SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT IN SMALL COMMUNITIES: A RESOURCE MANUAL BASED ON THE EXPERIENCES OF THE WHOLE CHILD PROGRAM IN WHITEHORSE, YUKON

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Prepared by:

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the Whole Child Program, Whitehorse, Yukon Territory.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

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Michael Kim Zapf, PhD
Project Director

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Whole Child Program (WCP) in Whitehorse, Yukon, has proven to be an effective community demonstration of the RCMP's National Youth Strategy to promote crime prevention through social development. Based in Whitehorse Elementary School, formal WCP operations began in May 2001 when funding from the RCMP National Youth Strategy allowed for the hiring of a Community Coordinator. According to an evaluation report completed following the first three years of operation (Zapf, 2004), the WCP "has shown that it can deliver a range of programs, services, and coordination in response to community needs consistent with the larger social development goals for the disadvantaged downtown Whitehorse population."

1.1   RATIONALE

As with most community-based initiatives, the WCP did not evolve in an orderly step-by-step manner; it was not a theoretical model designed by planners and then implemented systematically in the community. Long before external funding allowed for a formal program, the WCP began to take form when a critical mass of vision, commitment, skill, and volunteer service was achieved from local resource persons and community members. Many lessons were learned along the way – lessons about what worked, what might be changed, and what might be avoided.

The RCMP National Youth Strategy wants to capture these lessons learned from the successful WCP experience and use them as a guide or resource for other small communities grappling with similar issues of service delivery to vulnerable populations. Although the specific context of the WCP could be described as rural or remote, the model developed and lessons learned in that context may prove useful for reaching defined disadvantaged communities within urban centres as well. The intention of this Resource Manual is to make the WCP experience known and accessible to other small communities with similar needs, to stimulate discussion and suggest strategies that might be adapted to improve conditions in your community.

1.2   ORGANIZATION

The model developed and implemented by the WCP forms the basis for organization of this Manual with sections following the general chronological development of the WCP. While these sections are presented as distinct, numbered, and organized sequentially for clarity, it must be acknowledged that there was much overlap and integration in practice. Community projects are inherently more messy and vital than the clean abstract models that can be derived from the real experiences.

Following is an overview of the organization of the Manual:

C Section 1.0 – INTRODUCTION introduces the overall intent of the Manual (along with some clarification of what the Manual is not intended to do). Organization of the material and choices regarding writing style are explained. The meanings of key concepts are clarified for the reader at the outset. Major sources for the information about the WCP are identified.

C Section 2.0 – GETTING STARTED explores the context in which the WCP developed and the vision that evolved to guide the work. Historical context is examined in terms of the community initiatives that led to fundraising, staffing, and prioritization of community needs.

C Section 3.0 – THE PROGRAM examines the resources and operations of the WCP, beginning with its funding base. The WCP organization structure is considered at the levels of administration, staff, and partner agencies. An overview is presented of specific programs and activities offered to the community through the WCP.

C Section 4.0 – EVALUATION looks at the documentation generated by the WCP, the processes of formative evaluation and summative evaluation, and the dissemination of the model as a resource for other communities. This section explores information needs of staff and decision-makers to ensure the WCP continues to function effectively in the short term while continuing to pursue its long term goals.

C Section 5.0 – ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT looks at the issues faced by the WCP as it moves towards a new stage of organizational development following its initial success. As it consolidates the structures and activities developed during its implementation stage, the WCP looks ahead to new challenges of resources, service delivery, and identity as an established program in the local context.

C Section 6.0 – IMPACT: VOICES OF THE WCP draws on the recent evaluation to present a sample of contributions from the real people involved with the WCP in many roles. The intent here is to help bring the project alive, to convey the community impact of the WCP through the voices and stories of those who have lived it.

C Section 7.0 – ANOTHER EXAMPLE looks at the Whole Village Center, an American project in Plymouth, New Hampshire. Although there have been no formal linkages between the two projects, the Whole Village Center and the Whole Child Program share a common foundation philosophy and feature many operational similarities. This brief overview of the Whole Village Center affirms the adaptability of the general model in different contexts.

Within most sections, material is presented from the WCP experience itself. This content is clearly highlighted in the text to set it apart from any accompanying discussion. Reflective comments are made and issues are raised from the reported WCP experiences. Often, questions are put forward for your community to consider as you think about the issues you face, the resources available to you, and possible configurations that might prove effective in your context.

1.3   USE OF THIS MANUAL

This Manual is written for persons or groups looking to improve social conditions in their communities. The intended reader may be a local service provider (education, policing, social services, recreation, public health, rehabilitation, addictions, employment, etc.), an elected or appointed community official, a representative of a local interest group, or a citizen wishing to become more involved with improving local conditions. The reader may be at the beginning stages of identifying community issues and thinking about responses, or the reader may already be involved with local development efforts. The assumption here is that persons looking to improve local conditions may find some support, inspiration, and practical suggestions in the experiences of the WCP in Whitehorse, Yukon.

The Manual is not an academic paper or comprehensive literature review about social development or community programming. As explained, the target audience is not a group of distant experts or planners trying to develop models from outside the community. The goal is more specific and practical – to share the story of the WCP in Whitehorse and consider how aspects of their approach and model might be helpful for your work in your community.

Note also that this Manual is not offered as a prescription or step-by-step set of instructions for replicating the WCP in your community; the Manual is intended to be a reflective examination of the WCP experience in Whitehorse, Yukon, with questions to stimulate and guide your thinking about the issues and possible program responses that might be relevant in your setting. Arising from the local context and built upon local resources, the WCP has done well in its Whitehorse setting. While your community may face similar issues, it is important to recognize that small communities are unique at the same time as they have much in common. No other place with have the same configuration of history, geography, politics, economics, and human diversity as your community. Yet all small communities seek a rich and full life for those who live there, a safe and supportive social environment for children to grow, and freedom from oppression and crime in their various forms. All small communities will feature some pattern of mandated agency services related to policing, social services, education, health, and recreation. Often these services, provided from within and outside the community, feature gaps, areas of overlap, and poor coordination. If service delivery in your community is characterized by any of these problems, or if an identified group does not have full access to services, then this Resource Manual may offer some ideas that you can use.

One final caution about the Manual needs to be addressed. The Manual is not intended to serve as a comprehensive guide for any one agency's role in social development. With the WCP, initial efforts from teachers and administrators at Whitehorse Elementary School were later supported by generous funding from the RCMP and alliances with other agencies who shared the vision and the work. Each contributed what they could based on their resources and constraints at the time. True to the social development perspective, however, the WCP has not been just an education project, or a police project, or a social services project, or a recreation project; it has always been a community project.

In the social work literature on community development, there are many guidelines for working with community groups to improve local conditions. Similarly, the education literature has a rich knowledge base related to child development and community outreach. With regard to policing, the recent *Aboriginal and Youth Community Plans: Development Guide and Quality Assurance Guide* (Viau, 2005) provides a comprehensive model with forms and templates to be used by RCMP detachments when preparing Aboriginal and Youth community plans. Detailed templates are included which, when completed, "fulfill mandatory reporting requirements" (p. 2). Such disciplinary specific forms are very useful, and you can locate them through your local agency representatives if and when you need them. This Manual, however, is more generic and less agency-specific. It is intended to stimulate and support the efforts of whatever individual or group is poised to take the initiative at this time in your community.

1.4   SOURCES

Much of the material presented here on the Whole Child Program is adapted from *An Evaluation of the Whole Child Project (WCP): Whitehorse, Yukon* (Zapf, 2004), a formal evaluation completed after the initial three years of WCP operation. Data collection for the evaluation report involved document review (funding proposals, monthly Steering Committee minutes, monthly Coordinator's reports, media articles and interviews, WCP Newsletters, websites, Annual Reports, annual Family Surveys), plus individual and group interviews, surveys, attendance at WCP Steering Committee meetings, and direct participation in WCP program activities at Whitehorse Elementary School. Where necessary, this material has been updated to include 2004/2005 developments, based on monthly WCP Newsletters and other reports posted at the WCP website (Whole Child Program, 2005) in the year following the formal evaluation.

Information for Section 7.0 on the Whole Village Center in rural New Hampshire was acquired from their Internet home page (Whole Village Family Resource Center, 2005) and linked websites, plus an article published in the *Journal of Human Services in the Rural Environment* (Davis, Meyer, & Terrasi, 1995).

Where the Manual has made use of particular terminology, opinions, or models originating in other published sources, those sources have been clearly cited in the text and listed in a References section at the end of the document. Although the Manual is not intended as an academic document, this method of referenced citations was used to acknowledge original contributions and to allow the reader to locate those primary sources directly if you choose to pursue particular issues in more depth for application in your community.

1.5   TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

A glossary of definitions is not necessary with this Manual as the use of technical terms is minimal, and concepts are explained and discussed as they arise. Mention should be made, however, of four terms with ambiguous or varied common usage that need to be clarified for the purposes of the Manual. These terms are: Community; Social Development; Whitehorse Elementary School; and Whole Child Program.

<u>Community</u>

There have been many debates extending over decades in the literature about the meaning of the term "community." Most definitions include elements of people living in a specific geographic location with some degree of interaction and common ties or identification. The pendulum appears to swing back and forth from an emphasis on elements of physical location (communities defined by geographic or political boundaries) to an emphasis on interaction and identification (communities of interest or function). The increasing presence of the Internet serves to confuse definitional matters even further by making it possible to separate interaction from geographic proximity.

For the purposes of this Manual, it is not necessary to engage in a lengthy debate about the merits of various definitions. Programs such as the WCP are initiated and operate within communities identified by both geography and interaction, where people with common interests share space and relationships. What seems to be crucial to such program development is not the presence of clear boundaries as much as a shared commitment to the well-being of others. In the literature, such commitment has been expressed as "citizenship" (Wharf, 1997), or "empowerment" (Lundy, 2004), or an active responsibility to those "persons at the margins of community" (Kretzman and McKnight, 1993).

This notion of community focuses less on rigid boundaries and more on local interaction and mutual responsibility. A community could well be a neighbourhood or district or precinct within a larger identified town or city. Since the model discussed in this Manual develops a facility such as a school as the hub of service delivery for local families, it might make sense to think of community as the area effectively reached by that hub. It follows that operational community boundaries may change over time as the program expands or contracts its reach.

<u>Social Development</u>

Here is another often-debated term that lacks precision in its definition. In the social work literature, social development is usually linked with economic development, reminding us that economic development must be accompanied by an improvement in the living conditions for all people (James, 2005). From a social development perspective, leadership comes from the local community; grass-roots programs and interventions are developed from the local community and its resources. The term has been defined in *The Social Work Dictionary* (Barker, 1999) as "planned comprehensive social change designed to improve people's general welfare" (p. 448).

From a policing perspective, the current emphasis on crime prevention through social development has been described by the RCMP National Youth Strategy as "an elusive concept" that basically means "addressing the root causes of crime so that people do not want to or feel the need to commit crimes," acknowledging that "very often the root causes of offending and victimization stem from social and economic factors for which there may be no quick fix" (Dorothy Franklin quoted in Nicolle, 2003, p. 25).

It would appear that the broad notion of social development calls for all service workers in a community to look beyond the specific problems identified by their agency's mandate to the broader issues of building a stronger and more inclusive community. Much of this work will involve supporting community initiatives through resources and building alliances, rather than taking control or imposing programs.

<u>Whitehorse Elementary School</u>

Whitehorse Elementary School is a dual stream school with a French Immersion stream serving all of Whitehorse and an English-speaking stream serving the inner city community. At times in the documentation, the school is referred to as Whitehorse Elementary School; at other times, it is called Ecole Whitehorse Elementary. Since the initial focus of the WCP was the English-speaking inner city community, and the initials "WES" appear frequently throughout the background documentation, this Manual will use the designation "Whitehorse Elementary School."

