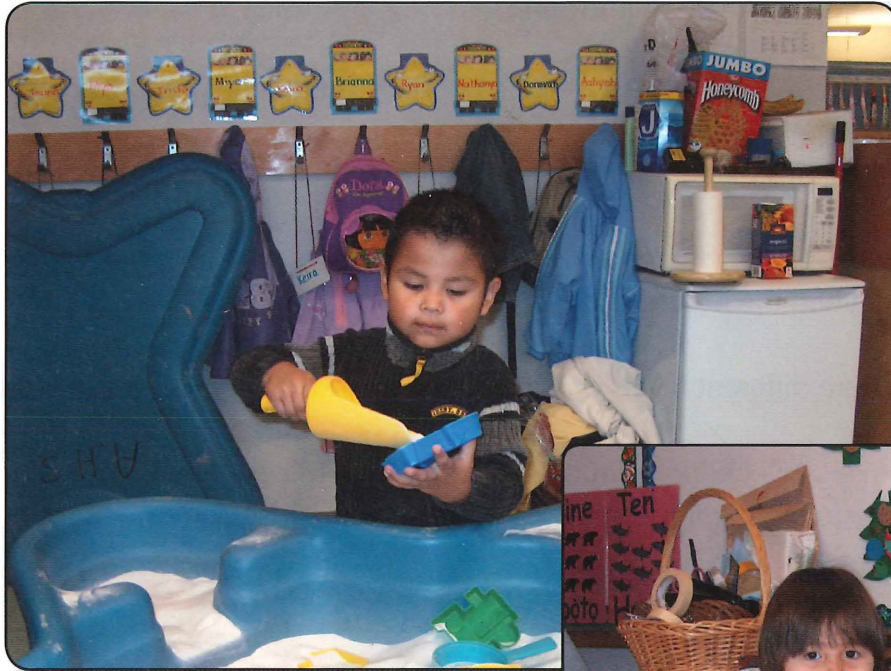
The greatest strength of the Yellowknife/Ndilo AHSUNC program is the integration of culture and language activities of the Weledeh people with a high quality early childhood education program.

#### *Highlights of Classroom Quality Results*

1. There is a consistent yearly measurement to guide the AHSUNC program in Yellowknife/Ndilo with ongoing program development, equipment rotation and results of “good to excellent quality” on the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale or ECERS.
2. The Yellowknife/Ndilo AHSUNC results for classroom quality are the highest among the eight AHSUNC programs in the NWT, and higher than other comparable early childhood programs in North America, such as the Head Start programs in the United States.
3. Areas of strength in the Yellowknife/Ndilo AHSUNC program include child and teacher-directed cultural activities, arts and crafts activities and the incorporation of child-centered learning in their daily schedule. As well, staff interaction, safety and health promotion activities are of “good to excellent quality.”
4. Areas for ongoing program development include language and literacy activities, further integration of health promotion activities and physical activity, as well as continued program support for parents and caregivers.
5. Program quality is the foundation of all early childhood programs, and the Yellowknife/Ndilo program has demonstrated consistent improvement in their program quality since the evaluation activities started in 2000.



# Chapter 5



**Aboriginal Head Start Child  
Outcome Results in Yellowknife/  
Ndilo-Successes and Challenges**

This chapter will address the evaluation questions and results of the children who attended the Yellowknife/Ndilo AHSUNC program from 2000 until 2007.

## 5.1 Evaluation Questions

1. What school readiness skills and knowledge do AHSUNC children have at the end of the program year?
2. Do AHSUNC children make gains in skills during the program year?
3. Are the gains made by AHSUNC children different from year to year?
4. How do the knowledge and skill gains vary among the AHSUNC children who attend the program?
5. Are there different levels of knowledge and skills for girls and/or boys?
6. Do AHSUNC children show gains in social skills development during the year? Are there differences between boys and girls?

## 5.2 Children's Demographics

The sample of children from 2000 to 2007 consisted of participants in the Yellowknife/Ndilo AHSUNC program (Exhibit 5.1). Admission criteria determine which children attend the program and are outlined by the Yellowknives Dene First Nation and the Yellowknife/Ndilo AHSUNC program.

### Exhibit 5.1

#### Demographic Characteristics of Yellowknife/Ndilo AHSUNC Children- 2000 to 2007

	All (n=232)	Age 4 (n=222)	Age 5 (n=10)
<b>Gender</b>			
Girls	110 (47.5%)	108 (46.6%)	2 (0.9%)
Boys	122 (52.5%)	114 (49%)	8 (3.5%)



These criteria are based on the AHSUNC principles and guidelines (Health Canada, 1998) and emphasize participation for Aboriginal children who would benefit from an early intervention program. The demographic characteristics of the AHSUNC children in the Yellowknife/Ndilo are as follows with information from the admission forms from 2000 to 2007:

- The number of boys and girls were closely balanced.
- 96% of the children were 4 years old by December 31 of the program year, and in their pre-kindergarten year.
- 4% of the children attended the program as 5 year olds.
- 94% of the children are First Nations and 6% are Inuit and Métis.

The Yellowknife/Ndilo AHSUNC program bases its admission of children on exhibited high needs, from families with limited financial means, children from single parent families, children who have been adopted by non-aboriginal families and children who will benefit from learning the Weledeh language and culture (Yellowknives Dene First Nation Admission Procedure, 2007).

Exhibit 5.2 provides a breakdown of the AHSUNC children from 2000 to 2007 in Yellowknife/Ndilo who participated in the evaluation studies. Generally, the sample of AHSUNC children is similar from year to year.

**Exhibit 5.2**  
**Yearly Distribution of AHSUNC Children in Yellowknife/Ndilo**

	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	Total
<b>Gender</b>								
Girls	19	13	16	17	13	16	16	110
Boys	13	19	17	18	23	16	16	122
<b>Total</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>232</b>

Special needs children from the Yellowknife/Ndilo program consist of five to eight children with speech and language delays and one to two children with social-behavioural needs each program year. When possible, program support (education assistant) is provided by the NWT Council for Persons with Disabilities to work with individual children. There are no formal diagnostic services provided for these AHSUNC children in the program.

The AHSUNC program does not at this time provide additional financial supports to expand services for children with special needs.

## 5.3 School Readiness- Emerging Literacy and Social-Emotional Development

The importance of a child's emerging literacy has been the hallmark of most early intervention programs for young children. Emergent literacy refers to how young children, such as AHSUNC children, become literate which is to read and write in a chosen language (Clay, 1967).

Literacy begins before children enter school, and its foundation is strengthened in the preschool years. School readiness is a broad concept that is the developmental maturation of physical, cognitive and social skills that enable children to complete an academic curriculum in elementary schools (Lewit & Baker, 1995). There are multiple determinants of children's readiness for school, which include family and community characteristics and the availability of human and financial resources to guide children's growth and potential.

### Further Information

#### School Readiness & Emerging Literacy

There are different opinions regarding the concept of school readiness, especially in terms of young children, who by nature, function at a wide range of physical, social, emotional and intellectual levels. For some authors, social and emotional development such as healthy relations with others, effective communication, self-control and emotional awareness are far more important in the early years than reading and writing (Gresham & Elliot, 1990). For others, school readiness needs to be considered from the perspective of a community-based approach that involves parents, early childhood programs and school educators, so that everyone is working toward the same goal, and is considering the place of community and family in children's learning (Piotrkowski, 2004).

School readiness is usually a term used by educators that includes emerging literacy in recognizing print, using language, drawing and communicating as signs of school readiness. What is important about school readiness is that research has determined that problems at school entry in social, physical and intellectual development can have long-term impacts for school progression and adult life (Alexander & Entwisle, 1988).

In the Yellowknife/Ndilo AHSUNC program, three measures were used to assess school readiness: the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test or PPVT-III was used to assess emerging literacy, the Brigance Screen was used to assess developmental knowledge and skills and the Social Skills Rating Scale or SSRS was used to measure prosocial skills. It is important to note that the Brigance and SSRS were used in Yellowknife/Ndilo from 2000 through 2007, and the PPVT-III measure was introduced as a post-test only measure from 2004 onward.

*AHSUNC Children in Yellowknife/Ndilo Have Emerging Literacy Skills*

Exhibit 5.3 provides the descriptive statistics for the PPVT-III findings for children in Yellowknife/Ndilo, along with the equivalent statistics for the norm sample. The PPVT-III, as used here, provides an indication of each child’s verbal abilities, and hence, their emerging literacy abilities.

The PPVT-III mean standard score for AHSUNC children in Yellowknife/ Ndilo from 2004 to 2007 was 92.4 ( $n = 112$ ,  $SD = 14.9$ , Range= 53 to 127). Standard scores are constructed to have an overall mean of 100, a standard deviation of 15 and are based on a norm-referenced sample of children of a given age, across all income levels (Exhibit 5.3). The emerging literacy scores for the children in Yellowknife/Ndilo were just below the expected mean for children in the same age range. In addition, there was minimal variability from year to year in these PPVT-III results.

**Exhibit 5.3**  
**Descriptive Statistics for Yellowknife/Ndilo PPVT-III**

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2004-07	Norm Sample
<i>n</i> =	25	30	29	28	112	2000
<b>Mean Standard Score</b>	91	92.6	96.6	89.3	92.4	100
<b>Median Standard Score</b>	89	93	100	89.5	92	100
<b>Standard Deviation</b>	14.2	12.2	16.7	16.2	14.9	15
<b>Minimum Standard Score</b>	72	65	59	53	53	40
<b>Maximum Standard Score</b>	127	115	124	113	127	160

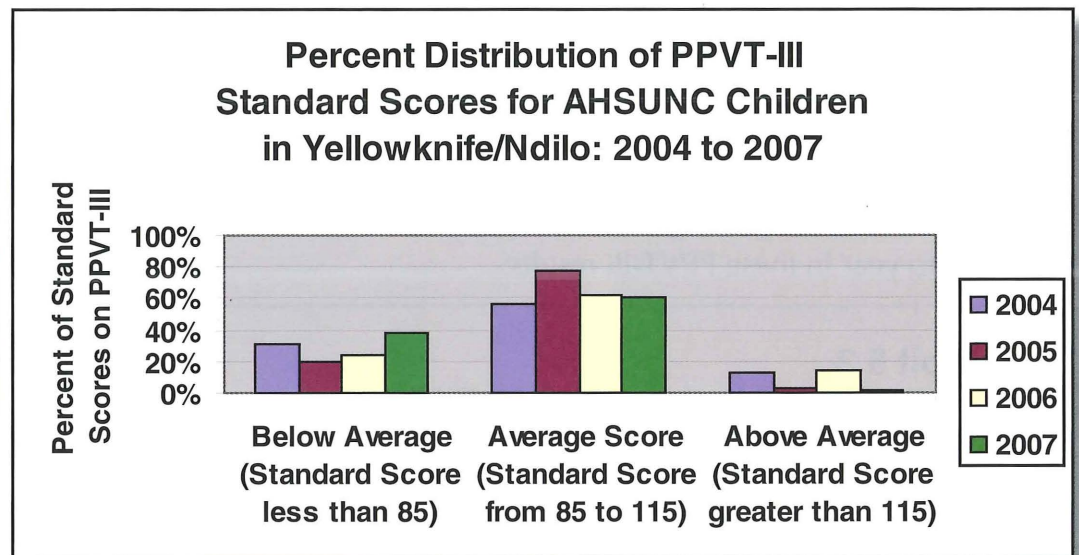
## 5.4 Diversity in Literacy and Knowledge at the End of the AHSUNC Year

The distribution of PPVT-III scores, in terms of the percent number of AHSUNC children, is outlined in Exhibit 5.4. This exhibit shows the percentage of children that scored below average, average and above average on the PPVT-III. Below average is defined as one standard deviation below the mean (standard scores less than 85), and above average (standard scores greater than 115) is defined as one standard deviation above the mean (Exhibit 5.4).

“ My child is happy and enjoys going to preschool. She loves doing more work at home.”

*AHSUNC Parent in Yellowknife/Ndilo*

**Exhibit 5.4**



61-80% of Yellowknife/Ndilo children scored within the average range on the PPVT-III. A smaller than expected group scored in the above average range (3% to 14%) and a larger than expected group scored below average (20% to 39%).

The AHSUNC children in Yellowknife/Ndilo demonstrated diversity in their literacy skills, with children achieving a range of abilities at the end of the program year. For example, the mean standard scores for the highest group of children (top quartile) were at and above national averages, which would put these children above the 79th percentile (Exhibit 5.5).

**Exhibit 5.5**  
**Percentile Rank for Yellowknife/Ndilo (2004 to 2007)**

	Yellowknife/Ndilo Percentile Rank	Expected Norm Sample Percentile Rank
Highest Quartile	79th	84th
Mean	27th	50th
Lowest Quartile	3rd	16th

The mean standard scores for the lowest quartile were below national averages (mean standard score of 71.6) and one to two standard deviations below the standard mean score of 100. This lowest group of PPVT-III scores for the AHSUNC children would put these children at the 3rd percentile, as compared to a national sample of children of similar ages (Exhibit 5.5).

“ My child  
 is eager  
 to learn at  
 Head Start.”

*AHSUNC Parent  
 in Yellowknife/  
 Ndilo*

**Further Information**  
**Function of Play and Learning**

Play encourages children to explore, investigate, create and invent with new and familiar materials. The spontaneous nature of play, which allows young children to choose where they want to play, motivates children to try, take risks, and keep building their experiences and understanding of themselves, others and their communities.

In active learning environments that are child-centered and play oriented, children have experiences and positive interactions with others, which provide them with a unity of a healthy body, mind and spirit (ShIPLEY, 1998).

## 5.5 Emergent Literacy of AHSUNC Children in Yellowknife/Ndilo Compared with Head Start Children who Participated in FACES

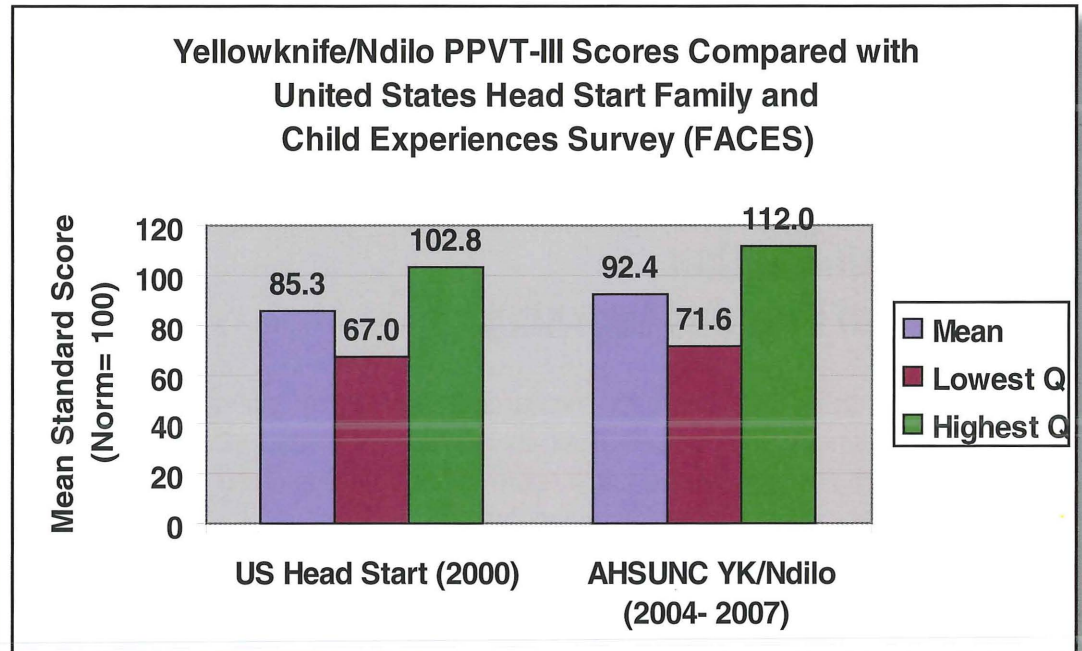
In perspective, the AHSUNC children scored somewhat better than Head Start children in the United States Head Start Family and Child Experiences Survey (FACES) on the PPVT-III. FACES is a survey that was first launched in the United States in 1997 as a study of a national random sample of Head Start programs and was designed to answer questions about child outcomes and program quality.