<u>Whole Child Program</u>

If you consult any of the references from this Manual or background documents on the model itself, you may be confused over usage of the labels "Whole Child Program" and "Whole Child Project."

In the documentation produced during the proposal and early development activities, frequent reference was made to "Dealing with the Whole Child Program," the name under which the organization was officially launched in May 2001. Over

time, however, the name evolved in common usage and program documentation. The "Dealing with" component of the label was dropped, and "Program" was replaced with "Project." Reports, newsletters, and media stories for the first three years of operation, including the formal evaluation of March 2004, made reference to the "Whole Child Project" as it was known at the time. Acting on one of the recommendations of the evaluation, however, the term "Project" was dropped and "Program" was re-confirmed as of September 2004 in recognition that "we have developed beyond the initial project stage in that we are now in the 4th year of operation" (Whole Child Program, 2005).

It is important for any reader to understand that the Whole Child Project and the Whole Child Program are one and the same; the most appropriate term was used at different stages of program development. A decision was made to use "Whole Child Program" throughout this Manual, consistent with the direction established recently by the program itself. It is most fortunate that the initials "WCP" cover both labels!

2.0 GETTING STARTED

Understanding the Whole Child Program in Whitehorse, Yukon, involves more than an examination of the program's current resources and operations. If social development initiatives, as defined in Section 1.5, generally involve interventions grounded in local leadership and resources, then it follows that current program activities probably have their roots in the vision and volunteer commitment of community residents. This section explores those roots by looking at key building blocks or foundations for the WCP, including: the physical and social context, the motivating vision of a better community, building of the initial alliance to accomplish the vision, resources accessed to create the program, and the initial prioritization of community needs.

Understanding this background, the nuts-and-bolts of "getting started," is necessary for understanding the program now as well as its future direction. A good deal of descriptive material on early WCP activities is presented in this section, much of which was compiled for the 2004 evaluation. A number of questions are suggested for consideration in your community. If you are reading this Manual, chances are that you and a small group of like-minded local individuals are beginning to think about improving local conditions through a social development approach. The questions offered in this section may help you to clarify the direction of your work and the resources you may require for an effective beginning in the context of your community.

2.1 CONTEXT

Whole Child Program

As the capital city of the Yukon Territory, Whitehorse currently features a population of approximately 20,000 residents. The primary economic force is government, with an estimated 5,000 public servants working for all levels of government (territorial, federal, municipal, First Nations). While the population may not be large in southern terms, Whitehorse is a large urban centre in the context of the north, and experiences many of the problems associated with urban living. The Yukon has a high rate of young offenders compared with the rest of Canada.

Whitehorse offers its residents a wide range of recreational and cultural activities, but most of these activities involve considerable cost (as well as transportation and supervision for young persons). There is no public recreation centre in downtown Whitehorse.

The downtown region of Whitehorse has been described as "host to transient families, a relatively large urban aboriginal presence, families facing life's disadvantages such as single parenthood and physical/mental limitations, all of which serve as the trap that is maintained by social assistance" (Pearl-Hodgins, 2003, p. 2). In spite of aging substandard housing, property values in the downtown core remain high. This situation has the impact of scattering the poor downtown population to the fringe areas rendering them relatively invisible as a community and posing obvious problems for coherent service delivery.

As a downtown school, Whitehorse Elementary School (WES) faces a number of challenges in the services it provides. The school is "dual track" meaning that it serves the needs of French Immersion for the entire city as well as the inner city English-speaking stream. In general, the 300-320 French Immersion students come from relatively privileged circumstances around the entire Whitehorse area. Most of the 80 English-speaking stream students reside in the downtown core, many in low-income households with associated disadvantages in terms of resources, opportunity, and educational preparation. A significant number of the English-stream students are First Nations.

The English-stream students at WES are a highly transient group (with a reported 12% of those beginning in kindergarten actually remaining to the end of grade seven). Most of the WES English-stream students score behind grade level on national standardized basic skills tests. In addition to the effects of poverty, many of the English-stream students have witnessed violence and substance abuse at home. Whitehorse Elementary is also the local school for Kaushee's Place, a transition house located in downtown Whitehorse. In every sense of the word, the English-stream population at Whitehorse Elementary School could be considered "at risk."

This overview of the downtown Whitehorse community setting reports on several contextual considerations that could be important for understanding your community as well. What is known about the physical environment and its impact? The built environment? What economic issues are facing your community? Is there a community identity? How would you describe social relationships in your community? Are there norms or standards for acceptable behaviour? What problems or issues have been identified in your community? How would you describe the pattern of service delivery in your community?

There can be a tendency to rush this exploration of community context. Many local residents will already have clear answers to the above questions without additional data gathering; they may want to move quickly to the next stage of

program planning. Your understanding of your community may, however, be quite different from that of other residents. At the outset of your social development work, it could be important to share perceptions among the group motivated to seek change and the population potentially affected by the changes you are contemplating. Viau (2005) suggests a number of approaches for these community consultations, including: focus groups, talking circles, town hall meetings, conferences, municipal government meetings, interagency meetings, workshops, and discussions with individuals and community leaders. The questions that follow may help you to initiate, guide, and record those discussions.

Physical Environment
- C What are the geographic and jurisdictional boundaries of your community?
- C What role do weather and climate patterns play in shaping life in your community?
- C To what degree is your community geographically isolated? How does this affect opportunities and interactions in your community?
- C How does the physical environment affect social interaction within your community?
- C How does the physical environment affect service utilization in your community?
- C What recreational resources are offered by the physical environment?

Built Environment
- C Who lives where? What is the arrangement of residences in your community? What is the degree of centralization?
- C Is there a pattern to the location of businesses, industry, and institutions in your community?
- C Are there definable ethnic areas within your community? What are the boundaries and how are they determined?
- C How would you describe housing conditions in your community?
- C By what means of transportation is your community connected to the outside world? How accessible are these methods for local residents?
- C What is the nature of public transit in your community? Availability? Cost? Directions? Times? What are the dominant commuting patterns associated with employment in this community?

Economy
- C How diverse is your local economy? How stable is it?
- C What is known about the levels of employment/unemployment in your community?
- C Have there been recent or impending economic changes for your community?

Community Identity
- C To what extent is there a sense of community? Do residents perceive a sense of belonging? Of connectedness? Of unity?

C How would you describe the level and pattern of interaction within your community? Do community members support each other? Is there a common identity? Do residents perceive a common future?

C How universally held is this shared identity?

C Is a written history of your community available? What resources are available through the community newspaper?

C Who are the long-time residents who hold the oral history of the community?

C What are the significant historical events for this community?

C What special meanings are associated with this community by the residents? Special names? Events? Cultural identification? Symbolic significance of particular places?

C How would you describe the status of your community relative to other communities in the region? Has the community been given a positive or negative label overall?

C How is your community perceived by outsiders? How is your community perceived by insiders?

C Most communities were created in another period. Is the original rationale still valid in your community? Are there renewal plans for your community? How is your community trying to change?

Social Relations

C Who lives within your community? What diversity is apparent?

C How rigidly is your community stratified by income and other attributes?

C Is there a dominant cultural group in your community?

C What sources and processes of oppression and/or discrimination can you identify in your community? What group stereotypes operate in your community?

C What conflicts do you see among community members or groups?

C Who are the obvious leaders in your community? Who is respected? Who is discredited? Are the local power brokers visible or behind-the-scenes?

C Which political party or group is dominant in your community? What has been the history in recent elections? What are the current dominant local issues?

C Who are the current political representatives and elected officials in your community?

C How are decisions that shape your community generally made?

C What groups are usually involved in community decision-making? What groups are usually excluded?

C What is the role of language in social relationships in your community? Does language appear to be a unifying or divisive factor?

C What forms of media reach the residents in your community? Radio? TV? Newspapers? Internet?

Norms

C Can you identify dominant values and standards operating in your community?

C What behaviours are acceptable or unacceptable in your community?

C	Who should or should not be shown respect in your community?
C	Are there protocols for approaching certain members of your community (Elders, healers)?
C	Within your community, are there issues around perceived ownership of territory? Turf issues? Gangs? Assumed ethnic areas?
C	Are there particular community traditions and events that are celebrated?
C	Are there traditions that have been elevated to a position of sacredness or utmost importance in your community?
C	What norms or cultural traditions are important to keep in mind for anyone working with the people who live in your community?

Local Problems or Issues
C	What is known about social problems such as crime, homelessness, or poverty in your community?
C	Can vulnerable or at-risk populations be identified within your community? How are they vulnerable?
C	What current problems or issues have been identified from within your community? Identified by whom? Problems for whom?
C	What problems have been identified from outside your community? Identified by whom? Problems for whom?
C	Is there someone in your community whose approval is particularly valued for decisions on this issue?
C	Is there someone in your community who has been very influential on past decisions on this issue?
C	Is there someone who is viewed by the community as having a great deal of knowledge about this issue?
C	Is there someone in the community who is seen as having the right to have a great deal of input on this issue?
C	Is there someone (or a group) in the community who could resist or threaten progress on this issue?
C	What expectations exist about outcomes? Long term? Short term?
C	Will there be competition for any proposed program in this area? Are there other services, government agencies, or private businesses offering programming in this area?

Services
C	What are the local agencies and institutions serving your community? Where are they located? What agencies are resident in your community and which ones provide service from outside?
C	What is known about the users of these services? To what extent are residents aware of existing services in your community? Are there barriers to accessing existing resources for certain groups? What is the nature of these barriers?
C	Are there local interagency committees, councils, clubs, or associations?
C	Are there informal helping systems operating in your community? What is known about how help is given? To whom? By whom? What is known about the relationship with the formal service delivery system?

C Is there an agency in your community currently positioned to take a leadership role in approaching the identified problem/issue?

C Are there resources identified as lacking within your community?

2.2 VISION

Development of the vision for the Whole Child Program can be seen in the various statements of goals and objectives appearing in the documentation related to the implementation phase. While specific expression of goals and objectives may represent the perspectives of particular stakeholders, there are clear connections, themes, and areas of convergence between the different statements.

A report entitled *Proposal and Planning Document: Developing Whitehorse's Community Plan on Homelessness* produced by the Whitehorse Planning Group on Homelessness (2000) addressed issues and "worrying trends" of vulnerable youth in Whitehorse "living in at-risk situations that need urgent and immediate attention." Immediate objectives included "more focused, stable programming to help them set and achieve goals and to prevent a slide any further down the slope to homelessness and isolation" (p. 4).

Early work leading to the WCP was grounded in a belief on the part of educators that barriers to learning are created and maintained by problems that originate outside the walls of the classroom.

Whole Child Program

An original Statement of Intent declared that:

> *The intent of this project is to improve the social well being, mental and physical health, and learning capacity of the children attending Whitehorse Elementary. The scope of the project will also include preschool children living in the downtown catchment area. The above goal is to be realized through the effective coordination of services from local child serving agencies and institutions, the development of improved community capacity, and the encouragement of cross systemic cooperation and coordination.*

This Statement of Intent document also listed seven "Guiding Program Principles" developed by the original interest group for the proposed project:

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1. *All participating members of this new initiative commit themselves, as far as possible, to the coordination of service effort on behalf of children and their families. This requires that all participating organizations and professionals work in close collaboration with one another. This implies that there will be cooperative ownership of the process and decisions governing the process.*

2. *The child and her or his family are central to the delivery of this program. Though important, all other service and organizational requirements are secondary to the need to place children and their families first.*

3. *The project will work diligently towards the building of a community based education model. In order for the project to take hold and sustain itself, it is critical that we collectively work toward the building and strengthening of community capacity. Thus, the project works with the community, not as an external controlling agent.*

4. *As far as possible the project will bend itself to meet the actual needs of the children and their families. It will not be limited to institutional mandates. Openness to flexibility is fundamental. Education does not begin in kindergarten, but is an ongoing process that begins at birth. Parents are the child's first teachers, thus it becomes crucial that we include programs that develop and encourage this notion.*

5. *The project will place the protection of children from abuse and neglect ahead of all other program principles.*

6. *The committee will encourage innovative and creative thinking and behaviour. As the project is an innovative service, it will be at liberty to take calculated risks in order to achieve its goals. Thus risk-taking is an important dynamic of the project.*

7. *The integrity of the process and the project shall not be compromised.*

The Statement of Intent from the initiating group declared not only a social purpose, a population, and general goals, but also specified a foundation set of values to guide the process of the work itself.

Once the group was incorporated as a non-profit society in 2002, they approved a Mission Statement and three objectives for the WCP.

Whole Child Program

As approved by the Dealing with the Whole Child Society in July of 2002, the initial Mission Statement read:

To improve the well being and encourage the healthy development of at risk students and their families through holistic services that are provided collaboratively in a community school environment.

At the same time, the WCP Steering Committee approved the following three objectives:

1. To identify and understand the holistic needs of students and their families.

2. To develop and implement programs and services that adequately meet these needs within a school environment and utilizing, where possible, existing resources and through complementing academic programming.

3. To promote and implement effective partnerships amongst community stakeholders and the school staff that will give vision and direction to the programs and services being delivered.

This first specification of mission and objectives for the WCP points to the building of a stronger community through improved service to families in the inner city area of Whitehorse. The overall vision here is one of a stronger inner city area of Whitehorse as a better place to live, with the WCP offering community programs and coordinating services to students and families through an active open school concept. A major task for this new program would be development of just such an open and accessible community school to serve as a safe and trusted alternative for families in trouble.

> ### *Whole Child Program*
>
> *The June 2003 Whole Child Project Annual Report acknowledged broad goals for an inner city school such as Whitehorse Elementary to "remove barriers to learning created by problems that begin outside of the classroom" following from a vision where "the school, instead of merely dealing with problems on a crisis basis, focuses school-linked services on prevention and early intervention." The school would "serve as a hub for delivery of services that complement and support education."*

Building and reflecting on their experiences during the implementation stage, the WCP has now asserted a set of foundation beliefs for their work.

> ### *Whole Child Program*
>
> *The WCP is based on beliefs that:*
>
> 1. *Parents are their children's first, most important, and most influential teachers.*
>
> 2. *Children are most successful when schools and families are mutually supportive.*
>
> 3. *The earlier that schools and families connect, the better for children.*
>
> 4. *The more information parents have about both child development and school expectations, the better they can influence outcomes to be positive. (Whole Child Program, 2005)*

Community programs vary considerably in the extent to which their purpose and direction are clarified in writing. At one end of the continuum are programs that have no clearly stated direction but continue through momentum and a general sense that they must be doing something right. This kind of approach poses obvious problems for funding, evaluation, and accountability. At the other end of the continuum are programs with so many defined mission statements, goal statements, targets, objectives, and sub-objectives that the overall work becomes particularized into a vast array of discrete accomplishments. What is a reasonable balance? At the early stage of "getting started" with a community social development project, the focus is more on expressing and committing to a shared vision for the work.

The following questions may guide you and your group in expressing your vision for your community and the values you will promote through your work together.

C What would your community look like if you made the changes you believe in?
C All of you have particular interests in this project based on your own experiences in this community and elsewhere. Some of you are involved because of your work, some because of personal involvement with the issues, some out of a sense of citizenship. What do you have in common?
C Can you declare a shared vision of this project to which you can all commit at this time?
C Can you express and agree on some basic values that will guide your work together? Are there foundation principles that you agree will govern your activities?
C Are these principles consistent with your vision for the community?
C What is the program intended to do overall for the people it serves?
C What will be the general approach of the program?
C What kinds of activities will there be?
C Are there people in the community currently working towards this vision?
C Who will be served by the intended program?
C How will they benefit?
C Where will the program be based?
C Do the various agencies involved have their own vision or mission statements directing their work in this community?
C How do the agency vision statements fit with what you are proposing for your project?

2.3   EARLY INITIATIVES

To fully appreciate current WCP direction and activities, it is necessary to understand the volunteer commitment that pre-dated the funded formal program.

According to teachers and administrators who were there at the time, Whitehorse Elementary School in the early 1990s had a reputation for being a tough school where fighting and vandalism were common. Staff had to deal with up to twenty fights per day, and the school at that time had a special room in the basement for violent kids to "cool off." The strap was in common usage as an instrument of social control.

Many changes were reported in the mid-1990s. The strap was abolished and a clear policy was implemented against humiliation of students as a technique of discipline and control. A second Vice-Principal position was added with specific mention of responsibility for promoting community development with the English-stream students. Administration and teachers began to acknowledge the need to go beyond the constraints of formal education if they wanted to help this community.

To make a difference, this group realized they needed to create a community atmosphere in the school. By the time of a 1996 workshop entitled "Success Before Six" (led by an outside facilitator), a number of teachers and administrators were discussing what was later described as "the germ of the Whole Child Program."

Whole Child Program

By the late 1990s, a core group of teachers and administrators at Whitehorse Elementary School were devoting considerable volunteer time to do what they could to promote the vision of a stronger community with the school as a central resource. For example, it was obvious that some children were coming to school hungry. A breakfast program was initiated with WES Principal and Vice-Principals preparing food donated by local stores. Eventually, this program was taken over by parents from the community, and it still operates today, as does a lunch program.

The same group at WES initiated an overall "open school" approach whereby students could come in to the school when they arrived in the morning rather than wait outside for the bell. Facilities such as the gym, computer lab, and library were made available to them (along with breakfast).

Soon these committed volunteers were doing all that could be done within the conventional school system. They met regularly to consider next steps, and invited other community leaders from outside the school to these meetings. Two key realizations set the stage for the direction of their future work. First, it was clear to the group that they had to move beyond the school to reach families in the community. Second, a central figure would be needed to coordinate all the proposed activities for school and community, yet there were no resources available within the school budget for such a position.

Several key components of the foundation for what would become the WCP were now in place. The idea had come from the community. Many volunteer hours had been committed already by community resource persons beyond their paid professional roles. Although beginning with a focus on children, there was an acknowledgement that any program must reach out to families, but this was beyond the scope of teachers and school administrators. Other groups serving families would need to become involved. An identified staff person would be required to bring all of this together and get the new program off the ground. In addition to the volunteer work already being done, there was a new focus – securing funding for a staff position.

2.4 INITIAL FUNDRAISING

Raising funds to hire a community coordinator became the central task for this committed community group.

Whole Child Program

The expanded community group (now including likeminded persons from the RCMP, Learning Disabilities Association of the Yukon, Whitehorse Planning Group on Homelessness, Yukon Family Services, First Nations, City of Whitehorse) began to seek funding for the community coordination role.

On behalf of Whitehorse Elementary School, a proposal for a school social worker was sent initially to the Yukon Territorial Government but was not successful. There were issues over what responsibilities lay with Yukon Education and which ones with Yukon Health and Social Services. Yukon Education expressed concern that teachers had been trained as educators not social workers, and the educational experience might be diluted if schools were trying to do too many other things at the same time; Yukon Health and Social Services could not pursue a role for social work in the schools when their resources were already stretched so thin trying to provide mandated services.

A funding proposal for a pilot "Dealing with the Whole Child" Program was prepared and submitted under a Homeless Initiative, but it did not match the criteria well enough for approval. The proposal was then forwarded to Human Resource Development Canada (HRDC), but did not meet the timing requirements for that funding.

A senior RCMP officer (with fortunate overlapping memberships on the Whitehorse Elementary School Parent Council, the WCP Steering Committee, and various funding review bodies) suggested the proposal might be of interest to certain funding initiatives through RCMP HQ in Ottawa. Using resources provided to them as a federal partner in the National Crime Prevention Strategy, the RCMP's National Youth Strategy funded the May 2001 hiring of a Community Coordinator for the Dealing with the Whole Child Project.

Whitehorse Elementary School agreed to provide office space for the Coordinator as well as a room for a Family Resource Centre and another Community Room for WCP programming.

At this point, the Whole Child Program could be considered launched. There was a home base and a staff person to work towards accomplishing the vision of the committed group of volunteers. The next major task would be understanding and prioritizing community needs in order to develop relevant and responsive programming.

2.5   PRIORITY NEEDS

One of the first tasks facing the new WCP Community Coordinator was to determine the needs and priorities of the families in the downtown Whitehorse area served by Whitehorse Elementary School.

Whole Child Program

In the fall of 2001, a door-to-door survey was conducted by the WES Vice-Principal/Counsellor and the WCP Community Coordinator. Most families were interviewed at home after school or in the evenings. Some families preferred to meet at the school.

This initial survey consisted of the following questions:

C *How long have you lived in downtown Whitehorse?*
C *How would you describe the downtown community? How do you like it?*
C *How many children do you have attending Whitehorse Elementary School? What grades?*
C *How many children do you have that are pre-school age?*
C *Are your children involved in out of school programs such as recreation (sports, dance, etc.)? If yes, what specifically?*
C *Are there existing programs you would like to have them involved in? If yes, what programs?*
C *What barriers are in the way?*
C *Would you like programs to be available for your children through the school?*
C *Do you have a feeling of community here in downtown Whitehorse? (Do you know your neighbours? Do you have close friends & family living here? Are there safe places for your children to play?)*
C *What would make you feel a greater sense of community?*
C *What could WES do to help create a stronger community feeling?*
C *Do you think that Whitehorse needs a community centre for downtown families?*
C *What would you like to see in a community centre?*

> C *What educational programs would you be interested in? (General Educational Development (GED)? Job skills training? Recreational or interest courses?)*
> C *What is your sense of Whitehorse Elementary School? Does it have a welcoming feeling? How do your children feel about Whitehorse Elementary School?*
> C *Any ideas about what services for families the downtown could use?*
> C *Do you feel Whitehorse Elementary School could help meet some of those needs? Suggestions?*
> C *Would you be on a Board?*
> C *Do you currently volunteer with any service?*
> C *Would you be interested in volunteering?*
>
> *Results of the survey were reported to the Steering Committee and later posted on the website. The concerns identified and the programs requested became the basis for developing the first WCP programs.*

In effect, this door-to-door survey was an assessment of the community's needs. The literature offers many methodologies and protocols for community needs assessments. The approach taken by the WCP, although simple and direct, proved to be very effective. The necessary data were collected but there were other major benefits from the personal approach taken. What better way to introduce the WCP to local residents than a visit at home from the Vice-Principal and the Community Coordinator? Both WES and the WCP were introduced in a personal way to the community by having "officials" make direct personal contact. This approach also conveys interest and respect for the opinions of the local residents.

The Community Survey has been modified and conducted each year since 2001. Its use will be discussed further in Section 4.1 – Formative Evaluation.

3.0 THE PROGRAM

The previous section described the context and origins of the Whole Child Program. With that background, this section examines the operation of the program itself with specific attention focused on three features of the WCP: structure; activities; and funding/resources.