Exhibit 5.6 provides a comparison of the FACES data for 2000 with the AHSUNC data from Yellowknife/Ndilo. The FACES data was used as a comparison here, as there are no comparable AHSUNC data in Canada.

“The relationship between education and economic well-being is well understood.”

(Heilin, 2006)

**Exhibit 5.6**



Overall, the scores of the typical Yellowknife/Ndilo AHSUNC child were at the 27<sup>th</sup> percentile in emerging literacy, and the US FACES typical child was further behind at the 16<sup>th</sup> percentile (Exhibit 5.7). The highest group of children in Yellowknife/Ndilo was at the 79<sup>th</sup> percentile, while the lowest quartile was at the 3<sup>rd</sup> percentile. Figures for the expected norm sample distribution are included in Exhibit 5.7 for comparison purposes.

### Exhibit 5.7

#### Percentile Rank for Yellowknife/Ndilo (2004 to 2007) & US FACES (2000)

	US FACES Percentile Rank	Yellowknife/Ndilo Percentile Rank	Expected Norm Sample Percentile
Highest Quartile	58th	79th	84th
Mean	16th	27th	50th
Lowest Quartile	2nd	3rd	16th

The Yellowknife/Ndilo children ( $n = 112$ ) and the US FACES children ( $N = 2800$ ) are similar in that both groups are functioning below national norms for all three quartiles or groupings of children. It is clear from these descriptive statistics that the children attending Head Start in the US and the Yellowknife/Ndilo AHSUNC program are indeed “children in need of early intervention.”

### Further Information

#### Agreement on Level of School Readiness

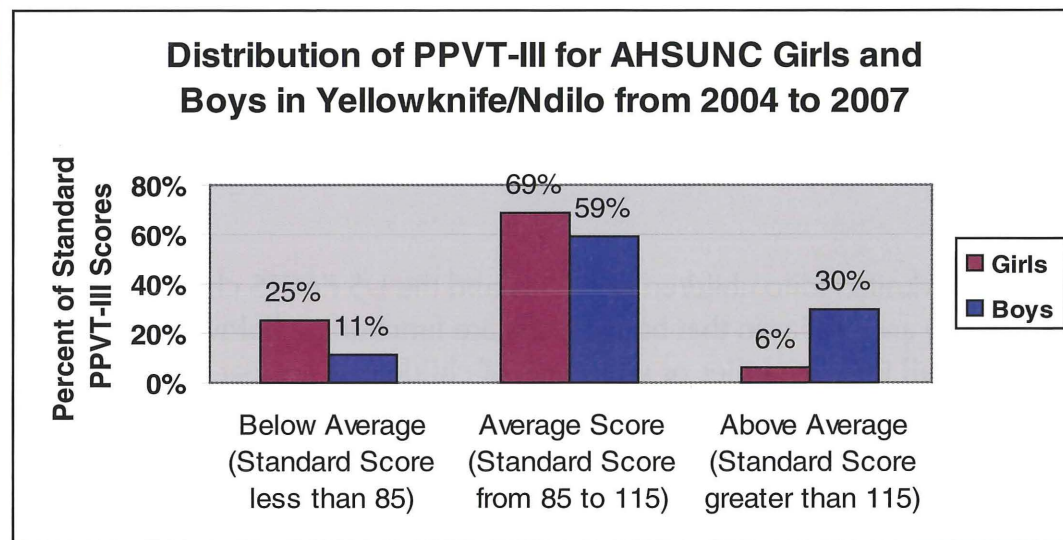
It has been suggested that early childhood intervention programs work in collaboration with kindergarten teachers and school systems to determine applicable levels of school readiness for each community.

Children who are better prepared are likely to succeed in school. Therefore, it is important for Head Start staff, parents, and school staff to work toward similar school readiness goals (Piotrkowski, 2004).

## 5.6 Similar Early Literacy Scores for Yellowknife/Ndilo Girls and Boys

Girls and boys from the Yellowknife/Ndilo AHSUNC program completed the year with early literacy skills and knowledge that were similar, as measured on the PPVT-III, a measure of receptive vocabulary (Exhibit 5.8).

Exhibit 5.8



The mean standard score on the PPVT-III for the AHSUNC girls in Yellowknife/Ndilo was 92.6 ( $n = 52$ ,  $SD = 14.9$ ) and was 92.4 for the AHSUNC boys ( $n = 46$ ,  $SD = 15.6$ ). There were slight differences in the number of boys and girls in each of the below average, average and above average groups. There was no significant difference between the mean standard scores on the PPVT-III for AHSUNC girls and boys  $t(46) = .06$ ,  $p = .5$ .

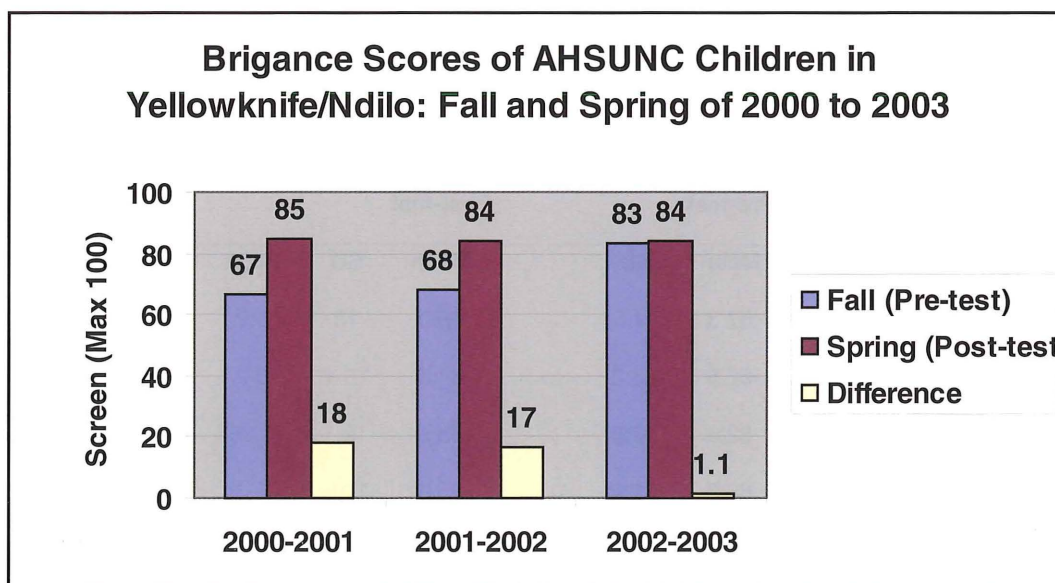


## 5.7 Positive Change in Knowledge and Skills Over the AHSUNC Year in Yellowknife/Ndilo

The Brigance Screens are criterion-referenced measures designed to sample a range of skills and knowledge essential for school success. Criterion-referenced measures are defined as measures that use a pre-specified standard to assess performance. The Brigance Assessments and Screens are designed for different age levels and produce a score between 1 and 100.

Children are expected to perform at the high end of the scale (median range from 73 to 91). The Brigance Screens are useful to rank differences among learners that score in the lower, average and above average ranges, as described in total scores out of 100, percentile ranks, quotients and/or age-equivalent scores. Exhibits 5.9 and 5.10 outline the fall and spring scores for the preschool screen for the cohorts of children who attended the program in Yellowknife/Ndilo from 2000 through 2007. The results show gains in knowledge and skills from the fall to the spring for AHSUNC children in Yellowknife/Ndilo.

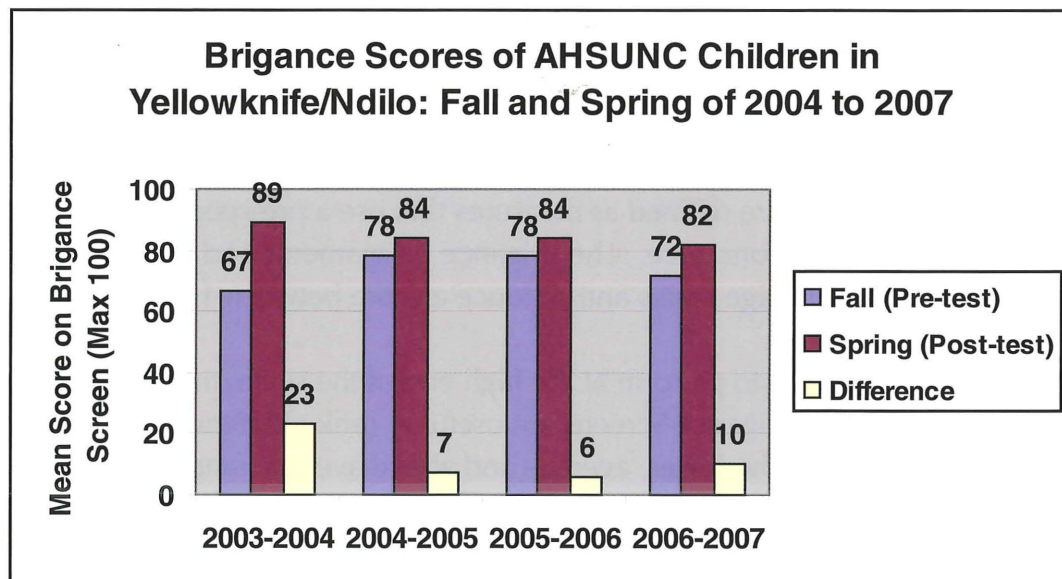
Exhibit 5.9



The eight skill areas of the Brigance Preschool Screen include visual/ fine motor, gross motor, receptive language, expressive vocabulary, verbal fluency, quantitative concepts, personal information and pre-reading

(Brigance, 1998)

Exhibit 5.10



Statistical comparisons reveal that some year's pre-test and post-test changes fall within the area of statistical significance, while others do not (Exhibit 5.11). Overall, most AHSUNC children showed gains in scores across the 8 domains of development assessed by the Brigance Screen.

Exhibit 5.11

Change in Brigance Screen Scores During AHSUNC Year 2000 to 2007

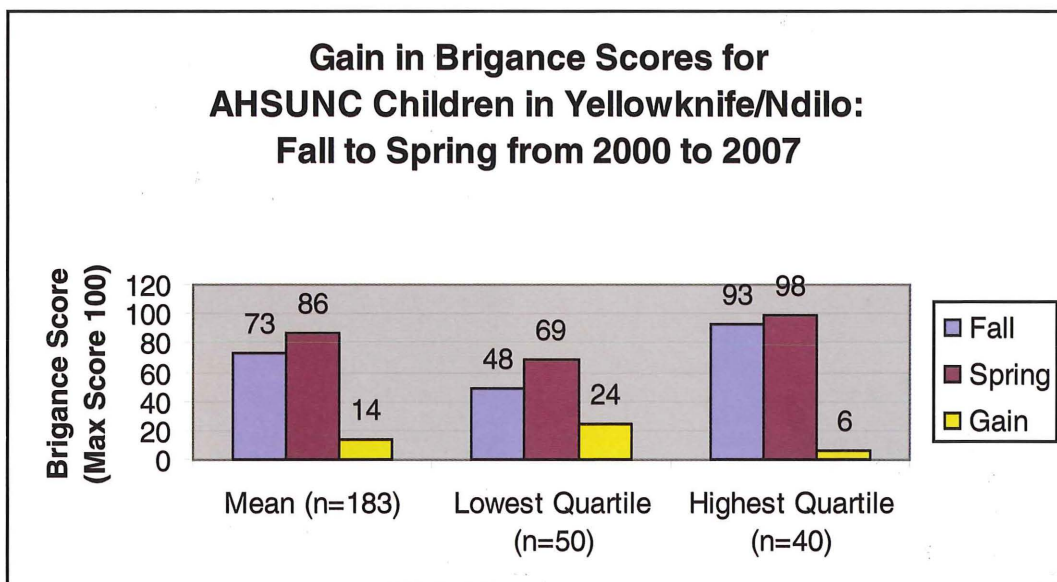
AHSUNC Year	Beginning of Year Pre-test			End of Year Post-test		t-test	p
	n	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
2000 to 2001	27	67.3	11.5	85.0	13	5.2	.001**
2001 to 2002	29	67.5	23.2	84.3	16.1	3.2	.001**
2002 to 2003	19	82.8	13.8	83.9	12.1	0.25	0.4
2003 to 2004	33	66.5	21.9	88.9	17.8	5.3	.001**
2004 to 2005	27	77.5	17.8	84.0	17.1	1.37	.08
2005 to 2006	25	78.3	20.3	84.4	14.7	1.22	0.1
2006 to 2007	25	72.2	16.2	82.2	13.6	2.3	.01*

\*p&lt;.01. \*\*p&lt;.001.

*Greater Gains for Those who Started the Program with Fewer Skills*

The greatest gains were made by AHSUNC children who started the program in the lowest quartile. The mean gain in Brigance scores over the year was 14 points, whereas the mean gain for those in the lowest quartile of the distribution was 24 points (Exhibit 5.12). The gain in the Brigance Screen score for the highest quartile was 6 points. There were differences between the mean gains in the lowest and highest quartile, which was statistically significant,  $p < .001$ .

**Exhibit 5.12**





## 5.8 Social and Emotional Development- Prosocial Skills and Internalizing and Externalizing Behaviours

Prosocial/social skills are learned behaviours that enable a child to interact with others. Psychosocial development is a sensitive area of development and is influenced by a child's family and community (Gresham & Elliott, 1990).

### Further Information Research on Early Intervention and Social Skills

Projects such as American Head Start (Ziegler & Valentine, 1997), the Carolina Early Intervention (Horacek, Ramey, Campbell & Hoffman, 1987) and the High/Scope Perry Preschool Study (Schweinhart, 2004) have demonstrated that addressing the social-emotional needs of children can have a long-term impact on behaviour. One study of the follow-up of children in kindergarten noted that the most salient aspect of the preschool program that benefited the children was their social-emotional adjustment (West, Hausken & Collins, 1995).

The Social Skills Rating Scale or SSRS (Gresham & Elliott, 1990) was used to assess the AHSUNC children's social skill development from 2000 through 2007. The SSRS is a norm-referenced, multiple-rater assessment used by teachers, parents and students to assess prosocial skills and problem behaviour. The SSRS standard scores have an overall mean of 100 and a standard deviation of 15, and are based on a norm-referenced sample of children.

Three forms are available, one for preschool children, one for elementary students and one for secondary school age levels. The SSRS has been commonly used in early intervention programs as an ecological tool with norms (Bagnoto, Neisworth & Munson, 1997).

#### *AHSUNC Girls and Boys in Yellowknife/Ndilo Have Average Social Skills*

The mean standard SSRS scores for AHSUNC girls and boys in 2000 to 2003 fell within the average range and improved slightly from the fall to the spring. The prosocial skills for the 2004 to 2007 AHSUNC girls and boys started higher in the fall and improved slightly in the spring (Exhibit 5.13 and Exhibit 5.14).