3.1 STRUCTURE

As with many community-based social development agencies, the WCP features an organizational structure that is relatively flat, non-hierarchical, and participatory. The WCP is governed by a Steering Committee that represents interested and participating partners. Reporting to the Steering Committee is the Community Coordinator, a role crucial to the operation and identity of the WCP. An Outreach Worker reports to the Community Coordinator. In addition to the formal Steering Committee and staff positions, the WCP involves an informal alliance with key community agencies and a less-defined partnership role with many other local services and resources.

Whole Child Program

Steering Committee

Since October 2002, the Dealing with the Whole Child Project Steering Committee has been incorporated as a non-profit society. Normally, the Steering Committee meets once per month. With very little turnover, the Steering Committee averaged 12-14 members during the WCP implementation stage. Organizations with representation on the Steering Committee include:

C *Whole Child Project (Community Coordinator)*

C *Whitehorse Elementary School (Acting Principal; Past Principal; retired Vice-Principal)*

C *Yukon Education (Director of Special Programs; Director of Learning; Director of French Services)*

C *RCMP (Whitehorse Detachment Operations NCO; "M" Division Planning & Community Services)*

C *Yukon Health and Social Services (Social Worker)*

C *Learning Disabilities Association of the Yukon (Director)*

C *City of Whitehorse (Parks & Recreation Worker)*

C *Champagne Aishihik First Nation (Education Coordinator)*

C *Ministerial Advisory Council on Rural Health (Member of federal group)*

C *Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition (Co-Chair) and Whitehorse Planning Group on Homelessness (Chair)*

Persons recruited to the first Steering Committee, understandably, were those who "could get the job done," recognized community leaders with a commitment to the vision of the WCP and an active interest in its initiation in downtown Whitehorse. The job at that time involved securing funding for the project and monitoring the start-up phase. Now that the WCP is established in the community, it may be time to consider revisions to the composition and operations of the Steering Committee. These issues are discussed further in Section 5.2 – Consolidation.

Reporting to this Steering Committee is the pivotal staff position of Community Coordinator.

Whole Child Program

Community Coordinator

Reporting to the Steering Committee is the WCP Community Coordinator. Initial funding for the Community Coordinator position in 2001 allowed the WCP to move past the vision and efforts of a few volunteers to become an actual program.

The WCP Community Coordinator is actually a 0.7 position, with the remaining 0.3 of the incumbent's full-time work duties attached to a role as Technology Integration Mentoring Teacher at Whitehorse Elementary School. For the 0.7 WCP position, the Community Coordinator is accountable to the WCP Steering Committee. For the 0.3 Technology Integration Mentoring Teacher position, the Community Coordinator is accountable to the Principal of Whitehorse Elementary School.

The original job description for the WCP Community Coordinator position (as developed and approved by the Steering Committee for the initial funding proposal) included the following duties:

1. *Establish a Community Resource Centre.*
2. *Identify programs needed and begin implementation of these programs.*
3. *Purchase materials and set up the Community Centre.*
4. *Coordinate services and support to parents and children.*
5. *Supervise community liaison workers.*
6. *Manage the centre.*
7. *Secure other resources and staff as deemed necessary.*
8. *Keep records and provide documentation.*
9. *Liaise with staff to keep them updated.*
10. *Member of the Steering Committee.*
11. *Facilitate the development of programs that would be a joint effort between various departments (i.e., Learning Disabilities Association of the Yukon (LDAY), Health and Social Services, Yukon Family Services, etc.).*
12. *Facilitate true partnerships with various agencies.*
13. *Facilitate effective partnerships with First Nations.*
14. *Do an inventory of the various agencies and funds available and be able to write proposals in order to secure the necessary funding for various aspects of the program.*
15. *Meet with Steering Committee, at regularly scheduled times, to give a progress report.*

Perhaps contrary to expectation, dual accountability for the Community Coordinator (reporting to the WCP Steering Committee for the 0.7 position and to the Principal of Whitehorse Elementary School for the 0.3 position) has not proven to be an issue or concern. There are obvious connections between the roles, and the administration of WES is strongly represented on the WCP Steering Committee. For effective practice in rural communities, such multiple roles are gaining more acceptance as characteristic and even desirable rather than a liability (Bodor, 2004).

A second staff position, reporting to the Community Coordinator, has been a part of the intended WCP structure since the beginning, although until recently there have been some difficulties with filling the position.

Whole Child Program

Community/Family Outreach Worker

Reporting to the Community Coordinator, the WCP Community/Family Outreach Worker has office hours at Whitehorse Elementary School in the mornings and is involved with community outreach in the afternoons.

According to the required services outlined in the job description, the Community/Family Outreach Worker will:

1. *Promote growth and positive behavioural change in students which will assist them in their academic and social success within the school setting and support them in remaining in school.*
2. *Undertake home visits to ensure attendance to assess family dynamics as they impact on the student and to assist the family to function effectively.*
3. *Promote life skills within the family, where necessary.*
4. *Act as liaison between the parents/guardians and the school.*
5. *Act as an advocate for the student and the family, and participate in the school-based working team meetings in regard to individual student need assessment and behavioural goal planning.*
6. *Play a mediating role where students, parents, or the school are in conflict.*
7. *Facilitate the development of self esteem and strong social skills among the students involved with the WCP.*
8. *Provide information about relevant community services and resources to students and their families.*
9. *Provide supportive instrumental counseling when necessary.*
10. *Strive to be a positive and effective role model.*
11. *Compile a weekly report for the Community Coordinator indicating students/families worked with, and including (a) intervention strategies carried out, (b) perceived student social/emotional growth and progress, and (c) any recommended changes in approach.*
12. *Determine, judge, and select appropriate course(s) of action within limits of established rules and procedures.*
13. *Establish and maintain open communication with students, parents/guardians, school personnel and involved community resources to meet students' needs.*
14. *Attend meetings as requested.*
15. *Treat as confidential all information obtained while carrying out this role.*

In the fall of 2002, a social worker assigned by Yukon Health and Social Services began a part-time connection with WCP at Whitehorse Elementary School for 4 hours or one half-day per week. Unfortunately for WCP, this worker's primary job was in child protection and she was frequently called away from Whitehorse Elementary School for emergency protection matters. The arrangement lasted only three months and proved unsatisfactory for both parties.

A part-time WCP Family Support Worker, reporting to the Community Coordinator, was hired in January 2003, however this person left for full-time employment elsewhere after five months. In January 2004, the part-time position of Community/Family Worker was again filled but this person also left for full-time employment elsewhere. Recruiting and retaining a suitable part-time worker proved difficult. The interpersonal skills and social development perspective required are attractive to other northern services recruiting for full-time workers.

In November 2004, the WCP hired a local resident with a lengthy history of volunteer contributions to WES and the WCP as Community/Family Outreach Coordinator.

In addition to its own administration structure and staff, the WCP also has relationships and connections with many different groups and agencies in the Whitehorse area. These relationships can be thought of in three groupings: the alliance; the host; and the partners.

Alliance – Conceptually, the social development thrust of the WCP involves elements of education, community policing, social services, and recreation.

Whole Child Program

Operationally, the WCP finds itself dealing frequently with Yukon Education, the RCMP, Yukon Health and Social Services, and the City of Whitehorse Parks and Recreation. With overlapping interests and professional values, the WCP has a special relationship with these groups, all of whom are represented on the Steering Committee, contribute (although unequally) to the resource base, and participate in the activities of the WCP. This relationship could be characterized as an alliance committed to pursuing, through the WCP, common long-term social development goals for downtown Whitehorse.

Host – The WCP has a fundamental connection with its host: Whitehorse Elementary School. The connection is so strong that the 2004 evaluation found many people in the community do not make a distinction between the two.

Partners – With regard to program activities and day-to-day operations, the WCP has relationships with many different agencies and groups in Whitehorse. With some partners, the WCP delivers joint services; with other partners, the WCP plays a simpler host or facilitator role (coordinating use of space at Whitehorse Elementary School; promotion). In addition, there are many agencies with whom the WCP connects as part of larger networks for information sharing or referral.

Whole Child Project

The 2004 evaluation listed the following agencies and organizations as WCP partners:

C *Learning Disabilities Association of the Yukon (LDAY) (Positively Family programming)*

C *Healthy Families (Parent & Tots programming; Nobody's Perfect Parenting workshops; Christmas Crafts session)*

C *Yukon Family Services (Nobody's Perfect Parenting workshops)*

C *Lake Laberge Lions Club (free use of van for transporting downtown children to evening programs for the 2001-2002 school year until it was necessary to come up with something larger to accommodate more children)*

C *Violence Prevention Yukon (Spousal Abuse Support Group)*

C *Yukon Volunteer Bureau (facilitate connections of volunteers for WCP activities; occasional referrals to WES)*

C *Yukon Arts Centre (Whitehorse Youth Centre/Whole Child Project/Whitehorse Elementary School joint mural and art mentorship program initiative)*

C *Whitehorse Youth Centre (mural project; joint evening programming for 9-12 year olds and sharing of WCP transportation)*

C *Skookum Jim Friendship Centre (joint evening programming and sharing of WCP transportation)*

C *Takhini Transport (contract since Oct. 2002 for large school bus to transport participants to evening programs from downtown; regular bus driver also participates in programming in the gym)*

C *Champagne Aishihik First Nation (landscape modeling)*

C *Leaping Feats Creative Danceworks (Dance Class)*

C *Northern Lights Dance & Dancers with Latitude (after school classes two days/week)*

C *Yukon Association of Community Living (Stress Reduction workshops for parents; Circle of Friends)*

C *Ta'an Kwach'an First Nation (provided an educational support for the 2001-2002 school year through the WCP)*

C *Fireweed Montessori Preschool Program (space for preschool at WES through the WCP; in exchange, one free tuition made available to a family needing financial assistance)*

C *Partners for Children (mutual distribution of newsletters)*

C *Whitehorse Air Cadets Program (space provided for air cadets; in exchange, cadets assist with open gym)*

C *Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Society of the Yukon (coordination to provide Stress Management workshops for parents; also use of facilities for teacher workshops on FAS)*

C *Yukon Child Care Association (use of WCP facilities for Professional Development & staff meetings)*

C *Whitehorse Planning Group on Homelessness (coordination through shared Board membership)*

C *Yukon Anti-Poverty Group (coordination through shared Board membership)*

C *City of Whitehorse Parks & Recreation (coordinated provision of free registration for Parks & Recreation programs for two families in need of financial support)*

C *City of Whitehorse Aquatic Centre (monthly swim nights for downtown kids)*

C *Yukon Health Services (awareness sessions of WCP and Parent & Tots through Well Baby Clinics)*

C *Child Abuse Treatment Services (coordination between CATS and WES teachers for anger management training and the Bubble program)*

C *Kaushee's Place (distribution of newsletters; letters of support for programming in support of families)*

C *Francophone School Board & Ecole Emilie Tremblay (involvement with Bullying Prevention initiative at WES; workshops by and for students)*

C *Selkirk School (distribute Newsletter; resource for developing community programming for their families)*

C *Elijah Smith Elementary (distribute Newsletter; Principal past member of WCP Steering Committee)*

C *CBC (CBC webmaster offers Internet Workshops for parents through WCP)*

C *Kiwanis Club (coordinated RCMP Kid Identification Kits and TOP COP Literacy promotion for families)*

C *Yukon Department of Education (partnership for a Kindergarten four year old early intervention program)*

C *Downtown Daycare Centres: Downtown Days, Guardian Angels Family Dayhome, Creative Play Daycare (distribute Newsletter; transportation provided from WCP dance program to downtown daycares to support working parents)*

C *Canadian Parents for French (provision of Community Room for meetings)*

3.2   ACTIVITIES

The WCP has initiated and/or coordinated a wide range of activities since its inception in the spring of 2001. New activities and programs are always being developed in response to needs identified through the annual Family Surveys as well as ideas originating with volunteers and staff. A few of these activities might be described as signature or defining activities for the WCP. These are the regular activities initiated by the WCP and run by volunteers with help from the WCP staff. Three such defining activities are: Open Gym and Computer Lab; Stone Soup Club; and Swim Night.