Exhibit 5.13

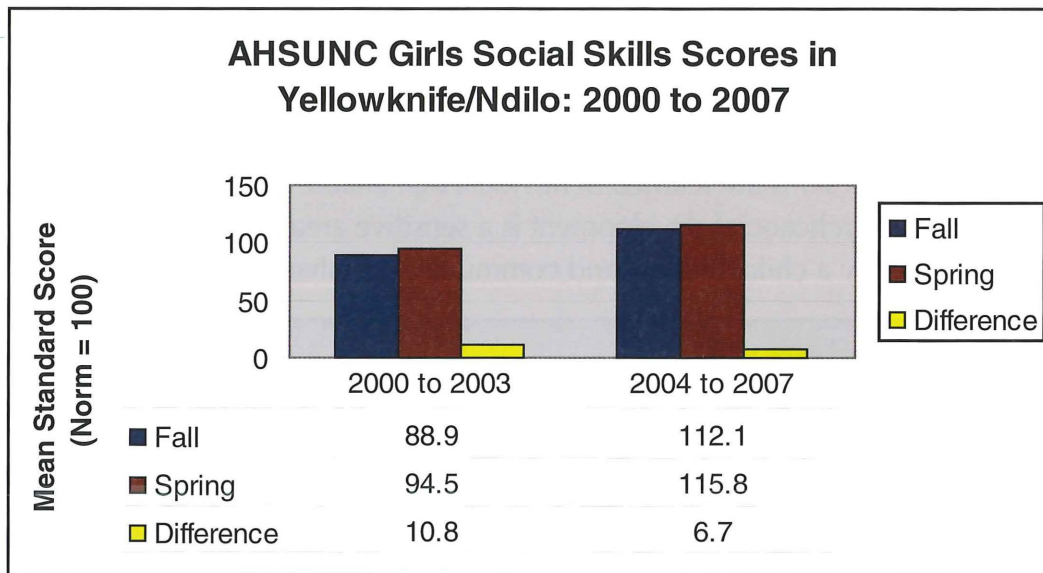


Exhibit 5.14

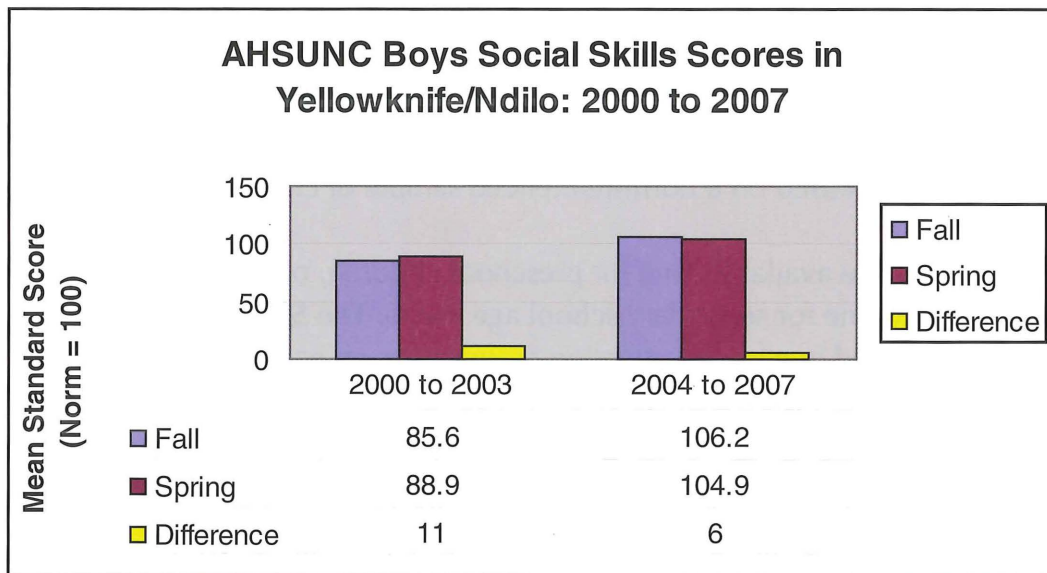


Exhibit 5.15 outlines the descriptive statistics for the SSRS for the cohorts of AHSUNC girls and boys from 2000 to 2003 and 2004 to 2007. Statistical comparisons reveal that the fall and spring comparisons of prosocial skills for girls and boys are minimally increased, and do not reach levels of statistical significance. The comparisons of SSRS for both boys and girls, do reveal positive trends in prosocial skill development, with pre-test levels maintained.

**Exhibit 5.15**  
**Social Skills for Yellowknife/Ndilo AHSUNC Girls and Boys**

Years	N	Fall Pre-test		Spring Post-test		t-test	p-value
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
<b>2000 to 2003</b>							
Girls	43	88.9	21.2	94.5	9.7	1.3	ns
Boys	44	85.6	20.3	88.8	16.4	0.8	ns
<b>2004 to 2007</b>							
Girls	55	112.1	16.2	115.8	16.3	1.2	ns
Boys	50	106.2	16.3	104.9	15.8	0.4	ns
<b>2000 to 2007</b>							
Girls	98	101.9	21.0	106.5	17.9	1.5	ns
Boys	94	96.5	21.8	97.4	20.3	0.3	ns

*ns-not statistically significant*

Although not shown in Exhibit 5.15, AHSUNC girls and boys who had fewer prosocial skills in the fall of both timeline comparisons, made the highest gains in the spring. As in previous school readiness results for Yellowknife/Ndilo, there was great diversity in results across the spectrum of prosocial skill development.

*Girls Have Higher Social Skills than Boys in Yellowknife/Ndilo*

The SSRS teacher scale assesses the levels of cooperation, assertion and self-control. As such, it is possible that differences will be found between AHSUNC girls and boys in Yellowknife/Ndilo. In the first round of evaluation in 2000-2001, AHSUNC girls across six NWT AHS programs were found to have social skills in the low average range, with AHSUNC boys scoring in the average percentile range, when compared to a norm-referenced group (NWT AHS, 2007).

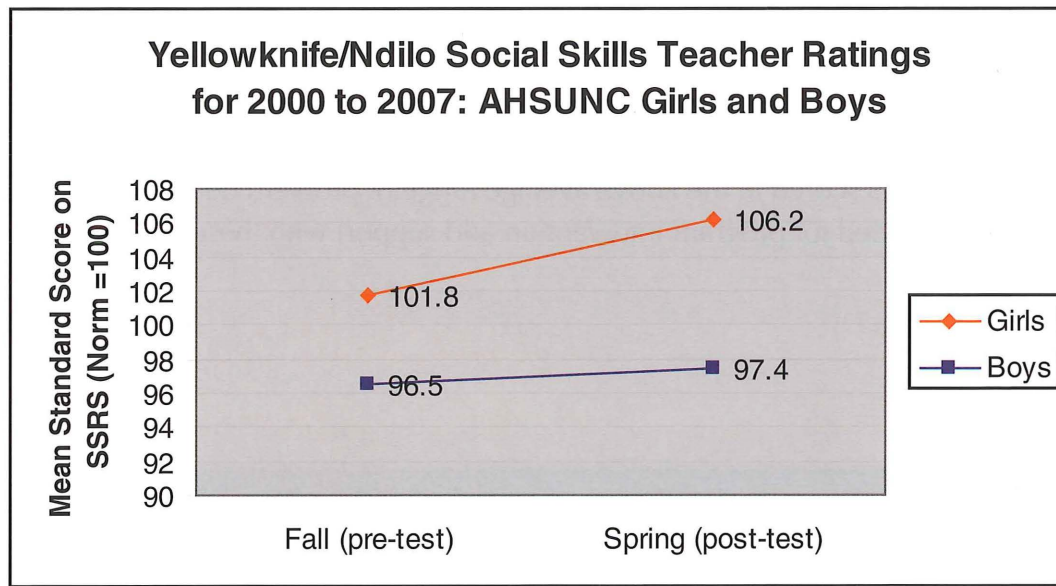


When combining AHSUNC SSRS results across several years, the results reflected positive improvements for AHSUNC girls (Exhibit 5.16).

The mean standard score on the SSRS for girls was 101.8 ( $n = 96$ ,  $SD = 21.9$ ) in the fall, and was 106.2 ( $n = 96$ ,  $SD = 20.4$ ) in the spring. The mean standard score for AHSUNC boys in the fall was 96.5 ( $n = 94$ ,  $SD = 20.9$ ) and in the spring was 97.4 ( $n = 94$ ,  $SD = 18$ ). The difference between the Yellowknife/Ndilo boys and girls was statistically significant in the fall,  $p < .05$ , and in the spring,  $p < .001$ .



## Exhibit 5.16



*AHSUNC Girls and Boys Showed Average Internalizing/Externalizing Behaviours*

The SSRS teacher scale has an additional measure that assesses internalizing and externalizing behaviours, otherwise known as problem behaviour. A certain level of poor control, fidgeting and attention issues is expected for preschool age children, as they are learning ways of interacting and using language for problem solving (Gresham & Elliott, 1990). The Problem Behaviour Scale assesses levels of these behaviours that are out of the range of average preschool age children.

Overall, the results in Yellowknife/Ndilo from 2000 to 2007 reveal average levels of problem behaviour for both AHSUNC girls (23<sup>rd</sup> to 47<sup>th</sup> Percentile Rank) and boys (30<sup>th</sup> to 50<sup>th</sup> Percentile Rank) when compared to a norm-referenced group of preschool children. These findings are consistent with the prosocial skills data, as discussed in the last section.

There was little change in the problem behaviour scores from the fall (pre-test) to the spring (post-test) for all AHSUNC program years, from 2000 to 2007. The number of AHSUNC children in Yellowknife/Ndilo that scored in the above average range of problem behaviours was small but consistent from the fall to the spring for all program years. Overall, 7% of AHSUNC girls and 12% of AHSUNC boys scored in the above average range of problem behaviours and indicate the need for program intervention and support with these children.



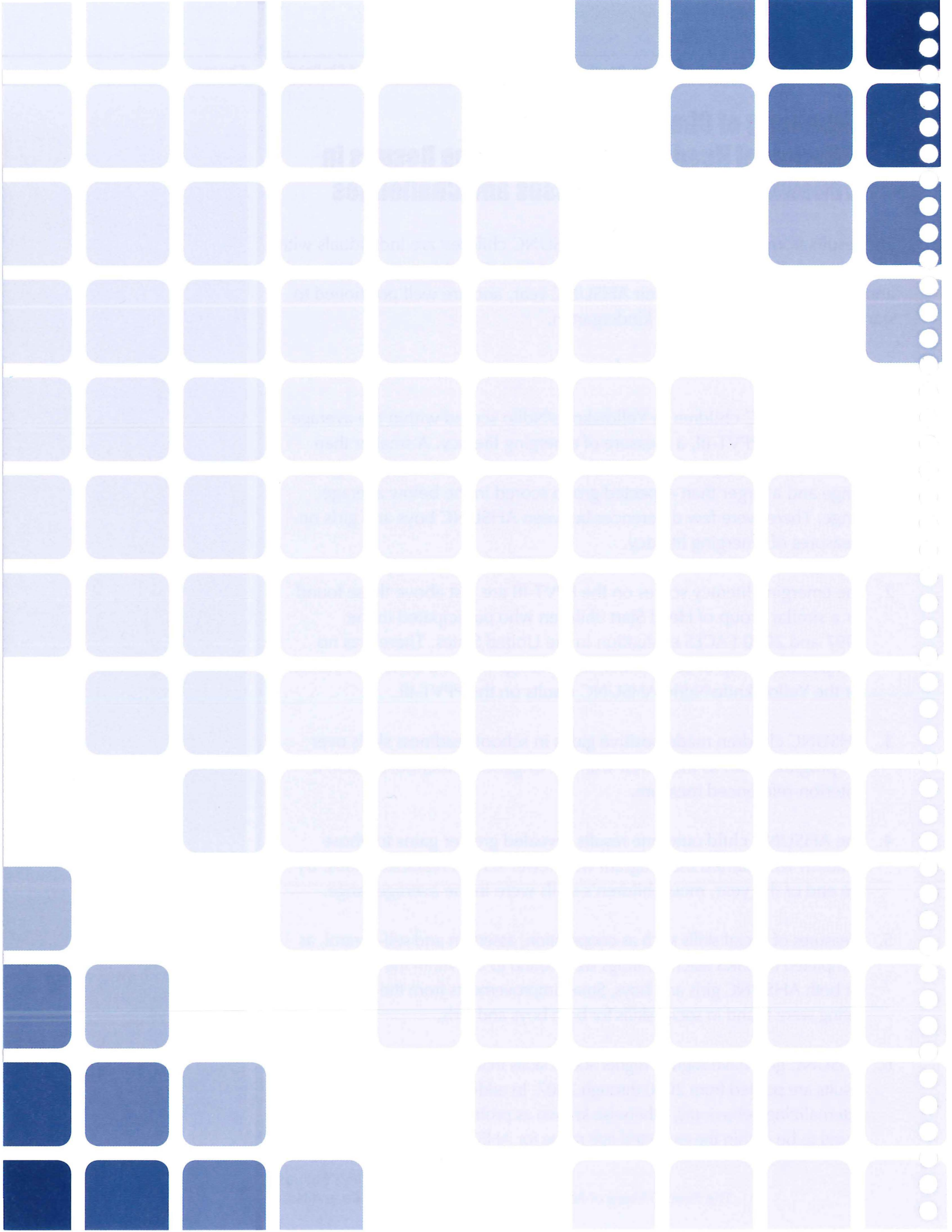
## 5.9 Summary of Chapter 5

### Aboriginal Head Start Child Outcome Results in Yellowknife/Ndilo- Successes and Challenges

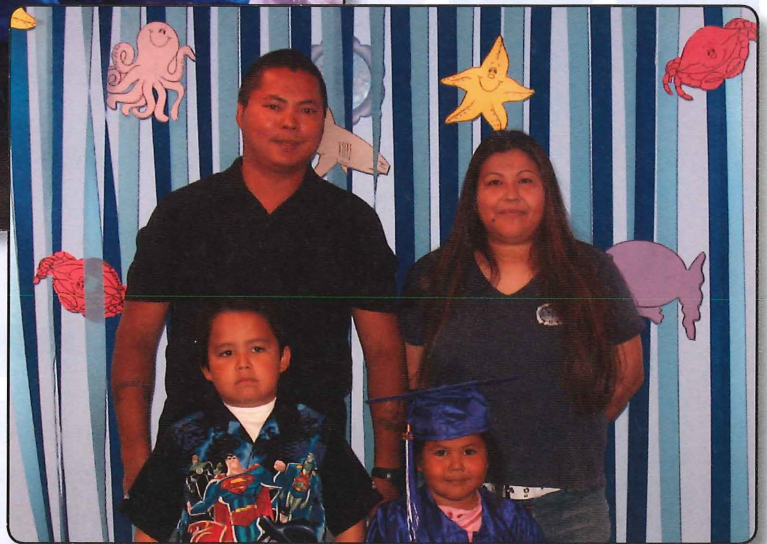
The results from Chapter 5 reveal that AHSUNC children are individuals with diverse strengths and challenges. Overall, AHSUNC children gained literacy and social skills throughout their AHSUNC year, and are well positioned to start their school education in kindergarten.

#### *Highlights of Child Outcome Results*

1. Most AHSUNC children in Yellowknife/Ndilo scored within the average range on the PPVT-III, a measure of emerging literacy. A smaller than expected number of AHSUNC children scored in the above average range and a larger than expected group scored in the below average range. There were few differences between AHSUNC boys and girls on measures of emerging literacy.
2. The emerging literacy scores on the PPVT-III are just above those found for a similar group of Head Start children who participated in the 1997 and 2000 FACES evaluation in the United States. There was no comparable group of early childhood findings within a Canadian context for the Yellowknife/Ndilo AHSUNC results on the PPVT-III.
3. AHSUNC children made positive gains in school readiness skills over the program year, as measured with the Brigance Preschool Screen, a criterion-referenced measure.
4. The AHSUNC child outcome results revealed greater gains for those children who started the program with fewer school readiness skills. By the end of the year, most children's skills were in the average range.
5. Measures of social skills such as cooperation, assertion and self-control, as completed by SSRS teacher ratings were found to be within the average range for both AHSUNC girls and boys. Small improvements from the fall to the spring were found in social skills for both boys and girls.
6. AHSUNC girls have slightly higher social skills than AHSUNC boys when results are pooled from 2000 through 2007. In addition, internalizing and externalizing behaviours, otherwise known as problem behaviour, were found to be within the expected age range for AHSUNC girls and boys.