> ### *Whole Child Program*
>
> *<u>Open Gym and Computer Lab:</u> One evening per week (currently Wednesdays) Whitehorse Elementary School is open from 6:30-8:00 pm for kids and parents to play basketball in the gym, work on computers in the lab, or participate in other activities of interest run by volunteers in various rooms around the school. Volunteers on Wednesday nights include RCMP officers, teachers, school administrators, parents, and interested persons from the community. Open Gym Night regularly brings in 40-50 kids and some parents. Additional activities scheduled during this same time period offer families a variety of events from which to choose when they are in the school.*
>
> *<u>Stone Soup Club:</u> This is essentially a regular workshop on preparation of healthy foods -- a community kitchen program which has become an informal parent support program. Parents look at issues of budgeting, buying, and preparing healthy meals and lunches, often under the direction of a "guest chef" (guests have included RCMP officers, Steering Committee members, teachers, parents, principals, etc.). Food prepared during the cooking class is either shared at the end of the class or taken home.*
>
> *<u>Swim Night:</u> The old downtown Whitehorse swimming pool was re-invented as a beautiful new Aquatic Centre at the top of Two Mile Hill. While the new pool facility is an amazing resource for the community as a whole, it is inaccessible for most of the downtown kids because of cost and transportation issues. One night per month, the WCP takes kids and families from the downtown core by bus to the new centre for a swim night free of charge. A recent swim night (February 2005) reported 62 participants.*

In addition to these signature programs, a range of other activities is always being offered.

> ### *Whole Child Program*
>
> *Following are some of the WCP activities and workshops that have been offered to downtown Whitehorse residents (some initiated by WCP; some hosted by WCP with other agencies):*
>
> C *Stained Glass Mosaics for Families (parents and kids working together)*

- C *Stenciling for Families (age 9+, create stencils, sponge stenciling on wood)*
- C *Internet Workshops for Parents and Staff (Internet Basics; SPAM free Internet; Your Child and Safety on the Internet)*
- C *Scrapbooking for Families*
- C *Gingerbread House Building*
- C *Model Building for Kids*
- C *Cooking & Crafts for Kids (ages 9-12)*
- C *Cooking on the Go!*
- C *Lending Library ("Reading to your Child" kits)*
- C *Ukrainian Easter Egg Painting*
- C *Dance Program (grades 1-3)*
- C *Pre-Teen Program (ages 9-12, co-programming with Whitehorse Youth Centre and Skookum Jim Friendship Centre)*
- C *Fathers' Ping Pong Night (drop-in coordinated with Healthy Families Yukon)*
- C *Family Resource Centre Computer Access (Internet, e-mail, printing, scanning)*
- C *Girls Soccer (with Yukon Soccer Association)*
- C *Woodworking (with Skills Canada)*
- C *Landform Modeling (building floor model of Yukon with designation of First Nations language groups, coordinated with Champagne Aishihik First Nations)*
- C *Developmental Stages of Reading Workshops (parents)*
- C *Spelling Workshops (parents)*
- C *Stress Reduction Workshops (parents, Yukon Community Inclusion Association)*
- C *Positively Parenting and Family Literacy Program (Learning Disabilities Association of Yukon)*
- C *Nobody's Perfect Parenting Program (Healthy Families Yukon and Yukon Family Services)*
- C *Parent & Tots Support Group (Healthy Families Yukon, WES)*

- *Noonhour Parenting Videos & Lunch (Yukon Family Services, WES)*
- *DARE Drug Abuse Prevention Program*
- *First Nations Potluck & Cultural Awareness (parents and teachers, Champagne Aishihik First Nations)*
- *FAS Workshop (parents and teachers, Fetal Alcohol Association of the Yukon)*
- *Leaping Feats Dance class (ages 6-7)*
- *Normal Child Development Workshop (Learning Disabilities Association of Yukon, Yukon Family Services)*

Through these coordinated efforts of the WCP, families in the downtown core of Whitehorse have access to relevant and diverse activities of interest. Most of these people would be unable to participate in other municipal or territorial recreation programs because of barriers related to program fees, equipment costs, transportation, and attitudes. There is no charge to the participants for WCP activities. Child care is provided free of charge at Whitehorse Elementary School during the regular Wednesday evening WCP program times. Supervised free transportation is available. Most activities are run by volunteers (many of whom are teachers, RCMP, or parents).

While transportation is not a recreational activity in the same sense as the others listed above, it has certainly been a defining service provided by WCP and should be mentioned in this section. The initial community needs survey identified transportation as a major concern for parents of children in the downtown core of Whitehorse. Affordable and safe transportation was clearly a requirement if children were going to participate in evening activities at WES or elsewhere. In the first year of WCP operation, the Lake Labarge Lions Club provided a van that could be used to pick up kids in the downtown core. Pickups were done by the RCMP and school Vice-Principal. Families felt safe seeing their children go off in the van with these responsible adults. As program numbers grew and more activities were offered, the volunteers were making so many trips with the van that they were missing the program itself. A contract was arranged with Takhini Transport to use a school bus to pick up all the children and interested parents for the regular Open Gym and Computer Lab evenings at WES and the swim night. A Principal, Vice-Principal or RCMP officer still rides the bus. Participants are returned home after the event on the same bus with the same supervision.

3.3   FUNDING/RESOURCES

Initiation of the Whole Child Project relied heavily on grant funding through the RCMP National Youth Strategy. Without the initial RCMP funding in 2001, the WCP in Whitehorse would not have started.   Funding for the Community Coordinator position was absolutely essential for the move from a volunteer service based in the school to a community service reaching out to families in the downtown area with a wide range of coordinated programs.

Whole Child Program

In 2001/2002, a $50,000 grant from the RCMP National Youth Strategy enabled the WCP to hire a Community Coordinator and establish itself as a resource to families in the downtown core of Whitehorse. In addition that first year, the WCP generated $1300 through incidental fundraising and received a $2500 grant from the city of Whitehorse Parks & Recreation for program materials. As well, the Lake Labarge Lions Club provided a van that first year for transporting kids from the downtown core area for WCP activities.

Equivalent block funding has been received annually from the RCMP National Youth Strategy since that time. In 2002/2003, Yukon Education committed to covering the 0.7 WCP Community Coordinator position, and that commitment continues. In effect, this frees up a portion of the RCMP block grant to be used for such things as: another position (family support or outreach), researchers, summer programmers, supplies, etc.

The WCP continues to seek funding from sources with an interest in social development work. A recent grant from Crime Prevention Yukon helps with the cost of safe transportation for downtown families to and from WCP activities; a portion of this grant also funds a part-time recreation worker to run the Open Gym nights.

Whitehorse Elementary School, where the Whole Child Program resides, provides space for a Family Resource Centre plus a Community Room for WCP programming or hosting services from WCP partner agencies. The school also provides office space for the WCP Community Coordinator and Outreach Worker.

> *Whitehorse Elementary School was awarded the Network of Innovative Schools designation in September 2003 in part because of the WES/WCP collaboration to work with downtown families through programming such as Internet Workshops for Parents, the Family Resource Centre, and Open Computer Lab. The award included a $30,000 grant from Industry Canada over three years ($10,000 per year). One benefit of this funding award has been provision of a computer pod with eight networked stations in the Family Resource Centre for use by families, as well as support for maintaining the WCP website.*

Overall, grant funding from the RCMP plus the commitment from Yukon Education to fund the Community Coordinator position provided the foundation resources to allow the WCP to establish itself in the downtown core of Whitehorse. These contributions have been generous but not without problems for the new program. The RCMP grants are on a year-to-year basis with no guarantee of automatic renewal; the Yukon Education commitment to the Community Coordinator position was initially for two years – 2002-2004 – but has been extended. This is not the same as stable funding. The WCP has become an important resource in downtown Whitehorse but funding concerns demand a great deal of time and energy from the Steering Committee and staff. Possible funding directions for the future are discussed further in Section 5.0 – Organizational Development.

> *Whole Child Program*
>
> *Even with the annual grants, the WCP has encountered occasional short-term difficulties with local allocation and dispersal. Some examples:*
>
> C *A grant in the second year went to the City of Whitehorse rather than the WCP.*
> C *When the WCP became a society, new problems were created because the RCMP was not set up to contribute funds directly to grass roots community organizations without a contract in place for tangible goods or services.*
> C *A sizeable grant for summer programming in 2003 reportedly was received in Whitehorse but had to be returned to Ottawa when it could not be dispersed locally in time for the summer period. The poor fit between the federal fiscal year and a community program based on the school year is an ongoing tension. (It can be difficult to spend money allocated for summer programming by the fiscal year end of March 31.)*

These difficulties were overcome. The lesson learned, however, is that a successful grant application does not necessarily mean smooth transfer of funds from one organization to another, especially if they operate on different principles and time frames. Although it is unlikely that every "glitch" can be predicted, you may be able to anticipate some of the potential difficulties for your community group by asking a few key questions:

C   Is our funder used to dealing with organizations such as ours?
C   Do we know of other grant recipients from this source? What has been their experience?
C   In what form and on what schedule will actual transfer of funds be made to our organization?
C   Are there expectations about when the funds will or must be spent? How do these fit with our local programming needs?

4.0 EVALUATION

This section looks at the related issues of evaluation (Is the program working? How do we know? How might it be improved?) and dissemination (How do we make these findings accessible to program staff, decision-makers, participants, funders, and other groups engaged in similar social development work?).   Of particular interest will be the data generated regularly by the program (weekly, monthly, annually) and the recent report *An Evaluation of the Whole Child Project (WCP): Whitehorse, Yukon* (Zapf, 2004).

The evaluation literature commonly makes a distinction between formative evaluations and summative evaluations. In general, a formative evaluation is intended to provide information to program staff and decision-makers on how to improve a developing or ongoing program, whereas a summative evaluation is intended to assess the overall impact of an established program. Formative evaluation procedures are usually built right into regular ongoing program operations, and are meant to build the capacity of the program. The data are examined for purposes of program improvement (how could we be doing this better?) and fine-tuning of components (how could this activity be done more effectively/efficiently?). Summative evaluations are occasional and more formal events, often scheduled according to a program's long-term funding cycle or the achievement of a developmental milestone. They are usually undertaken for purposes of accountability (are the funders and community getting intended benefits?) and strategic planning or policy-making (where do we go from here and how do we get there?).

In practice, the distinction between the two is often not so clear cut. Many evaluations feature formative and summative aspects. Monthly activity reports might accumulate and be used in aggregate by funders and policy makers to assess the overall effectiveness of a program. A summative report evaluating program outcomes may include recommendations to make daily operations more effective. While such overlap is common and even useful, there may still be utility in distinguishing between the two as they tend to have different audiences, methodologies, and emphases.

4.1   FORMATIVE EVALUATION

Formative evaluations generally focus on capacity building by providing information to program staff and decision-makers on how to improve or fine-tune a program that is ongoing and evolving.

During the hectic implementation phase of the WCP, there was little time to devote to systematic data collection during activities. Nearly every activity was new or evolving and much WCP staff time was spent on planning, support, coordination, participation, and troubleshooting. Monthly and annual reports served as a sufficient overview of activities with minimal data collected for individual activity sessions. There may be an opportunity now to consider collection of additional relevant data at the level of the individual program event.