# Chapter 6



**Yellowknife/Ndilo Aboriginal  
Head Start Parents and  
Community - Proud and  
Empowered**

This chapter presents the evaluation questions and findings of the Yellowknife/Ndilo AHSUNC parent survey from 2000 to 2007.

The term parent will be used in this chapter to describe the person who completed the survey and has responsibility for the AHSUNC child; this could be a guardian, extended family, foster parent or other person caring for the child.

## 6.1 Evaluation Questions for Chapter 6

1. How important is it to you and your family for your children to learn about their culture, language and traditions in the AHSUNC program in Yellowknife/Ndilo?
2. What are the strengths of the AHSUNC program and what part of the program would you change?
3. What do parents think of their children's school readiness and social skills development at the end of the AHSUNC program year?
4. How satisfied are the parents with the AHSUNC program in Yellowknife/Ndilo?

## 6.2 Parent Survey Demographics

All AHSUNC parents from 2000 to 2007 had the opportunity to participate in the parent surveys. The parent surveys were completed at the end of the program year in Yellowknife/Ndilo on an individual basis. Participation was voluntary and was done with the assistance of a local fieldworker.

In the surveys, parents identified as being First Nations, Métis and/or Inuit, and a few as non-aboriginal. Those identifying as non-aboriginal had other people in the home that were responsible for the AHSUNC child, and they identified with First Nations, Métis or Inuit ancestry.

The participation rates in the parent survey are outlined in Exhibit 6.1. Overall, 79% of AHSUNC parents in Yellowknife/Ndilo completed the parent survey.

## Exhibit 6.1

### Participation of AHSUNC Parents in the Survey

	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	Total
Surveyed	30	29	25	35	22	20	16	184
Total Possible Surveyed	32	32	33	35	36	32	32	232
<b>Total %</b>	<b>94%</b>	<b>90%</b>	<b>76%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>61%</b>	<b>63%</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>79%</b>

The parents were all living in Yellowknife/Ndilo at the time of the survey, and most spoke English as their primary language and may or may not speak a traditional Aboriginal language. As Yellowknife is the capital of the NWT, many different culture and language groups are represented through the AHSUNC parent surveys. The following culture and language groups were cited on the surveys from 2000 through 2007: Dogrib, North Slavey, South Slavey, Cree, Chipewyan, French, Inuvialuktun and Inuktitut.

## Further Information

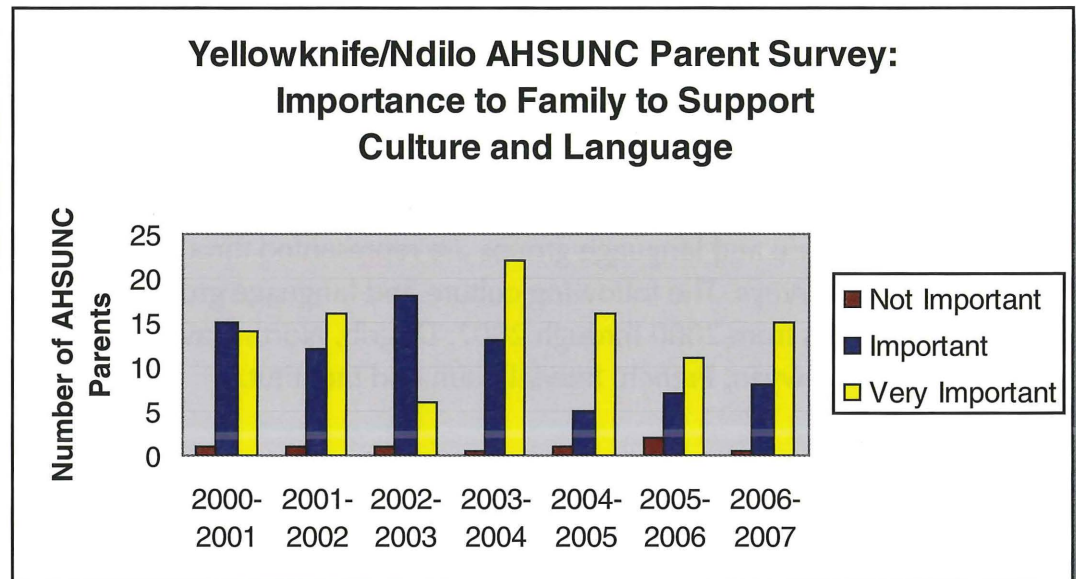
### The Legacy of AHSUNC for Parents

The greatest gift Aboriginal Head Start gives a family is hope. Families leave the program with a belief in a rewarding future, confidence and an awareness of their strength and value as Aboriginal persons. The AHSUNC program helps parents recognize their role as their children's first teachers. AHSUNC believes in parents and their ability to raise families with cultural pride, esteem and identity. Aboriginal Head Start is part of a movement to build community (Sones, 2002).

## 6.3 Culture and Language is Important to AHSUNC Parents and Families

The survey asked AHSUNC parents about the role of culture and language in their family and their children's learning in the AHSUNC program. Exhibit 6.2 provides a breakdown of how important it is to parents to support one's culture and language. The results indicated that it is important for most AHSUNC parents in Yellowknife/Ndilo to support their own culture and language.

Exhibit 6.2



*n* = 184 parents

For some parents, it is hard to teach their traditional language, as they may not have a good comfort level with their own Aboriginal language skills. For other AHSUNC parents, cultural activities such as traditional games, on-the-land camps and drum events are more important than supporting the use of a traditional Aboriginal language.

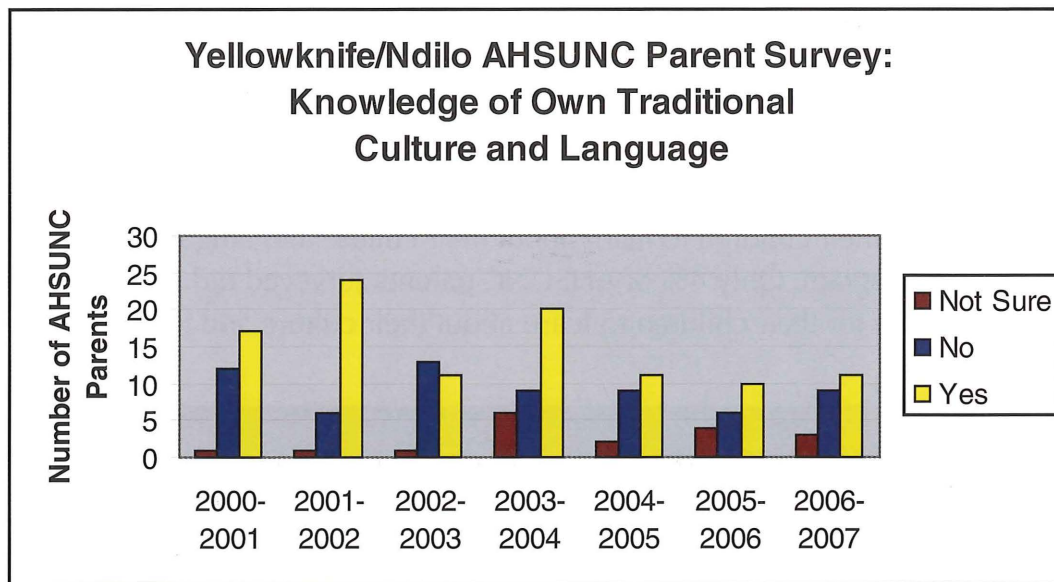


## 6.4 Parents' Knowledge of Their Own Traditional Culture and Language

AHSUNC parents want their children to learn their traditional language, even if they do not speak the language at home. Approximately 57% of the parents surveyed feel they know enough about their own traditional culture and language in order to support their children at home (Exhibit 6.3).

32% of the parents surveyed do not report knowing enough about their culture and language, and 11% of the parents reported that they were unsure. There were fewer parents in the 2004 to 2007 AHSUNC years that reported knowing their own culture and language, as compared to the earlier AHSUNC program years from 2000 to 2004 (Exhibit 6.3).

Exhibit 6.3



n= 166 parents

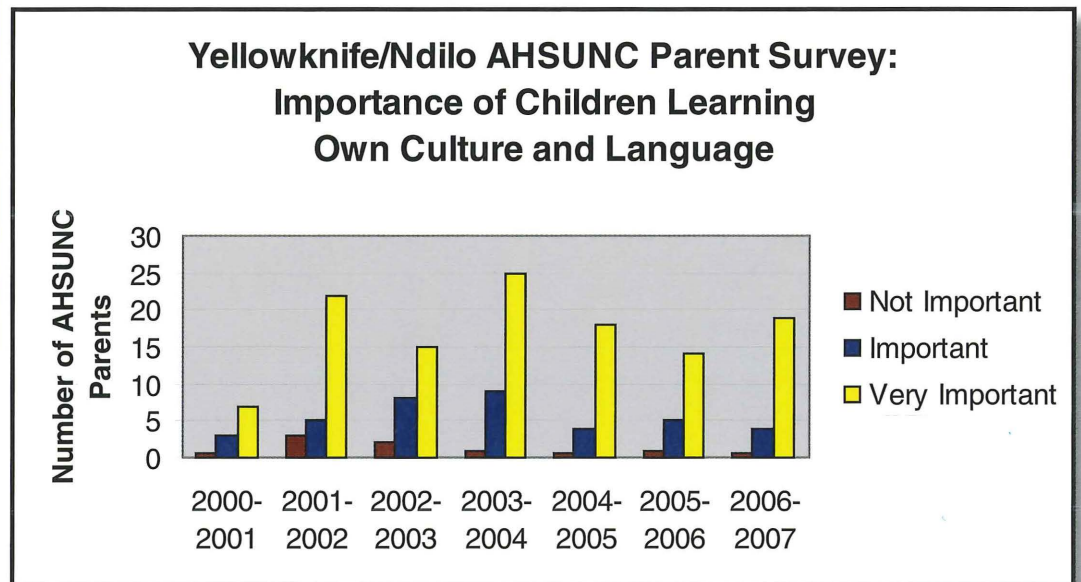
"I send my son to the Head Start program because of the culture and language teaching."

AHSUNC Parent  
in Yellowknife/  
Ndilo

## 6.5 Parents Want Their Children to Learn About Culture and Language

Exhibit 6.4 provides the breakdown of the beliefs of parents of the importance for their children, to learn about culture, language and traditions.

Exhibit 6.4



*n* = 166 parents

Approximately 96% of parents surveyed from 2000 to 2007 reported that it is important for their children to learn about their culture and language in the Head Start program. Only 4% of AHSUNC parents surveyed did not feel it was important for their children to learn about their culture and language.



When parents were asked to provide comments regarding the culture and language content in the AHSUNC program in Yellowknife/Ndilo, approximately 64% of parents surveyed expressed specific comments for ongoing culture and language instruction in the program.

Furthermore, the Yellowknife/Ndilo program faces a challenge in meeting the diverse culture and language needs of their children and families. The parent surveys revealed eight different language groups among the children and their families. Several parent comments included good satisfaction with learning about different cultures, and others wanted their Aboriginal language to be the only language of instruction. Previous evaluation reports have highlighted this challenge to meet the diverse language and cultural needs of children and families in Yellowknife and Ndilo.



“As parents,  
we have lost  
our culture,  
I do not  
want this to  
happen to  
my kids.”

*AHSUNC Parent  
in Yellowknife/  
Ndilo*

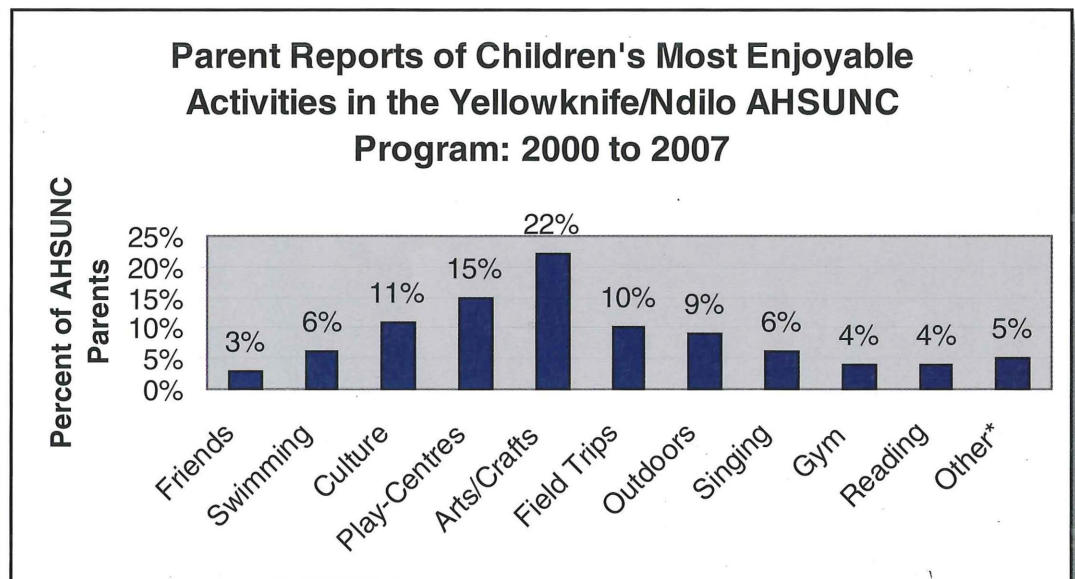
## 6.6 Parents' Belief about Program Strengths and Areas for Development

Parents were asked what activities their children enjoyed at the Yellowknife/Ndilo AHSUNC program. The survey question was open-ended, that is, each parent was free to name any activity their child enjoyed.

A total of 468 most enjoyable children's ratings were provided from the parent surveys from 2000 to 2007, which can be grouped into 30 different areas. The Yellowknife/Ndilo AHSUNC program reveals many of its program strengths, as previously reported in Chapter 4 on program results and classroom quality, through this feedback from AHSUNC parents.

The most enjoyable AHSUNC children's activities, as reported by AHSUNC parents, are shown in Exhibit 6.5.

**Exhibit 6.5**



*n* = 184 parents

\* Other- includes writing, snack time, helping out, movies, dancing, drumming, computers, bus rides, counting, weather chart, class discussions, sewing, games, show and tell.



The parent surveys from 2000 through 2007 provided suggestions for program improvement in two areas: (1) program structure and (2) program content.