Many programs make use of an activity sheet for recording such data, and the WCP has been using a version. While content can be revised, expanded, or contracted to meet local needs, a regular activity report might include such items as:

C Date
C Location
C Duration
C Who was there?
       -Staff
       -Volunteers
       -Participants
C Demographics (if possible)
       -Age
       -Gender
       -Ethnicity

-Area of residence
                    -First time participant / Repeat
                    -Other
    C   Preparation for Activity
                    -Who?
                    -Hours?
    C   Follow-Up
                    -Who?
                    -Hours?
    C   Outputs/Outcomes
                    -Products created
                    -Interaction measures
                    -Attitude measures
                    -Behaviour measures
    C   Critical/Significant Incidents
                    -Comments from participant(s)
                    -Insights
                    -Unexpected event
                    -Injury/Accident
                    -Mastery/Celebration
    C   Comments
                    -Concerns
                    -Positives
                    -Suggestions
                    -Reminders for next week

4.2   SUMMATIVE EVALUATION

Summative evaluations are generally intended to assess the overall outcome or impact of an established program, and are usually undertaken for purposes of accountability (are the founders and community getting intended benefits?) and policy-making (where do we go from here and how should we proceed?).

Whole Child Program

After three years of WCP operation in Whitehorse, an evaluation was conducted in early 2004 at the request of the RCMP and funded through their National Youth Strategy at National Headquarters in Ottawa. The Canadian Research Institute for Law and the Family (CRILF), based in Calgary, was contracted to conduct the evaluation and prepare a report. CRILF had done previous evaluation work with the RCMP including ongoing projects in the Yukon and elsewhere.

The first step in a summative evaluation is usually a negotiation between the evaluators and key stakeholders to sort out the focus and scope of the study. Research questions and an evaluation design are considered for their appropriateness to the developmental stage of the program and their relevance for the stakeholders. The results of this negotiation process need to be documented and affirmed by the evaluator, the program, and the sponsor. Such a preliminary agreement, often called a feasibility report, will outline at a minimum the research questions, the time frame for the study, the budget, the methodology, and the nature and distribution of a final evaluation report.

Whole Child Program

An initial site visit took place in November 2003 when the Executive Director of CRILF and the Senior Research Officer for the RCMP National Youth Strategy held meetings in Whitehorse with the WCP Steering Committee, WCP Community Coordinator, RCMP officers from "M" Division and Whitehorse Detachment, and program participants. Written documentation generated during the first two years of WCP operation was also gathered during this visit (funding proposals, articles, Coordinator reports to Steering Committee, WCP Annual Reports, survey results, etc.).

As a result of these meetings and review of the documentation, the following research questions were developed for the WCP evaluation:

C *What is the vision of the WCP?*

C *How was the WCP implemented?*

C *What is the structure of the WCP and how does it function?*

C *What roles are played by WCP staff, particularly the Community Coordinator?*

C *What is the community context in which the WCP operates?*

C *How does the specific community context affect the structure and activities of the WCP?*

C *What indications are available regarding the strengths and weaknesses of the WCP to date?*

C *What has been the overall impact of the WCP on the inner city community of Whitehorse? On the RCMP? On Whitehorse Elementary School? On social service delivery in Whitehorse?*

C *What has been the overall cost of the WCP to date?*

C *What resources are needed to sustain the activities of the WCP?*

C *What resources are needed for the WCP to develop in response to community needs?*

C *What recommendations might be made for improvement of the WCP?*

C *Could the WCP model be useful in other northern communities?*

These questions were reported back to the evaluation funders via a **WCP Evaluation Feasibility Report** *accepted in early January 2004 for an evaluation to be completed by March 31, 2004. As Principal Investigator for the WCP evaluation, CRILF selected a Professor of Social Work from the University of Calgary who had previously lived and worked in Whitehorse, and had published extensively on issues of social service delivery in rural and remote regions.*

The fundamental criteria by which any program evaluation is judged has been called the "utility standard" (Patton, 1997, p. 18), or the extent to which the intended users of an evaluation actually make use of the findings for decision-making and program improvement. Patton puts forward two foundational steps for "utilization-focused evaluation":

1. Identifying and organizing primary users of the evaluation, and
2. Focusing the evaluation on their interests and what they believe will be useful. (p. 186)

Whole Child Program

Two primary intended users of the evaluation of the Whole Child Program in Whitehorse, Yukon were identified: the RCMP and the WCP Steering Committee.

The RCMP wanted to examine the overall impact of the Whole Child Program with specific attention directed at the role of Community Coordinator, initially funded by them and deemed critical to the inception of the WCP. RCMP Headquarters in Ottawa wanted to understand what had been achieved with their financial support so far. Since the Whitehorse Detachment of RCMP "M" Division was actively involved with administration and program delivery through WCP, there was also interest in systematic feedback on WCP program services from the perspective of policing through community partnerships and social development.

> *The local WCP Steering Committee viewed the evaluation as valuable feedback for improving project services and structures. They also regarded an evaluation as having the potential to generate supporting material for future funding applications.*
>
> *The goals of the WCP Steering Committee appeared to fit well with the RCMP National Youth Strategy's approach of* **Crime Prevention through Social Development.** *Going into the process, both groups described the evaluation as a potential "win/win" situation. Every effort was made to keep the evaluation focused on their interests and the information they would need to make future decisions with regard to the* **Whole Child Program.**

Summative evaluations often feature methodologies that are quantitative (meaning that variables associated with the program are measured or counted). This is the case because many evaluation clients are interested in *causation* – establishing what outcomes or results are "caused" by the program. After the preliminary meetings between CRILF, the RCMP, and WCP administration, a decision was made that a conventional quantitative approach would not produce a meaningful evaluation of the WCP at the point where the community-based program was just completing its implementation phase. Specific program objectives had not been operationalized (measured in numbers, made countable); defined outcomes could not be measured or attributed specifically to the program.

This is a common situation for new community-based programs with broad social development goals. As described in Section 2.0 – Getting Started, the WCP was the product of a community initiative that had been developing in many forms for some time. It was not a new program conceived, designed, and imposed from an urban head office with requisite measures and instruments in place for assessing attainment of short-term objectives. Formally initiated by RCMP funding with long-term social development goals, the WCP developed from a vision and committed effort at the grassroots community level.

Much of the program evaluation literature promotes scientific rigor at the expense of broader understandings of "cultural relationships" and "the holistic view of child development" (Budgell and Robertson, 2003, p. 123). Exploring the issues of evaluation for community-based projects, Gardner (2003) observed that such work often involves looking at programs that are "developing rather than established" (p. 73), with the result that the evaluation is likely to focus on process (what is happening within the program). Kibel (1999) argued that "for programs engaged in healing, transformation, and prevention, the best source and form of information are client stories" (p. 13).

Patton (2002) confirmed qualitative enquiry as an appropriate approach for evaluation of programs at the implementation stage, explaining that "qualitative methods are often used in evaluations because they tell the *program's story* by

capturing and communicating the *participant's stories*" (p. 10). Such qualitative data is most often collected through "interviews, field observations, and documents" (p. 13). These three techniques were the primary data collection methods selected for the WCP evaluation.

The appropriate methodology for the WCP evaluation, therefore, was qualitative – which means an attempt to capture the quality or nature of a program through "descriptive data based on spoken or written words and observable behaviors" (Williams, Unrau, and Grinnell, 2003, p. 431).

The developmental history of the WCP and its meaning throughout the implementation stage would be sought in the accounts of the stakeholders and participants. Their narratives, perspectives, experiences, and documentation would be the primary sources of data. The WCP evaluation would attempt to build a "foundation of general ideas" about the program rather than produce "statistically definitive data or conclusive results" (Unrau, Gabor, & Grinnell, 2001, p. 210) at this implementation stage. The evaluation would be concerned with program description and outputs.

A distinction between program outputs and outcomes is important in the evaluation literature. "Outputs" have been defined as "what are produced by the program" (Perlmutter, Bailey, and Netting, 2001, p. 189) whereas "outcomes" are "quality-of-life changes for clients" (p. 191).

The broad social development goals for the WCP would be considered as potential outcomes (such preferred conditions as social well-being, healthy child development, improved community capacity, a safe and caring community, freedom from crime and oppression, etc.). It was not possible to measure those conditions at the implementation stage of the WCP or to attribute their level to activities of the WCP. The WCP evaluation in 2004 would look instead at outputs:

- C   What is happening in the program?
- C   Who is being served and how?
- C   What sorts of new activities have emerged?
- C   What materials/resources are used?
- C   What administration structures and process did the program adopt?
- C   What philosophy is evident in the activities of the program?

Whole Child Program

The Principal Investigator for the WCP evaluation made two data collection trips to Whitehorse in January and February 2004. During these site visits, he conducted 16 individual and 7 group interviews with key informants (WCP staff, Steering Committee members, program participants, volunteers, parents, youth, agency representatives), attended 2 Steering Committee meetings, administered 2 surveys (WES teachers;

43

> *partner agencies), participated in WCP activities at WES, and rode the*
> *pick-up bus. Most of the personal interviews for this study were*
> *scheduled in advance with particular key informants. Some, however,*
> *occurred by taking advantage of unplanned opportunities and chance*
> *encounters at WCP activities and events. Documents reviewed included*
> *initial funding proposals, subsequent funding applications, minutes and*
> *Coordinator's reports from monthly Steering Committee meetings,*
> *assorted media articles and interviews,* **WCP News** *newsletters, websites,*
> **WCP Annual Reports (2002, 2003), and annual Family Surveys (2001,**
> **2002, 2003).**

Most of the research questions identified in the WCP Evaluation Feasibility Report required descriptive answers that could be developed from the written documentation and the interviews, the voices and stories of the WCP. In addition, the evaluation report presented a set of recommendations. Given the two identified primary users of the evaluation (RCMP in Ottawa and the WCP Steering Committee in Whitehorse), specific recommendations were addressed to each user group.

> ### *Whole Child Program*
>
> *Two recommendations regarding continued funding and the*
> *process of local fund dispersal were directed primarily to the RCMP. The*
> *rest of the recommendations were directed to the WCP Steering Committee*
> *and related to alternatives for the WCP to consider as it moves past*
> *implementation to the next developmental stage as an established*
> *program.*

Full text of the recommendations can be found in the evaluation report itself (Zapf, 2004) and will not be repeated here. Issues arising from the recommendations to the WCP Steering Committee are discussed further in Section 5.0 – Organizational Development.

With regard to the recommendations directed towards the WCP Steering Committee, it is important to note that a community-based evaluation such as this one "assumes people at the local level can create effective solutions to situational concerns" (Owen and Rogers, 1999, p. 220). The evaluator was not involved to impose solutions. The evaluator's role was to offer perspectives and information as input for the community stakeholders to make their own decisions that have meaning in their context.

As a program evolves, so does its evaluation requirements. For reasons already discussed in this section, a qualitative approach with a focus on program description and outputs was deemed appropriate for an evaluation following the initial implementation phase of the WCP. As an established program, however, the WCP might now expect future sponsors to be more interested in outcome goals and

quantitative measures. Any long-term strategic plan and associated budget developed by the WCP at this point should identify specific measures for program outputs and outcomes tied directly to program objectives, as well as procedures for the ongoing collection of such data within program activities.

This work cannot wait until the time of the next summative evaluation or the data will be retrospective and haphazard. Measures should be developed now in consultation with core funders to ensure that their future information requirements can be met with relevant and meaningful data. This collaborative process could involve some degree of negotiation and compromise between the broad social development goals of the WCP and the more specific interests and target outcomes desired by program funders.

As an umbrella organization coordinating community activities and services delivered by a number of local agencies, the WCP may have to take into account the stated goals, objectives, measures, and activities of those partners for any future summative evaluation processes. It may be that evaluation of individual component programs or clusters of similar services will have more meaning down the road than any overall assessment of the WCP alone on broad social development goals.

This would be an evaluation issue for any community-based program coordinating services directed towards common social development goals.

4.3   DISSEMINATION

A considerable amount of relevant documentation was generated by the Whole Child Program during its planning and implementation stages. This material now serves as a valuable record of the evolving WCP vision, structure, programs, and resources. Retrievable information on decisions made, persons and groups involved, program inputs and outputs, and lessons learned along the way constitute a rich archive for informed decision-making and evaluation.

Whole Child Program

Copies of initial funding proposals for staff positions, program operations, and evaluations are on file with the WCP. Minutes of the monthly Steering Committee meetings, and the Coordinator's Reports prepared for those meetings, are also stored. Key documents such as Mission Statements, Guiding Principles, and Objectives are similarly on file and available. WCP Annual Reports (produced in the spring of each year) are on file, as well as the results of the annual fall Family Survey.

The WCP has also communicated its message to the broader community through the local media: stories and interviews with **The Whitehorse Star** *and* **The Yukon News***; interviews on* **CBC Radio** *and*

> *local cable television. In addition to brochures and program posters distributed at the school and around the community, the WCP produces* **The Whole Child Program News,** *a newsletter (initially six times per year, now monthly) with information on current activities, upcoming events, WCP staff and structure, and articles related to parenting concerns. The* **Whole Child Program News** *is distributed to families through the school, to agencies in the community, and posted on the WCP website.*
>
> *Along with the regular* **Newsletter,** *additional information on the Whole Child Program can be found at the WCP section of the WES website at:* http://www.yesnet.yk.ca/schools/wes/whole_child.html. *Regularly maintained and updated, this site is closely linked with a* **Parent Resource** *site found at:* http://www/yesnet.yk.ca/schools/wes/parents.html.
>
> *During the implementation phase, the WCP was nominated by stakeholders for various recognitions and awards, a process that raised the profile of the project regionally and nationally. Positive publicity accompanied the following awards:*
> - *WCP received Crime Prevention Yukon's* **Project of the Year Award** *as an outstanding project for youth in the City of Whitehorse (October 2002)*
> - *Whitehorse Elementary School received Canadian Association for Community Living's* **Inclusive School Award** *(November 2002)*
> - *Whitehorse Elementary School awarded the* **Network of Innovative Schools** *designation in part because of the WES/WCP collaboration to work with downtown families through programming such as Internet Workshops for Parents, the Family Resource Centre, and Open Computer Lab (September 2003).*

The Whole Child Program has done a fine job of documenting its efforts and activities for purposes of advertising, promoting, monitoring, and managing the operation. Newsletters, annual reports, proposals, regular staff reports, promotional items, and the website communicate information about the program to local decision-makers, potential partners and users of the project, and targeted funders. The full report *An Evaluation of the Whole Child Project (WCP): Whitehorse, Yukon* (Zapf, 2004) is available online.

Internal documents and formal evaluation reports, however, tend to have limited circulation and generally hold little appeal for the public. Now that the WCP has established itself as a community-based social development program, it may be time to reach out to a wider audience. Other communities facing similar issues could benefit from the model developed and operationalized for the Whole Child Program.

The RCMP National Youth Strategy actively supports this perspective as evidenced by their initiation of this Resource Manual. The hope is that the experiences and lessons learned from the WCP might offer initiative, direction, and support for other small communities attempting to improve conditions through their own social development initiatives. It will be through such a broad process of sharing experiences, a wide dissemination of models and lessons learned from individual community initiatives, that an informed knowledge base will begin to take shape. This knowledge base will be the foundation for future projects.

Another forum for thoughtful sharing of community programs could be the professional and academic literature. Journals in the disciplines of education, social work, recreation, and community policing might be very receptive to a submission from your group about your project. Your model might have considerable appeal for presentation at conferences related to these disciplines. Such dissemination would put your model "out there" and make it available through various data bases to the planners and concerned citizens who might be exploring social development approaches to tackle similar problems in their communities. There is also the potential benefit of making connections and initiating dialogue with other communities and groups struggling with similar issues (What funding approaches worked for them? How are they structured? What has been effective for them? What pitfalls can be anticipated and managed?).

Community members may be intimidated by the thought of such writing for publication. You will likely find, however, that you have generated all the necessary information as you have designed and implemented your local program. Most journals will expect an article to explain the context and setting of the program, the program's vision or purpose, any connections with similar programs or issues in the literature, the model and resources required, the activities of the program, any data available on program outputs and outcomes, and some discussion of what worked and what did not work. You will know all of this from your ongoing planning, decision-making, and experiences related to your program.

You may find that members of your group, particularly from the involved professions, have the skill to write about your community's project for publication. Students on field placement or summer employment can be a valuable resource for data collection and writing. There has also been a recent push in many journals and conferences for co-authorship between academics and community practitioners; your regional post-secondary institution could be a source for partnerships or assistance with writing. The important step is to make your contribution to the developing knowledge base by writing your experiences down and getting them out there into the discussion.

In the future, a review article or an edited book might serve to collect these various experiences and models from individual communities and draw out themes and patterns to inform the next generation of community projects. This is how knowledge is built and it depends upon the input and active participation of groups like yours.

5.0 ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

> *Whole Child Program*
>
> *There were frequent references to the WCP as a "pilot" project over the first three years of development and implementation. Yet the formal evaluation identified a clear sense among stakeholders and staff after three years that the WCP had proven itself in the implementation phase. It had successfully demonstrated that it could deliver a range of programs, services, and coordination in response to community needs consistent with the larger social development goals for the downtown Whitehorse population. There was an anticipation that the WCP was ready to move past the "pilot" phase on to the next stage in its evolutionary development as an organization.*

A number of questions arise for any social development program moving past the implementation stage. Some of these questions are:

C What might the next stage look like?
C What new tasks and challenges now confront the program, and how are they different from the challenges faced during the implementation phase?
C Has the vision changed?
C What lessons were learned from the implementation stage to guide future development?
C Successful implementation suggests that effective information gathering and decision-making took place during that phase. Are the processes and structures that were effective in launching the program still appropriate for current tasks?

This section examines a potentially useful model from the literature and then explores particular consolidation challenges facing the WCP as an established program.

5.1   ALTERNATIVE SOCIAL AGENCIES

The literature on organizational development offers many models that might help clarify the choices faced by a new social program following a successful implementation stage. Many of these models, however, assume a large bureaucratic organization (usually in an urban context) and may not be particularly helpful in suggesting next steps for a social development program in a small community. One model that does hold some promise is the discussion of "alternative social agencies" by Perlmutter (1988) and explored in the Canadian context by Kerisit and St-Amand (1995), Mullaly (2002), and Carniol (2005).

Alternative social agencies tend to emerge in response to public neglect of a particular special client population. Often there is a perception that conventional institutions and service structures cannot be counted on for the innovation and flexibility required to be responsive and relevant to this particular target population. Alternative programs are initiated through personal commitment, shared values, and charismatic leadership rather than the formal mandate and positional leadership associated with more conventional bureaucratic organizations. Alternative services tend to be open, welcoming, and involve a sense of belonging. Key to their operation is the creation of a safe space for conversation, sharing, and activities "where one feels at home and can reweave social bonds that have been broken and destabilized by poverty" (Kerisit & St-Amand, 1995, p. 101).

Alternative agencies usually feature relatively flat organizational structures where staff and administrators experience overlap and integration between their personal and professional lives. The work is not just a job, but an active expression of the values of a small group of likeminded individuals. Alternative social agencies are usually small in size and characterized by economic marginality rather than stability. There is often an accompanying fear that governments may cut or eliminate funding to alternative services that do not surrender to conventional bureaucratic control.

According to the 2004 evaluation, all of the suggested characteristics of alternative social agencies appear to fit well with the reported experiences and structures of the WCP during its first three years of operation. They may well be relevant also for any social development program that evolves in your community to meet local needs.

Many alternative social agencies that survive move on to adopt some aspects of the bureaucratic agency approach. Yet securing stable funding can involve some loss of control and flexibility. New staff and board members, particularly in leadership roles, can experience difficulty living up to the halo effect attributed to the original charismatic group. As agency size and scale of operations grows, hierarchical management structures can replace original consensual models.

Such transition to a conventional bureaucratic model is not inevitable or even desirable for many alternative social agencies. With visionary leadership committed to responsiveness and innovation, an organizational environment can be maintained that supports shared decision-making, participatory planning, and empowerment of staff and community consumers of the service. To avoid the slippery slope to conventional bureaucracy, a local social development organization must make deliberate, informed, strategic choices in keeping with their original vision and values. Mullaly (2002) suggested that alternative agencies might be understood as "counter-systems to mainstream social agencies and can be used ultimately to establish a base from which larger social changes can be eventually effected" (p. 194).

5.2 CONSOLIDATION

Vision

Documentation produced by the Whole Child Program over its first three years featured various principles, goals, and objectives reported in different ways at different times. The vision evolved as the program gained experience.

Whole Child Program

The initial WCP Statement of Intent in 2001 made reference to "children attending Whitehorse Elementary" and "preschool children living in the downtown area."

In 2002, the first WCP Mission Statement looked at a broader population of "at risk students and their families."

The September 2004 issue of the **Whole Child Program News** *reports that "we have grown to include children and parents from many other schools that participate in our evening programs… [which] regularly attract children from Whitehorse Elementary School, Elijah Smith School, Takhini Elementary, Christ the King, and Selkirk Elementary."*

As would be expected, the vision is not static but changes and develops as the program itself grows. What has remained constant for the WCP is the ideal of a community-based school as the hub for delivery of school-linked services to families. What has changed is the initial concept of boundaries for the community served.

Name

Whole Child Program

The WCP was known as the Whole Child Project during its first three years of operation. In September 2004, the label was deliberately changed to the Whole Child Program with the rationale that "we have developed beyond the initial project stage in that we are now in the 4th year of operation."

The label change from "project" to "program" is more than playing with words; it reflects a profound change in the WCP's self identity. A "project" has connotations of a one-shot initiative with time-limited funding and activities (pilot project, demonstration project). A "program," on the other hand, is an established entity with a supporting structure and ongoing activities.

Hiring the Community Coordinator in 2001 was a milestone signaling the launch of the WCP; self-recognition in 2004 as a program rather than a project is a similar milestone signaling confident completion of the implementation phase in the WCP's development.

Funding and Sustainability

Whole Child Program

The WCP began formal operation in 2001 with a grant from the RCMP National Youth Strategy that allowed for the hire of a Community Coordinator. Annual grants from the RCMP and a time-limited commitment from Yukon Education to fund the Coordinator position have enabled the program to continue.

In a relatively short period of time, the Whole Child Program has established itself as a real presence in downtown Whitehorse. Children and families in the area count on the activities and opportunities made available through the WCP, and positive results have been reported by agency stakeholders. Yet the funding base of the WCP has been cobbled together from short-term government commitments and annual grants. The 2004 evaluation found that this funding uncertainty was perceived as a great threat to the continuation of what has proven to be a workable model. Fear was expressed during the evaluation that funders tend to be more interested in "new" Yukon initiatives, but may not be as keen on the WCP when it has become "established."

True to its social development approach, the WCP has involved a local alliance integrating education, policing, social services, and community recreation. It follows that an ideal funding arrangement might involve a long-term commitment of resources from all four primary interest groups. The pattern to this point has been one of applying for grants or resources, then doing the best possible with monies received. Now that the WCP model has been implemented and is running with some success, it may be time to develop a longer term budget plan with contributions from the RCMP, Yukon Education, Yukon Health and Social Services, and the City of Whitehorse. Outside grants could still be sought for specific projects or activities, but the core operations of an established WCP require committed funding.