(1) AHSUNC parent suggestions for program structure:

- Run the program from Monday to Friday
- Include more outdoor activities and field trips
- Have the children attend when they are younger
- Full day programs, if possible
- Bus service for kindergarten
- More teaching of traditional languages

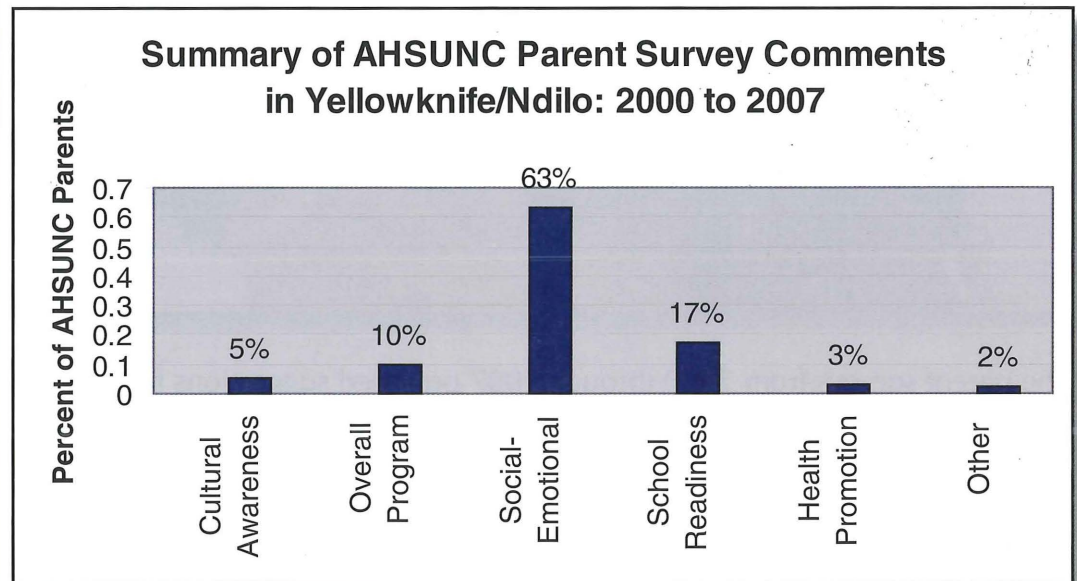
(2) AHSUNC parent suggestions for program content:

- More time in play centres
- Funding for more staff to work with the children
- Student and teacher follow-up out of school
- Parent meetings at different times
- More emphasis on literacy and numeracy skills
- More exposure to different cultures

## 6.7 Parents' Perception of Children's School Readiness and Social Skills

Exhibit 6.6 provides a summary of the general comments made by AHSUNC parents at the end of the AHSUNC year. A total of 58 additional comments were made regarding the AHSUNC program, and were focused in six general areas. Of interest, 63% of the general comments were about the improvements in their children's social-emotional development, followed next by 17% of comments concerning readiness for school.

**Exhibit 6.6**



*n* = 184 parents

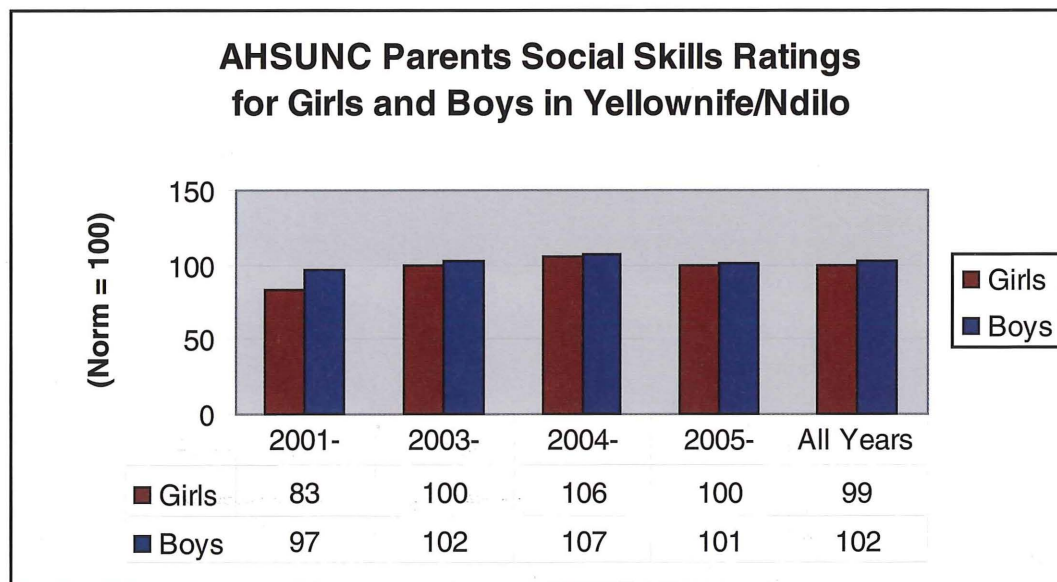
Also, AHSUNC parents have a good understanding of the AHSUNC approach to learning for children, in that the terms used in the open-ended questions reflected a child-centered approach and learning through play. Although not measured directly, the consistent use of these learning concepts and terms by AHSUNC parents are indicative of an appreciation and confirmation of the approach to “learning through play” that is used in Yellowknife/Ndilo.

## Further Information Learning Through Play

Play helps children find new ways of dealing with everyday life. As children play from all cultures around the world, they explore the properties of things and extract information about their environment. Children imitate, recreate and rehearse roles that help them understand and solve problems related to everyday life. They form relationships, share, cooperate, master their emotions, extend the range of their experience, test ideas and form associations between things, events and concepts. When children are more active in their play, they find learning easier (Shipley, 1998).

Exhibit 6.7 provides the AHSUNC parent ratings on the SSRS (Gresham & Elliott, 1990). These ratings were completed by AHSUNC parents from 2001 through 2006, and were completed on a voluntary basis with the fieldworker. The SSRS-Parent form asks parents to describe the frequency of their children’s social skills including cooperation, assertion, responsibility and self-control.

**Exhibit 6.7**



AHSUNC Girls- *n* = 38

AHSUNC Boys- *n* = 34

The Social Skills results from the AHSUNC parents indicate that most parents rated their children within the average range of prosocial skills. There was no significant difference between the Social Skills ratings for AHSUNC boys in comparison to girls;  $t(34) = 1.1, p = .15$

“Thanks to Head Start, my child is more responsible, therefore I do not worry about him as much.”

*AHSUNC Parent in Yellowknife/Ndilo*

## 6.8 Parents Approve of the AHSUNC Program in Yellowknife/Ndilo

AHSUNC parents agreed consistently from year to year, that they were satisfied with the AHSUNC program in Yellowknife/Ndilo. 97% of AHSUNC parents reported that they were satisfied with the program from 2000 through 2007.

The most consistent program satisfaction comments from the 2000 to 2007 AHSUNC parent surveys were as follows:

- Excellent setting and program;
- Satisfied with the curriculum and inclusion of Aboriginal teachers;
- Well organized and friendly staff;
- More than satisfied with the program;
- Impressed with traditional language teaching;
- Children really enjoy the program;
- Incorporation of culture is good.

Overall, satisfaction with the AHSUNC program is high in Yellowknife/Ndilo, as reported by the parents from 2000 through 2007.

“Keep up the good work, I’m glad my child is part of this wonderful program.”

*AHSUNC Parent  
in Yellowknife/  
Ndilo*





## 6.9 Summary of Chapter 6

### Yellowknife/Ndilo AHSUNC Parents and Community

The results from Chapter 6 reveal that AHSUNC parents participated in the survey process at a high rate, and are interested in what their children are doing in the program. Overall, parents are satisfied with the program, and are very much in support of culture and language teaching.

#### *Highlights of Parent Survey Results*

1. 79% of AHSUNC parents and guardians participated in the end of the year program survey in Yellowknife/Ndilo 2000 through 2007. Most of the AHSUNC parents speak English in the home, and may or may not speak a traditional Aboriginal language.
2. There were eight different culture and language groups represented in the parent surveys from 2000 through 2007 including: Dogrib, North Slavey, South Slavey, Cree, Chipewyan, French, Inuvialuktun and Inuktitut.
3. It is important for most AHSUNC parents to support their own culture and language with their young children. Furthermore, 57% of AHSUNC parents surveyed feel they knew enough about their own culture and language to support their child at home. Whereas 43% reported they were unsure or did not know about their culture to provide support at home.
4. 96% of AHSUNC parents want their children to learn their traditional culture and language in the program in Yellowknife/Ndilo. As well, many AHSUNC parents want their children to learn about other cultures. The Yellowknife/Ndilo program has been faced with a challenge to meet the culture and language needs of their children and families, as there are often more than four different culture and language groups represented in the children attending the program each year.
5. According to the AHSUNC parent surveys, the children enjoy a variety of program activities; the most frequent activities cited in the survey are arts and crafts, play-centres, field trips, playing outdoors, cultural activities, swimming, singing, playing in the gym, being with friends and reading.
6. Suggestions for program improvements include running the program longer, including more outdoor activities and field trips, having a three-year-old program and more teaching of traditional Aboriginal languages.

7. AHSUNC parents reported improvements in their children's social-emotional development as standing out the most, of all possible areas of improvement in their children at the end of the year.
8. Social skills results from the AHSUNC parents indicated that parents rated their children's prosocial skill development within the average range. Parents were asked to describe the frequency of their children's social skills including cooperation, assertion, responsibility and self-control.



# Chapter 7



**Discussion-**  
**What Do These Results Mean?**

The results, as presented in this publication, highlight the commitment of the Yellowknife/Ndilo AHSUNC to program accountability, independent evaluation, self-reflection and program growth to meet the challenge of supporting Aboriginal children and their families.

The following discussion will integrate the results from the evaluation work completed from 2000 to 2007 and provide a context for these findings within early childhood research. The discussion in this chapter is intended to be brief and for further information the reader can consult the list of references.

## 7.1 Chosen Methodology

The methodology used with the AHSUNC Yellowknife/Ndilo program from 2000 through 2007 was designed and implemented through a partnership of the AHSUNC program staff and multicultural practitioners familiar with the Aboriginal Head Start (AHS) movement in Canada. Since the start of AHS in 1995 across Canada, there have been evaluation initiatives that describe and narrate the impact of this culture-specific early childhood program.

In 2000, the Western Arctic Aboriginal Head Start Council (WAAHSC) took an approach of seeking out a methodology that would meet the needs of its programs and provide evidence of accountability to its stakeholders, including AHSUNC parents and communities.

The use of a participatory action evaluation approach and measures that have quantifiable results was a novel approach to evaluation with AHSUNC in 2000. Furthermore, this approach was consistent with the intentions of the NWT AHSUNC programs to find out what is working in their programs, and how the children and parents are doing. The Yellowknife/Ndilo AHSUNC program continued with the AHSUNC methodology for seven consecutive years.

The choice of standardized evaluation measurements in the AHSUNC program in Yellowknife/Ndilo was agreed upon by the WAAHSC for a number of reasons. One main reason for the use of these measures is based on the premise that culture-bound instruments with sound psychometric properties in the hands of multicultural practitioners are preferred over culture-free instruments with limited psychometric properties (Ponterotto & Alexander, 1996).

"My daughter is more social, sings more and likes to write."

*AHSUNC Parent  
in Yellowknife/  
Ndilo*

The methods used with AHSUNC in Yellowknife/Ndilo have provided a clear basis for collaborative approaches between evaluation personnel and AHSUNC staff and parents. These collaborative approaches have been beneficial to the Yellowknife/Ndilo AHSUNC program in providing quantitative and descriptive information of program strengths and areas for ongoing program enhancement.

## 7.2 AHSUNC Program Quality

Program quality is the foundation of early childhood programs and a determinant of program effectiveness, child-outcomes and program accountability.

The Yellowknife/Ndilo program has demonstrated a consistent pattern of good levels of program quality, as seen on the classroom quality measures from 2000 through 2007. The consistency in classroom quality was seen across several areas of their AHSUNC program, with strengths in culture and diversity, health and safety promotion, variety of learning materials and staff support.

The Yellowknife/Ndilo program quality scores were highest among other AHSUNC programs in the NWT, as well as higher than other comparable early childhood programs across North America. Classroom quality was and remains the Yellowknife/Ndilo AHSUNC program's greatest strength.

"She is learning she can't always have her own way, and is learning to share and express her feelings."

AHSUNC Parent  
in Yellowknife/  
Ndilo

## Further Information

### What is a High Quality Program?

There is no perfect early childhood classroom. However, a program that is based on the learning and developmental needs of its target group, is the ideal program. Several areas of program quality have been found to contribute large benefits for children and are listed below (Ramey & Ramey, 1998):

- Programs with an emphasis on education and language development, which could include instruction of one or two different languages;
- Well-developed curriculum and resources for teacher development;
- Clear direction and philosophy of the program's early childhood approach;
- Applicable developmental timing, and program duration and intensity- attending early intervention programs for two or more years, year-round and five day a week programs;
- Supports for parents, community members and other community supports to maintain children's gains, and continue to encourage and support lifelong learning and healthy living;
- Program that supports the individual differences of children, including language and culture, special needs and other social-emotional factors;
- Children and parents who participate the most, that is actively and regularly, are the ones who show the greatest developmental progress.

The Yellowknife/Ndilo AHSUNC program has many of the high quality program characteristics. Areas for ongoing program improvement include further development of literacy and language activities, supporting the individual learning needs of AHSUNC children that attend the program and working with stakeholders to address the need for resources to develop applicable curriculum materials and address ongoing program stability issues.

### *Physical Health and AHSUNC- An Emerging Program Area*

There is an increasing concern for the physical health of Canadian children, including Aboriginal children (Health Canada, 2007). The AHSUNC program has two program areas that focus on health, and include health promotion and nutrition. The Yellowknife/Ndilo AHSUNC program has made improvements in the last seven years in these areas, according to program quality measures.

Further attention to physical recreation and quality nutrition programming is possible. As well, the incorporation of traditional foods on a regular basis is consistent with healthy eating and supports culture-based learning.



## 7.3 Child Results- School Readiness and Social-Emotional Development

In the Yellowknife/Ndilo AHSUNC program, school readiness is a key outcome of the program, and includes the social, emotional, spiritual and intellectual growth of the child. Each and every day, the program emphasizes a wide variety of learning and growth experiences that support each child's readiness for school. The AHSUNC program in Yellowknife/Ndilo includes literacy activities, social-emotional learning and physical and cultural activities that form a "whole-child" early intervention program. This approach is consistent with the principles and guidelines of the AHSUNC program, and recent models of learning for First Nations, Inuit and Métis children (Canadian Council on Learning, 2007).

Two areas of school readiness were monitored for each AHSUNC group of children from 2000 through 2007. The first area was emerging literacy (knowledge/skills in language use and concepts of numbers) and the second area of measurement was social skills development.

It is important to recognize that these measures provided a glance at each group of AHSUNC children's skills and readiness for school, and do not reflect a complete picture of all developmental and social-emotional learning that has occurred for these young children in Yellowknife/Ndilo.

### *Emerging Literacy- Knowledge and Skills*

Emerging literacy incorporates the cultural and social aspects of language learning and early math skills, and children's experiences with an understanding about written language, both reading and writing. Young children that attend early intervention programs, like AHSUNC in Yellowknife/Ndilo, learn the functions of literacy through observation and participating in real-life settings in which reading and writing are used. It has been established that knowledge and skill problems at an early age do predict future school problems (Barnett, 1995).

Many studies have proven quite consistently over the years, that attending preschool programs can mean the difference between failing and passing, regular or special education, staying out of trouble and graduating from high school (Barnett, 1995; Ramey & Ramey, 1998; Duncan, et al., 2007).

The results from the Yellowknife/Ndilo AHSUNC evaluations reveal improvement from the fall to the spring and average levels of receptive vocabulary, an



indication of emerging literacy. These results indicate the Yellowknife/Ndilo AHSUNC program's commitment to learning and school readiness. As well, the diversity of scores found in the Yellowknife/Ndilo AHSUNC children's Brigance and PPVT-III results provide an indication of the range of skills that AHSUNC children are achieving. There is a group of AHSUNC children in Yellowknife/Ndilo that are functioning below average levels, and it is these children that were able to make the greatest gains throughout their AHSUNC year. Of interest, there are AHSUNC children who have school readiness skills that are above average levels.



"All in all,  
his skills  
have been  
developed  
and he is  
ready for  
kindergarten."

*AHSUNC Parent in  
Yellowknife/Ndilo*

The Yellowknife/Ndilo AHSUNC program is meeting its goal of addressing school readiness, and is well positioned to enhance program areas that would further support literacy and math skills. In addressing even minor delays in school readiness, it is possible to positively influence the health and well-being of children in Yellowknife/Ndilo.

*Social Skills Development: A Priority for AHSUNC in Yellowknife/Ndilo*

Social skills begin and strengthen through positive interactions with other people, including sharing, cooperating and comforting others. Psychosocial development is important for every child, as these culture-specific skills allow a child to interact in the social world and to develop healthy relationships (Gresham & Elliott, 1990).

Deficiencies in social skills have been related to poor school performance, social maladjustment, peer rejection and mental health problems (Kupersmidt, & Dodge, 2004). Aggressive behaviour has been found to develop from an early age and to crystallize or become embedded within a person at around eight years of age. Therefore, programs to reduce and prevent inappropriate aggression through prosocial skills development need to be implemented long before the middle school years, and preferably, in the preschool years.

“ His behaviour has improved a lot and he is interacting with other students and adults.”

AHSUNC Parent  
in Yellowknife/  
Ndilo



The social skills results from the Yellowknife/Ndilo program have identified this area of early childhood programming to be a priority for AHSUNC teachers and parents. Program quality measures indicated positive improvements in areas that address social skills development in young children, such as improvements in child-centre learning, enrichment of dramatic play opportunities, attention to staff interaction and language use with the young AHSUNC children.

On measures of social skills (cooperation, assertion and self-control), the teacher and parent ratings were found to be within the average range for both AHSUNC girls and boys. Small improvements from the fall to the spring were found in social skills for both boys and girls. AHSUNC girls have slightly higher social skills than AHSUNC boys when results were pooled from 2000 through 2007.

Overall, the emphasis on social skills in the AHSUNC program, including the evaluation of prosocial skills, is developmentally appropriate and highly relevant in addressing the psychosocial development of AHSUNC children in Yellowknife/Ndilo. Furthermore, the Yellowknife/Ndilo program is implementing a prevention focus for aggression and problem behaviour in young children through programming that focuses on social skill development.

#### *AHSUNC Providing Social-Emotional Support to Succeed*

It has been found that children's cognitive and school readiness scores have improved due to motivational factors following participation in early intervention programs, such as Head Start (Ziegler, 1968). There are misconceptions that disadvantaged children lack the intellectual abilities of their advantaged peers. It has been identified long ago, and continues to be shown that the differences between the advantaged and disadvantaged, is a matter of optimal intellectual performance, and less so differences in cognitive abilities (Ziegler, 1968; Barnett, 1995).

The Yellowknife/Ndilo results are consistent with the general findings that Aboriginal children are at-risk, and certainly are in need of program supports to address delays, and perhaps to address social-emotional impediments that interfere with these children reaching their full potential.

### **Further Information**

#### **Positive Impact of Early Intervention Programs**

The evidence accumulated over the past 25 years in North America indicates that early intervention programs can produce modest to large effects (effect sizes of over one standard deviation) on children's cognitive and social development.

Larger effect sizes have been associated with improved performance later in school, particularly when the early childhood programs are of good quality. These findings have come about from early intervention programs that are characterized by intensive, high-quality programs and the use of rigorous research designs (Ramey & Ramey, 1998).

## 7.4 Parent Survey Results

The AHSUNC children from Yellowknife/Ndilo come to the program with their excitement, enthusiasm and openness. Much learning has already come before they enter the AHSUNC program, as the first years of life lay the groundwork for all future learning; it is parents, families and communities that have provided that foundation.

As such, the inclusion of a parent survey and Social Skills ratings by AHSUNC parents provides evidence of the Yellowknife/Ndilo program's commitment to feedback and input from its parents.

The parent surveys reveal great satisfaction with the AHSUNC program in Yellowknife/Ndilo, and findings that support the program's emphasis on traditional Aboriginal culture and language. This overwhelming support for the teaching of language and culture is also a challenge for the AHSUNC staff in Yellowknife/Ndilo, as several different Aboriginal language groups are represented in any one year among the AHSUNC children and families.

The role of parents and community in early childhood programs is well established and parental involvement has been found to benefit children throughout their development. The AHSUNC parent surveys reveal interest in the well-being and early education of their children. Furthermore, encouraging ongoing parent involvement in AHSUNC children's early development and school years is important because involvement is something that can be altered.



## 7.5 AHSUNC Girls and Boys: Few Differences

Parents, educators and researchers, including Aboriginal communities, have observed differences in the behaviour, learning styles and interests of girls and boys. We parent, teach and support our girls and boys differently, and this is done for different reasons and is supported by extensive literature around the world (Marcon, 1999; Gresham & Elliott, 1990).

Gender differences were indirectly evaluated in the 2000 to 2007 evaluation with AHSUNC children. There were few differences in skills and knowledge for AHSUNC boys and girls, but there were differences in the social skills ratings.

In the first two years of AHSUNC evaluation, from 2000 to 2002, the social skills ratings for girls were found to be less than expected and were a concern for the program staff. Program improvements were made to various child centres in Yellowknife/Ndilo such as dramatic play and more opportunities for verbal interactions among the children. It appears in part that these program changes impacted changes in social skills for AHSUNC girls.



"AHSUNC taught my child lots about his culture and helped prepare him for kindergarten; he helps his mom, dad and brothers."

AHSUNC Parent in Yellowknife/Ndilo

## 7.6 AHSUNC Areas for Further Consideration in Yellowknife/Ndilo

The AHSUNC evaluation studies from 2000 through 2007 have provided much information and guidance for program areas that require further program enhancements and focus. However, several areas of inquiry could not be reviewed from the evaluation data, as sufficient resources did not allow this analysis and work to be completed. Areas of inquiry not addressed in the 2000 through 2007 AHSUNC evaluation in Yellowknife/Ndilo include:

- What was the influence of program attendance, including number of days attended and child outcome measures such as the PPVT-III?
- What was the influence of parent and family factors such as socio-economics, family composition and siblings that have attended AHSUNC?
- What was the influence of teacher factors and child outcome measures?
- What was the influence of special needs and child outcome measures?
- What was the influence of extra staffing for children with identified needs?
- What was the relationship between social skills, child outcome measures and problem behaviour?
- What was the influence of the change of location of the AHSUNC program from the Ndilo community setting to a Yellowknife school setting?

“He started out very behind the others and now his speech has improved by playing with others.”

*AHSUNC Parent  
in Yellowknife/  
Ndilo*

In terms of addressing children with special needs in the AHSUNC program, there are no additional financial supports provided by the Public Health Agency of Canada. This is an area of concern for the AHSUNC staff in Yellowknife/Ndilo, as children with special needs require additional staffing and program intervention supports.

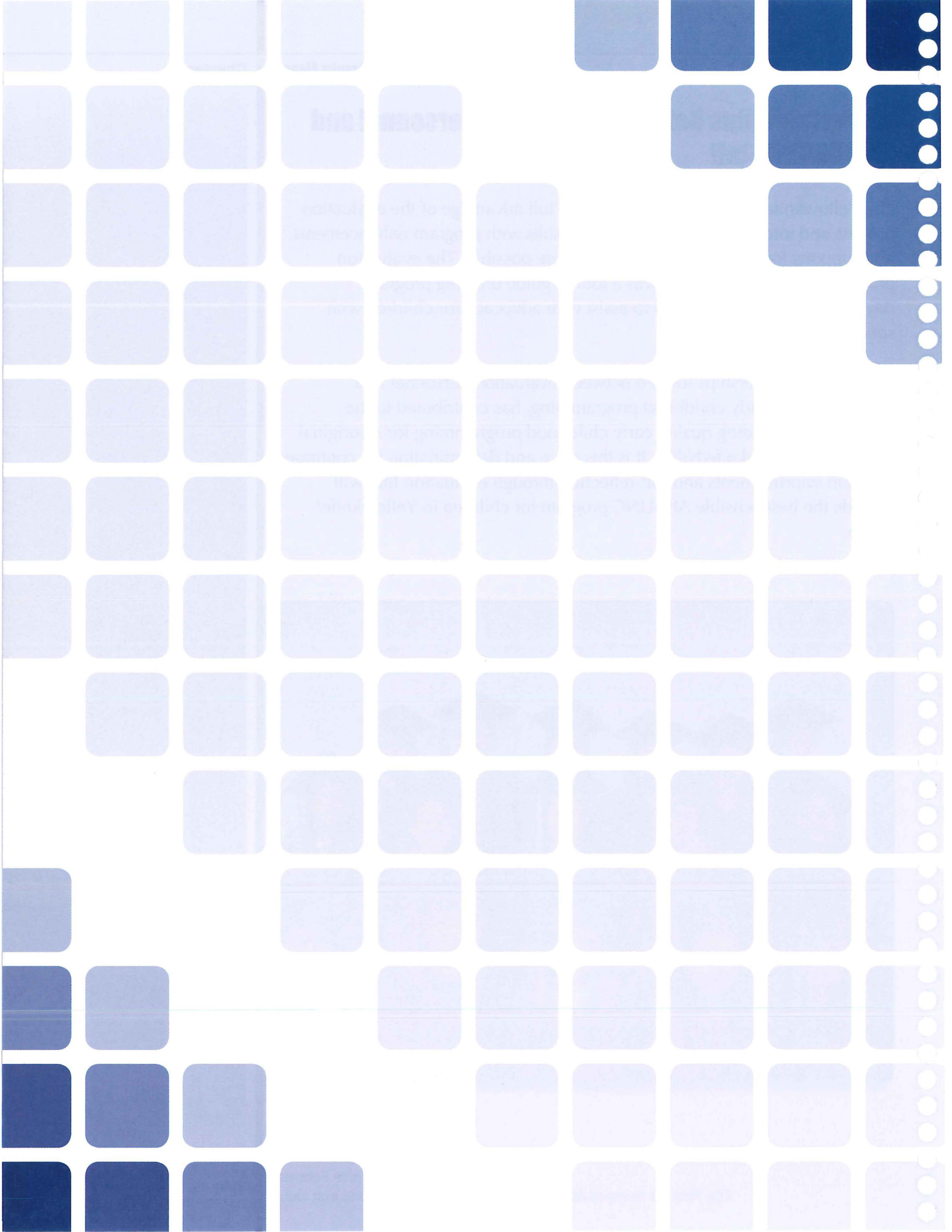
Different evaluation supports in terms of individualized measures are needed to assess the progression and program impacts of children with special needs. The AHSUNC program area for children with special needs requires financial support and development prior to any future evaluation activities with these children.

## 7.7 Partnerships Between Evaluation Personnel and AHSUNC Staff

The Yellowknife/Ndilo AHSUNC site took full advantage of the evaluation process and integrated the findings and results with program enhancements and supports for children and parents, where possible. The evaluation process in Yellowknife/Ndilo was a tool to guide ongoing program development and growth, and to assist with advocacy for children with special needs.

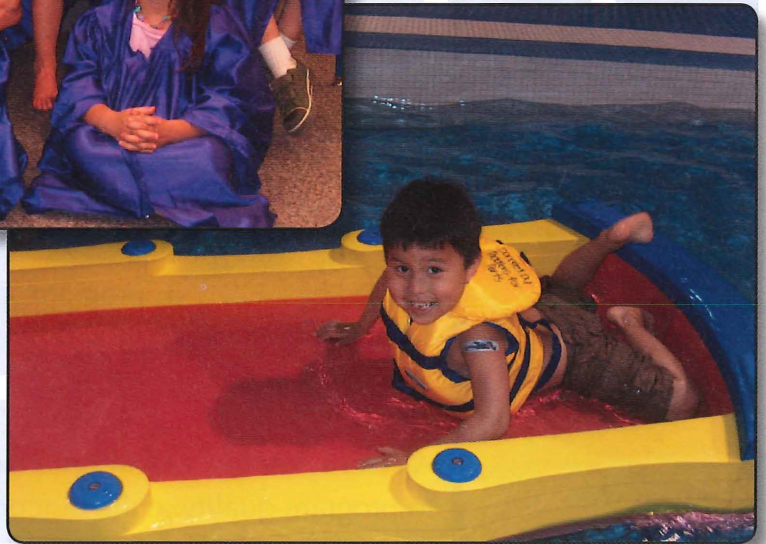
As well, the partnerships formed between evaluation personnel and practitioners of early childhood programming, has contributed to the optimism in providing quality early childhood programming for Aboriginal children in Yellowknife/Ndilo. It is this drive and determination for continued program improvements and self-reflection through evaluation that will provide the best possible AHSUNC program for children in Yellowknife/Ndilo.







# Chapter 8



**The Future of AHSUNC in  
Yellowknife/Ndilo**

Chapter 8 provides a discussion of priority areas for evaluation and program development for the Yellowknife/Ndilo AHSUNC Program in the years to come. As well, final comments from the authors of this publication are included.

The last words are left to AHSUNC parents and children, who make the Yellowknife/Ndilo Program what it is today, and what it will become tomorrow.

## 8.1 Priority Areas for the Future

The following priorities are listed here as suggestions for future program evaluation and development. These priority areas have been developed from the Yellowknife/Ndilo AHSUNC evaluation activities from 2000 through 2007, as presented in this publication. The list is presented in order of priority.

### *Commitment to Accountability and Program Growth*

Evaluation, in all its forms, is a tool for all intervention-type programs, such as the Yellowknife/Ndilo AHSUNC Program, to be used as a guide to strengthen, what is already there. Evaluation provides early childhood programs with specific areas for further development and answers questions formed by AHSUNC program staff. Most often, evaluation activities confirm what is already known, and provides guidance for continued program growth and development.

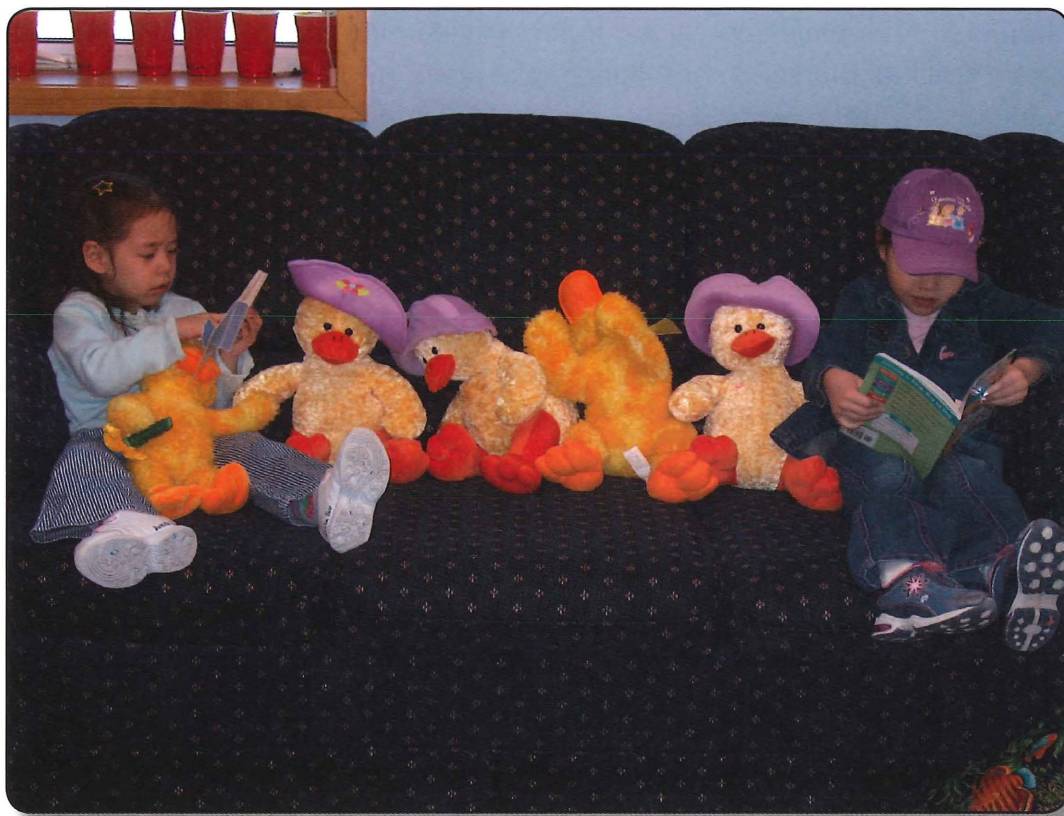
A priority for the Yellowknife/Ndilo Program is to continue its dedication to program quality, child outcome measures and parent feedback. Areas for ongoing enrichment, as outlined in this publication, include further development of language and literacy programming, and strengthened child-centered learning.

By committing to ongoing program evaluation, the AHSUNC program will remain accountable to its parents, families and communities, as well as, and most importantly, to the children.

*Longitudinal Study with AHSUNC Graduates and Transition to Elementary School*

The Yellowknife/Ndilo Program has laid the foundation for the completion of a longitudinal follow-up with AHSUNC graduates in community schools. This most important work will provide much detail and knowledge about how AHSUNC children are doing in the years after they have attended the program.

These longitudinal findings will also provide information that could lead to the improvement of the AHSUNC program in Yellowknife/Ndilo, and areas of support that may be needed for AHSUNC children after Head Start.



“The destiny of a people is intricately bound to the way its children are educated.”

(Helin, 2006)

### *AHSUNC Curriculum Development*

A priority area for the Yellowknife/Ndilo AHSUNC Program and others, is the development of culturally-relevant early childhood curriculum materials. Currently, the AHSUNC program in Yellowknife/Ndilo relies on a limited scope of programming resources.

As the culture and language component of AHSUNC is integrated throughout the program, the next step in program development is to design, pilot test and implement an AHSUNC curriculum, with child and parent resources and supports. The evaluation data from the classroom quality measures in Yellowknife/Ndilo can be especially useful, as they provide background for areas of program strength and areas requiring further development. As well, current emphasis on physical health can be integrated in the curriculum, which is consistent with outdoor traditional teachings.

It is recommended that any AHSUNC curriculum work be inclusive of traditional Aboriginal approaches to lifelong learning and holistic health, and where collaboration and consultation take place among AHSUNC teachers, communities and parents.

### *Addressing Children with Special Needs*

The Yellowknife/Ndilo AHSUNC Program provides an integrated approach to addressing special needs, and this approach is certainly the most realistic and practical approach at this time. Addressing the learning needs of children with special needs is a challenge, given the limited resources that are available for special needs in AHSUNC programs and other early childhood programs.

Further program and evaluation efforts for special needs children will depend on a comprehensive approach and funding system and the political will to fully support these young children and their families. Supporting the program needs of children with special needs should not come at the expense of resources for the overall AHSUNC program, as it is currently funded.

The Yellowknife/Ndilo AHSUNC can provide leadership and guidance to AHSUNC programs, to further the agenda in support of children with special needs and their families.

### *Lead the Evaluation Debates*

The Yellowknife/Ndilo AHSUNC Program has demonstrated that evaluation capacity is growing. Previous evaluation activities have led to future ones, with more detailed questions being asked, after each round of measurement. However, there has been much debate about the use of outcome evaluation methodologies with Aboriginal communities and programs such as AHSUNC.

The “to test or not to test” debate is ongoing between AHSUNC researchers, program practitioners and policy makers regarding the place of culture and diversity in program evaluation and accountability. It is through ongoing discussions, collaboration and sharing of ideas and results that this debate can continue and strengthen the research agenda of AHSUNC across Canada.

The Yellowknife/Ndilo AHSUNC Program has designed and completed an evaluation approach to meet the needs of its children and families. In sharing these results with others, the Yellowknife/Ndilo program can be a leader for the discussion of evaluation methods with AHSUNC.



*Advocacy to Keep AHSUNC*

A priority issue for early intervention programs, like AHSUNC in Yellowknife and Ndilo, is to raise awareness at the community and political levels, of the impact and place that AHSUNC has in Aboriginal communities. This can be accomplished through advocacy, commitment and passion for the growth of the AHSUNC movement in Canada.

AHSUNC was built on the strengths of Aboriginal people, and this program needs to remain a part of the Canadian landscape for future generations of Aboriginal children and families.

## 8.2 Final Comments

*From the Evaluation Team*

As seen throughout this report, the AHSUNC program in Yellowknife/Ndilo has provided the best possible early childhood program for their young children. As a result, AHSUNC in Yellowknife/Ndilo gives families and children hope that their futures can be prosperous, healthy and empowered.

The Yellowknife/Ndilo AHSUNC Program has built a quality program based on their dedication to continuous improvement. The Yellowknife/Ndilo AHSUNC Program has also demonstrated leadership for its young children by sharing their successes and challenges with others. Furthermore, the Yellowknife/Ndilo AHSUNC program staff is encouraging others to do the same, so that programs can learn from each other. Evaluation and research is the starting place for better things, and not the final word, especially with a program such as AHSUNC. It is in stretching our thinking, beliefs and knowledge that most can be learned, and the Yellowknife/Ndilo AHSUNC has done this.

Congratulations Yellowknife/Ndilo! There is never a first unless someone starts it and we are confident that the Yellowknife/Ndilo AHSUNC Program will continue to develop and provide leadership for continued program success.

Dr. Jennifer H. Chalmers & Liz Cayen

### *From the Yellowknife/Ndilo AHSUNC Program Staff*

The Yellowknife/Ndilo Aboriginal Head Start (AHSUNC) Program has operated for over ten years, and continues to improve each year. The purpose has always and will always be the same – to make our young children ready to go to school so they can be successful.

The evaluations that have happened over the years have been one of the best tools we have had and it makes our program so strong. Each time, we learn more and make the changes to make the program even better. We have demonstrated that we can put the old ways of working with our children together with the new ways of helping them be ready for the world of today.

We want our younger generation to be strong in their cultural roots and to also have the skills and knowledge they need to be successful in our changing times. It is our hope that this booklet has given you an idea of what the Yellowknife/Ndilo Aboriginal Head Start (AHSUNC) Program is all about and how we have grown over the years, and will continue to grow in the future.

Reanna Erasmus & Tina Zoe



*From the Parents and Children*

"Your program has helped us a lot; thank you for everything you've done for our daughter."

"Keep up the good work, I'm glad my child is part of this wonderful program."

"The program is excellent."





# Appendix A



**Evaluation**  
**Data Collection Tools**

## Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (Revised Edition) -ECERS

<b>Author &amp; Year:</b>	Harms, T., Clifford, R.M., and Cryer, D.- revised edition 1998
<b>Publisher:</b>	Teachers College Press
<b>Age:</b>	For all early childhood programs (including culture-specific programs for children under age 6 years and greater than 2 years)
<b>Time needed:</b>	3 hours of classroom observation/documentation
<b>Training needed:</b>	Knowledge of early childhood & qualitative documentation
<b>Materials:</b>	ECERS material, early childhood classroom, plain paper

---

### *What the instruments tells us?*

- Samples the classroom quality of an early childhood program.
- 37 areas are grouped in seven areas: Space and Furnishings, Personal Care Routines, Language-reasoning, Child Activities, Teacher-Child interaction, Program structure, parental involvement and staff and management issues.
- Can provide classroom quality ratings, and information for program improvement and enhancement.

### *How does this instrument work?*

- Ratings are through observation and scored as follows- inadequate quality, minimal quality, average quality, good quality and excellent quality.
- Ratings are done through the cultural/language context of the observer.
- Section scores are added up and ECERS total scores are used for reporting, quality purposes and evaluation monitoring.

### *Comments:*

The ECERS classroom quality measure has become a baseline measure for many early childhood programs such as Head Start. As a qualitative tool, it provides feedback on classroom quality, development as well as being culturally sensitive and relevant for work with AHSUNC. It has been used with the NWTAHS since 2000.

## Brigance Preschool Screen

<b>Author &amp; Year:</b>	Brigance, A.H. 1 <sup>st</sup> edition 1985, 2 <sup>nd</sup> edition 1998
<b>Publisher:</b>	Curriculum Associates
<b>Age:</b>	For 3 & 4 year-old children (Screens available for other ages)
<b>Time needed:</b>	15 minutes, children interviewed by teacher or evaluator
<b>Training needed:</b>	Knowledge of early childhood & screening procedures
<b>Materials:</b>	Screen, scoring sheet, plain paper, crayons, open space

### *What the instruments tells us?*

- Samples children's skills in a broad range of areas including fine and gross motor, language, general knowledge and school readiness skills.
- Gives norm referenced tables to compare children to a national sample.
- Can provide information about children with possible language and learning problems; can identify children with possible academic talent.
- Can provide information about growth and development over time.

### *How does this instrument work?*

- The child is asked to perform some tasks that are typical of most preschool programs; the screening book outlines all the questions for the interviewer.
- The skills measured are consistent with areas of development for the age level.
- A score is added up after the child has completed the tasks; analysis by evaluation team follows.

### *Comments:*

The Brigance Screens are clear, easy to use and provides information about children's development in a timely and fun manner for the child. The research on the Brigance screens is well documented and provides good statistical features (test-retest, inter-rater and internal consistency). The Brigance Screens can be used for children from age 2 to 7 years and provides a good overview of the child's development over time. Also, the Brigance materials have been used in some NWT and Nunavut schools.

## Social Skills Rating Scale (SSRS)

<b>Author &amp; Year:</b>	Gresham, F.M. and Elliott, S.N., 1990
<b>Publishers:</b>	PsyCan (Canadian Company)
<b>Age:</b>	For children 3 to 18 yrs, teacher/student & parents complete the scale
<b>Time needed:</b>	10-20 minutes
<b>Training needed:</b>	Training of the scale; analysis done by evaluation consultants trained in interpretation of educational and psychological testing
<b>Materials:</b>	Scale and quiet area

---

### *What the instrument tells us about children:*

- The scale emphasizes positive behaviours or prosocial skills that are related to academic functioning. Behaviours include: sharing, helping, and relationships.
- Samples children's skills in three areas of social skill development: social skills, problem behaviours and academic competence.
- Gives norm referenced values to compare children to other children; national norms include multiracial, delayed, disabled and male/female children.

### *How does the instrument work?*

- The instrument is a scale that teachers/students and parents can complete. The teacher/student and/or parent circle 1 of 3 answers for 40 short questions. The scale measures how a child demonstrates prosocial skills in the last two months.
- The prosocial skills measured are consistent with child development principles.
- A score is added up and analysis by the evaluation team follows.

### *Comments:*

The SSRS is clear and easy to use by teachers and parents. It is a multi-rater scale; that is several can use the measure. The research on the SSRS is well documented and it has excellent statistical features (reliability and validity). The SSRS is one of the best scales available today for programs such as Head Start, and has been used by many early childhood programs.

## Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT-III)

<b>Author &amp; Year:</b>	Lloyd M. Dunn, Leota M. Dunn & K.T. Williams; 1 <sup>st</sup> edition 1959, 3 <sup>rd</sup> Edition 1997, 4 <sup>th</sup> Edition 2006.
<b>Publisher:</b>	PysCan (Canadian Company) and American Guidance Services
<b>Age:</b>	For people 2.6-90+ years (test has levels of increasing challenge)
<b>Time needed:</b>	10-15 minutes
<b>Training needed:</b>	Conducted by experienced personnel in psychological testing.
<b>Materials:</b>	PPVT(III), scoring sheet and quiet area

---

### *What the instrument tells us about children?*

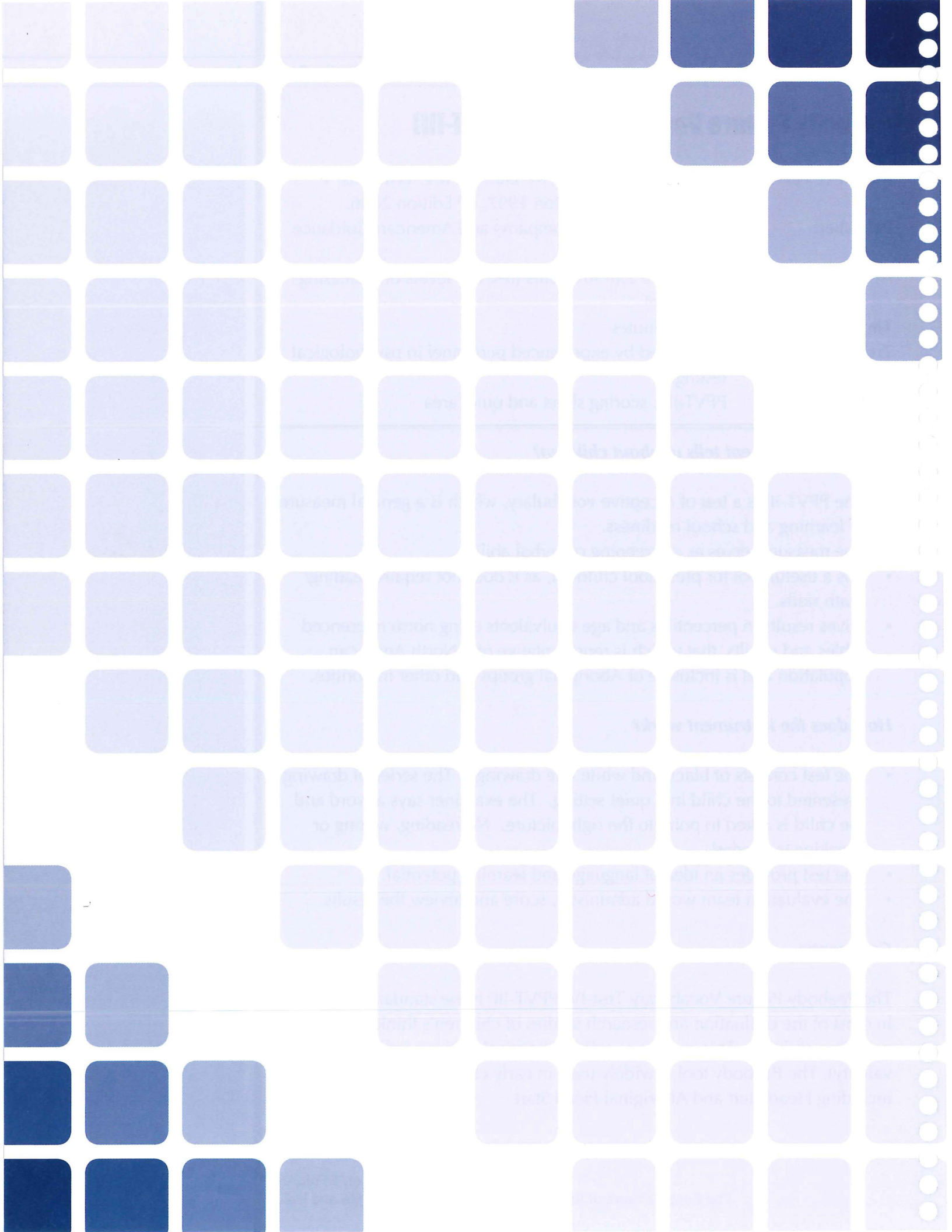
- The PPVT-III is a test of receptive vocabulary, which is a general measure of learning and school readiness.
- The measure serves as a screening of verbal ability.
- It is a useful tool for preschool children, as it does not require reading/math skills.
- Gives results in percentiles and age equivalents using norm referenced tables and results, that which is representative of a North American Population and is inclusive of Aboriginal groups and other minorities.

### *How does the instrument work?*

- The test consists of black and white line drawings. The series of drawings presented to the child in a quiet setting. The examiner says a word and the child is asked to point to the right picture. No reading, writing or speaking is needed.
- The test provides an idea of language and learning potential.
- The evaluation team would administer, score and review the results.

### *Comments:*

The Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test-IV (PPVT-III) is the standard tool used in most of the evaluation and research studies of children's thinking or cognitive abilities. This test has excellent statistical features (reliability and validity). The Peabody tool is widely used in early childhood evaluation, including Head Start and Aboriginal Head Start.



# Appendix B



**About the Authors**

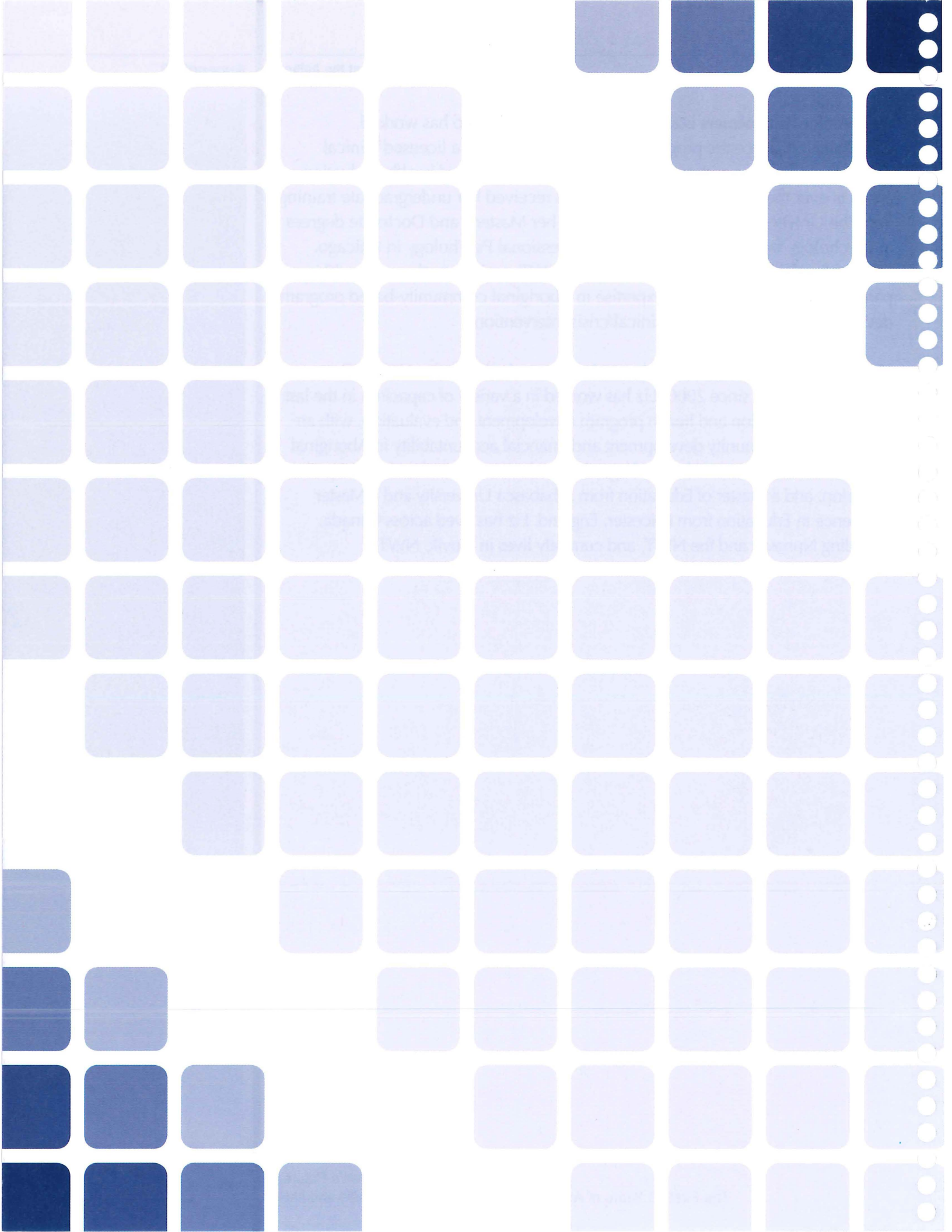
**Reanna Erasmus** is the manager of the Aboriginal Head Start program in Yellowknife/Ndilo, and has worked with the evaluation process since the beginning. She has managed the program since 1997, and was part of the start-up of the Western Arctic Aboriginal Head Start Council in 2000, that subsequently designed and implemented the outcome evaluation of AHSUNC in the NWT. Reanna has worked on the National Aboriginal Head Start Council and other initiatives to advocate for the Aboriginal Head Start program. Reanna lives in the community of Ndilo, and brings her own Aboriginal heritage, passion and dedication for the well-being of Aboriginal children to the Aboriginal Head Start movement, as well as representing the program in presentations including Canadian and International locations.

**Tina Zoe** is an Aboriginal Head Start teacher with the Yellowknife/Ndilo AHSUNC program, and has worked with the evaluation process and tools since the beginning. She has entered her 8<sup>th</sup> year with the program, and has consistently developed knowledge, skills and creativity in working with the young children. Tina has completed a certificate in Early Childhood Education from Aurora College, as well as the Aboriginal Language and Culture Instructor Program. Tina lives in the community of Dettah, which lies southeast to Yellowknife, and which is a community of the Akaitcho Dene First Nations. Tina speaks the traditional language and shares her knowledge and skills with the children throughout all aspects of the AHSUNC program in Yellowknife/Ndilo.



**Dr. Jennifer H. Chalmers** is an evaluation consultant who has worked with AHSUNC since the program started in 1996. She is a licensed clinical psychologist and has authored more than 60 education and health evaluation projects over the last 18 years. Dr. Chalmers received her undergraduate training from the University of Western Ontario and her Master's and Doctorate degrees in Psychology from the Adler School of Professional Psychology in Chicago. She has lived across Canada, including the NWT, and currently works within a partnership of associates with expertise in Aboriginal community-based program development/evaluation and clinical/crisis intervention.

**Liz Cayen** is an evaluation consultant who has worked with the AHSUNC evaluation process since 2000. Liz has worked in a variety of capacities in the last 25 years in education and health program development and evaluation, with an emphasis on community development and financial accountability in Aboriginal communities. Liz received her undergraduate education from the University of Waterloo, and a Master of Education from Athabasca University and a Master of Science in Education from Leicester, England. Liz has lived across Canada, including Nunavut and the NWT, and currently lives in Inuvik, NWT.



# Appendix C

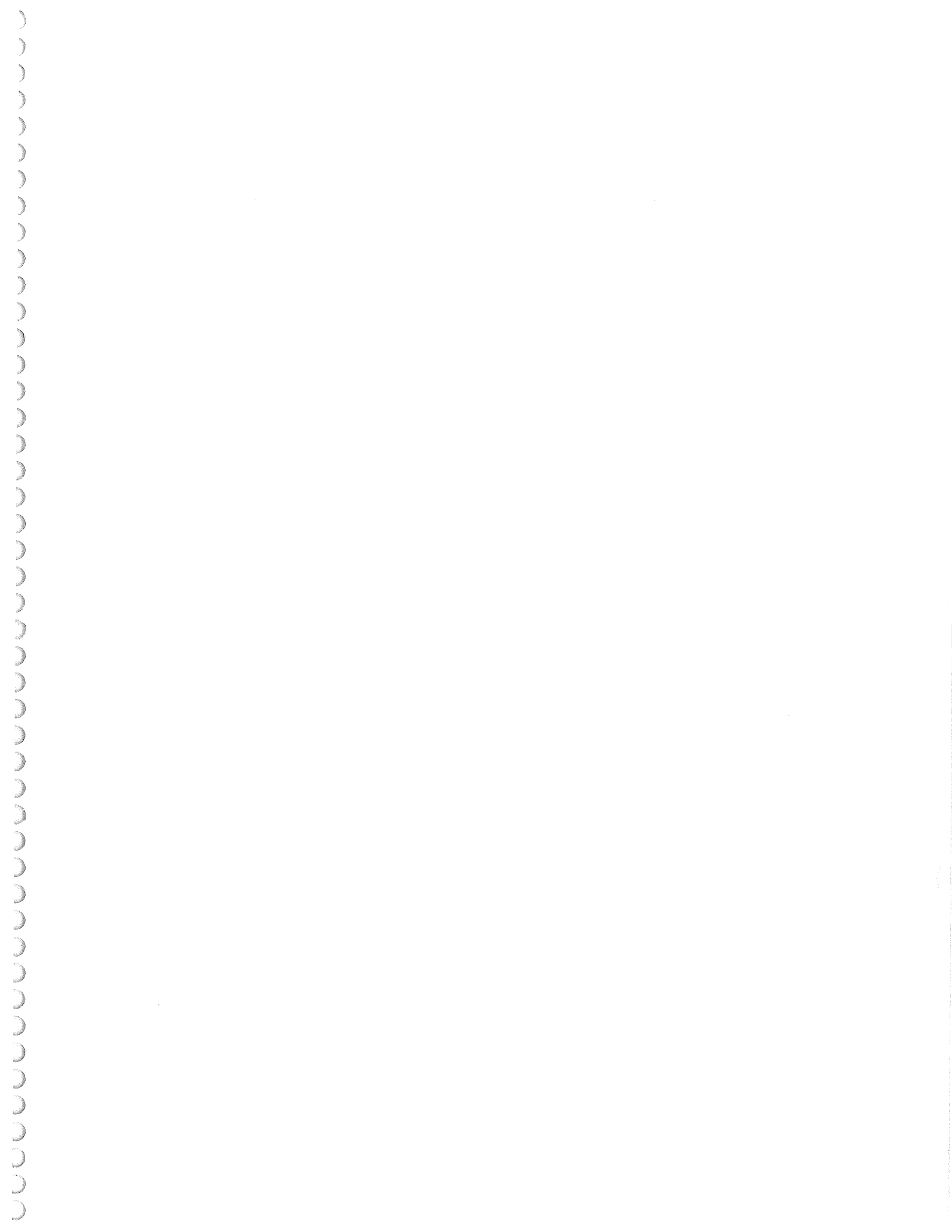


## References

- Administration for Children & Families. (2001). *Head Start FACES 2000: Longitudinal findings on program performance, third progress report*. Washington, DC: Author.
- Administration for Children & Families. (2007). *Head Start Program Fact Sheet*. Retrieved November 15, 2007 from <http://www2.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/hsb/about/fy2007.html>.
- Alexander, K.L., & Entwisle, D.R. (1988). Achievement in the first 2 years of school: Patterns and processes. *Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development*, 53 (2), 1-139.
- Bagnoto, S.J., Neisworth, J.T., & Munson, S.M. (1997). *Linking assessment and early intervention: An authentic curriculum-based approach*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes
- Barnett, S. (1995) Long-term effects of early childhood programs on cognitive and school outcomes. *The Future of Children*, 5, 25-50.
- Brigance, A.H. (1998). *Preschool Screen, Kindergarten Screen and First-Grade Screen*. North Billerica, MA: Curriculum Associates.
- Canadian Council on Learning. (2007). *Redefining How Success is Measured in First Nations, Inuit and Métis Learning, Report on Learning in Canada*. Ottawa, ON: Author.
- Clay, M.M. (1967). The reading behaviour of five year old children. *New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies*, 2, 11-31.
- Duncan, G.J., Claessens, A., Huston, A.C., Pagani, L.S., Engel, M., Sexton, H., et al. (2007). School Readiness and Later Achievement. *Developmental Psychology*, 43, 1428-1446.
- Dunn, L.M., Dunn, L.L., & Dunn, D.M. (1997). *Peabody Picture and Vocabulary Test, Third Edition*. Circle Pines, MN: American Guidance Service.
- Gresham, F.M., & Elliot, S.N. (1990). *Social Skills Rating Scale for Preschool Level Teacher Ratings*. Richmond Hill, ON: Psycan Educational and Clinical Resources.

- Harris, J. (2002). *What Every Parent Needs to Know About Standardized Tests*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.
- Harms, T., Clifford, R.M., & Cryer, D. (1998). *Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revised*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Helin, C. (2006). *Dances with dependency: Indigenous success through self-reliance*. Vancouver, BC: Orca Spirit.
- Health Canada. (1998). *Aboriginal Head Start Urban and Northern Initiative: Principles and Guidelines*. Ottawa, ON: Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada.
- Health Canada. (2007). *Eating well with Canada's Food Guide: A resource for educators and communicators*. Ottawa, ON: Author.
- Horacek, H.J., Ramey, C.T. Campbell, F.A., and Hoffman, K.P. (1987). Predicting school failure and assessing early intervention with highrisk children. *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, 26, 758-763.
- Jablon, J.R., Marsden, D.B., Meisels, S.J., & Dichtelmeiller, M.L. (1994). *Work Sampling System*. Toronto, ON: Pearson Education Canada.
- Kirmayer, L., Simpson, C., & Cargo, M. (2003). Healing traditions: Culture, community and mental health promotion with Canadian Aboriginal Peoples. *Australasian Psychiatry*, 11, Supplement, S15-S23.
- Kropp, P. (2000). *How to Make Your Child a Reader for Life*. Toronto, ON: Random House.
- Kupersmidt, J., & Dodge, K. (2004). *Children's peer relations from development to intervention*. Washington, DC: APA.
- Lewit, E.M. & Baker, L.S. (1995). School readiness. *The Future of Children*, 5, 128-139.
- Marcon, R.A. (1999). Positive relationships between parent school involvement and public school inner-city preschooler's development and academic performance. *School Psychology Review*, 28, 395-412.
- National Aboriginal Health Organization. (2002). OCAP Principles: Ownership, Control, Access and Possession. Retrieved May 2, 2007 from [www.naho.ca/firstnations/english](http://www.naho.ca/firstnations/english).

- Northwest Territories Aboriginal Head Start Council. (2007). *Ten Years of Aboriginal Head Start in the NWT*. Northwest Territories: Author.
- Palmantier, M. (2005). *Building a community of communities: Results and discussion of the National Roundtable on Aboriginal ECD: What can research offer Aboriginal Head Start?* ON: Health Canada & Lakehead University.
- Piotrkowski, C.S. (2004). A community-based approach to school readiness in Head Start. In E. Zigler, & S.J. Styfco (Eds.), *The Head Start Debates* (pp.129-142). Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes.
- Ponterotto, J.G., & Alexander, C.M. (1996). Assessing the multicultural competence of counselors and clinicians. In L.A. Suzuki, P.Melle, & J.G.Ponterotto (Eds.), *Handbook of multicultural assessment: Clinical, psychological and educational applications* (pp. 651-672). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Ramey, C.T., & Ramey, S.L. (1998). Early intervention and early experience. *American Psychologist*. 53, 109-120.
- Schweinhart, L.J. (2004). *The High/Scope Perry Preschool Study through age 40*. Eighth Monograph of the Perry Preschool Study. Ypsilanti, MI: High/Scope.
- Shipley, D. (1998). *Empowering children: Play-based curriculum for lifelong learning* (2nd ed.). Scarborough, ON: ITP Nelson.
- Shipley, D. (1998). *Empowering children: Play-based curriculum for lifelong learning* (2nd ed.). Scarborough, ON: ITP Nelson.
- Sones, R. (2002). *Parents in Aboriginal Head Start: Building community*. Vancouver, BC: Population and Public Health Branch, BC/Yukon Region, Health Canada.
- West, J., Hausken, E.G., & Collins, M. (1995). *Readiness for kindergarten: Parents and teacher beliefs* (NCES No. 93-257). Washington, DC.
- Wolfe, Jennifer. (2000). *Learning from the past*. Mayerthorpe, AB: Piney Branch.
- Yellowknives Dene First Nation Admission Procedure. (2007). *Yellowknives Dene First Nation Admission Procedure*. Yellowknife, NWT: Author.
- Ziegler, E., & Butterfield, E.C. (1968). Motivational aspects of changes in performance of culturally diverse nursery school children. *Child Development* 39, 2-14.
- Ziegler, E., & Valentine, J. (1997). *Project Head Start: A legacy of the war on poverty*. (2nd ed.). Alexandria, VA: National Head Start Association.



Done Necha-lia Gha Enitl'e Ko- Ndilo Aboriginal Head Start  
Weledeh Yellowknives Dene First Nation  
Ndilo, Denendeh