Rough estimates put forward informally during the 2004 evaluation process suggested that core WCP operations could be funded for an annual cost of $60,000 - $80,000. This might not be an unreasonable amount if split among education, policing, social services, and municipal recreation sources.

<u>Steering Committee</u>

Whole Child Program

At the time of the 2004 evaluation, several issues related to Steering Committee composition were raised by stakeholders. The business community was not represented on the Steering Committee. Champagne and Aishihik First Nations were represented, but other First Nations who also have members living in downtown Whitehorse were not (in spite of past efforts from WCP to recruit and maintain their involvement). Policing and Education were well represented on the Steering Committee; comparatively, Social Services and Recreation might appear under-represented (in terms of number and seniority). Parents and families from the user population were not represented on the Steering Committee.

The 2004 evaluation made it clear that these observations were not intended as criticisms or suggestions of exclusion on the part of the WCP Steering Committee. On the contrary, much appreciation was expressed for the initial group's effectiveness in accomplishing the difficult tasks associated with launching the Whole Child Program. Now that the program is poised to move to another stage of development, however, it may well be time to reconsider the most effective pattern of representation on the Steering Committee.

Of course, an expanded Steering Committee could pose new challenges as meetings would be more difficult to schedule and conduct efficiently. Initially, it was important for the entire Steering Committee to meet monthly as the program took shape. The question must be asked now, however, whether everyone's input is necessary on every issue of program monitoring and administration. It may be time to create a much smaller Executive Committee that could meet frequently (monthly or whatever schedule is deemed necessary) for ongoing operational administration of the WCP (supervision of staff, expenditure approval, monitoring of programs). The full Steering Committee could then meet much less frequently and concern itself with broader issues such as overall budget approval, program development, and strategic planning. The WCP may have developed to the point where it is no longer possible or desirable to involve the whole Steering Committee in every issue.

<u>Partners</u>

Whole Child Program

As discussed in Section 3.2, the Whole Child Program has actively sought connections and developed relationships with many agencies and organizations in the Whitehorse region and beyond. At various stages in the implementation of the WCP, these relationships have been characterized by documented lists of "contacts" or "links" or "partnerships."

Application of one broad term to account for these diverse relationships has led to some confusion about what agencies are active partners in WCP programming, which ones are hosted or housed by WCP, and which ones are affiliated in some other way. At this stage of development, the WCP may wish to consider refinement of these characterizations to reflect the nature of the actual connections with partner agencies.

6.0 IMPACT: VOICES OF THE WCP

Most of the information about the WCP presented in this Manual so far has been objective. Along with this kind of descriptive factual content, the recent WCP evaluation (Zapf, 2004) also attempted to give voice to the many people involved with the WCP sharing their experiences and the felt impact of their program. A selection of those voices is presented here in an effort to convey the vitality of the program. Note how citizens from diverse backgrounds and roles appear to be converging on the same social development goals.

Individual speakers are not identified, but general affiliations are used to give an indication of the perspective behind the comments.

Whole Child Program

Is WCP making a difference? I know it is. I see the positive energy, the self esteem, the role modeling. (Steering Committee member)

I have no doubt we are having a positive influence here, an impact on their lives. We are making connections, helping the community grow. (RCMP)

Stay home parents, single parents, any parent. We all need to shine sometimes. I can shine here. (Parent)

The availability to access the school as a community service means that families that might not otherwise be in a school setting are given the opportunity to experience this setting in family oriented activities. This may help some parents ease fears about being involved in their children's school experience later on in the child's life. It creates a vital link between parents, children, and schools. (Agency representative)

That guy? He's our Principal. He's on the bus all the time. He knows me. (Youth)

Many years ago a lot of these parents had bad school experiences themselves, but now they are coming into the school and having positive experiences. Word spreads. Not just the parents but the kids too are feeling more positive about the school since WCP started. (WES teacher)

The proof is that after 3 years we are still getting more than 50 kids from core downtown Whitehorse. We are saving kids here. I can't prove this, but I see the kids living a different relationship with the RCMP. (Steering Committee member)

Right now, Whitehorse Elementary has less vandalism than any other school in Whitehorse. (RCMP)

We, the First Nations, approve of the good things they are doing, and have included their information in our newsletters. WCP provides healthy and safe alternative activities for the downtown youth and is in fact open to all children. (Agency representative)

The kids know us. They can discuss consequences with us. This is not the same as giving talks about drugs and such. This is the fundamental principle of "officer presence" in operation. (RCMP)

Children think of the school as a place to have fun outside of school hours. This improves their overall attitude towards school. (WES teacher)

The biggest thing I saw, the biggest change, is that I went from being just another cop to being an actual person with these kids and families. (RCMP)

I like to play basketball with the cops. They're like not bossy at all. (Youth)

The original plans for a WCP started out with no intent of RCMP involvement or crime prevention. But that all changed with the funding. Now WCP challenges preconceived notions of what the RCMP is all about, a real change in attitudes. The RCMP couldn't buy this PR for a million dollars. (Steering Committee member)

WCP means that we are not alone in this work and that the school is at the centre of the community and in no way an adversary. (Agency representative)

Sometimes I wear my uniform, and my badge. The girls look at me and say Wow, I could be RCMP too! (RCMP)

I like to see my kids calling RCMP officers by their first names. (Parent)

WCP is leading the way in showing other schools and agencies what community really means. (Agency representative)

I am still not sure what the magic is – why it works. I guess the entire WCP is about relationships – with families, with the RCMP, with agencies, with volunteers. Relationships based on openness and trust. (Steering Committee member)

You know how this program spreads? It's like a summer fire. One branch is burning over there, one over here, the roots are all touching underground and the fire could pop up anywhere. (Parent)

I'd like to reiterate the importance of families entering the school itself prior to their children entering school as it may dissolve or expose any barriers that parents have to becoming involved parents in the school system. (Agency representative)

Another thing you can't measure but it's huge. Kids will get involved to help you and you learn how to say things and do things with them. They teach us every day how to be better police officers. Just being there Wednesday nights, what I learn from these kids I can apply to my relationships with other kids. (RCMP)

Without the WCP, my agency's services in downtown Whitehorse would be scrambling to find available child friendly space to offer some of our programs. (Agency representative)

For me, it's a fun night out with the kids for free, and it's safe. Where else could we go where there is something for everyone and they don't compete? This is the high point of our week. (Parent)

My kids get to be with kids from outside their class. There is a great mix of ages, grades, and cultures. You can walk in and see grade sevens playing basketball with kindergartens. Everyone is equal in the gym and the computer lab. (Parent)

Rules? Yeah, I guess there are rules. Like no swearing or being mean. The Principal is right here, and the cops. You have to be good. (Youth)

This is not an RCMP project. We see it as an RCMP funded community project run by the community. We supplied the money at first and partnered, but we don't have to look after it. (RCMP)

I like to have the computer all quiet, just to myself. (Youth)

These kids can't count on much in their lives, but they can count on the Wednesday night bus coming to bring them to the gym. (RCMP)

We view the WCP as a sister agency, with similar beliefs that families are at the core for determining children's success. We share the goal of reducing the number of children that go into care by engaging the whole community in the care of children and families. (Agency representative)

7.0 ANOTHER EXAMPLE:
THE WHOLE VILLAGE CENTER

The Whole Village Center (WVC) developed in an American rural context in a manner very similar to the pattern we have experienced with the Whole Child Program in Whitehorse, Yukon. Based in Plymouth, New Hampshire, the Whole Village Center also traces its philosophical foundation to the proverb that "It takes a whole village to raise a child." In fact, this quote introduces the WVC's website (Whole Village Family Resource Center, 2005) as it does the WCP site (Whole Child Program, 2005).

Rural families in the surrounding rural New Hampshire region were experiencing stress and tough times related to issues of poverty, single-parenting, economics and dual-employment, substance abuse, family violence, and unwanted pregnancy. Existing services for children and families in Plymouth were scattered across town and featured a mix of resident agencies and workers visiting from outside. Rural clients were unsure what services were available and how best to access them. They were often discouraged by inhospitable agency environments, transportation difficulties, visibility and concern about family reputation, strong rural sense of independence, and lack of funds. Major problems also existed at the interagency level in terms of communication and referrals.

Whole Village Center

The Whole Village Family Resource Center is a collaborative of health and human service agencies whose goals are to help families become healthier, safer, and increasingly self sufficient. The Center aims to focus the interest of the community on issues that affect children and their families, and to encourage the kind of community environment in which families can thrive. (Whole Village Family Resources Center, 2005, p. 1)

In 1989, the Plymouth-Area Ad Hoc Committee on Youth at Risk was set up to bring together agencies and groups that were providing service to children and families in the Plymouth region. One of their first projects was a needs assessment survey of children and families in the area. Service delivery overlap and gaps were then considered in light of the identified needs of local families. A Workshop for Educators in 1991 subsequently brought together teachers and administrators from the region to focus on these issues. Out of this work developed a vision of one-stop-shopping for social services in this rural area, a centre or shared interagency facility, a central hub for service delivery. Three guiding concepts were agreed upon in the early stages of development:

1. interagency collaboration
2. local control and leadership
3. increased client access to services

The initial vision for the project included several potential benefits for local families in need:

C increased access to a range of services to support and strengthen families, with simultaneous access to several services at once
C homelike waiting areas where family members could feel comfortable, safe, and secure
C easier and more efficient referrals
C overall, an increased sense of community caring

Identified potential benefits for local agencies included:

C improved interagency collaboration, interaction, and coordination
C integrated services and improved case management
C reduced professional isolation for rural workers
C reduced operational costs (shared support staff costs, facility costs, client transportation vouchers, etc.)
C promotion of coalitions and joint-funding submissions for programming and research activities

Whereas the Whole Child Program in the Yukon opted to develop the existing Whitehorse Elementary School as the hub of its activities, the Whole Village Center was able to build a new facility using private fundraising and a $1 million Community Development Block Grant from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development. Completed in 1996, the Whole Village Family Resource Center sits on some 10 acres of land and usually houses or hosts 12-16 agencies providing services for families and children in the region. The Whole Village Center is a private nonprofit corporation, with monthly meetings at the center of the Whole Village Agency Council.

Agencies physically housed at the Whole Village Family Resource Center facility include:

C Brian's House (supervised visitation center)
C Court Appointed Special Advocates (trained volunteer advocates for abused and neglected children in court)
C Family Planning (confidential reproductive health care for women and teens)
C Family Strength (in-home support for individuals and families)
C Lakes Region Community Services Council (services for individuals and families with development disabilities)
C Pemi Baker Home Health & Hospice (home health care and hospice services to individuals and families)

C Plymouth Area Community Closet (emergency funds, food, clothing, and furniture)

C Plymouth Regional Clinic (walk-in general medical care for persons with no insurance and limited income)

C Tri County CAP Head Start (comprehensive pre-school child and family development program)

C Tri-County CAP Outreach (umbrella agency for elderly, handicapped, and low income individuals and families)

C UNH Cooperative Extension Nutrition Connections Program (basic education in nutrition and budgeting for low income families)

Regional agencies affiliated with the Whole Village Family Resource Center include:

C The Circle Program (volunteer support for 9-11 year olds from low income families)

C Communities for Alcohol and Drug Free Youth (school and community-based alcohol and drug prevention)

C Connery Psychological Services (professional mental health services)

C The Greenbook Project (services for battered women and children)

C Voices Against Violence (hotline, shelter, education, and support for victims of family violence)

C Plymouth State University Counseling Clinic with Master's Degree grads completing internship hours towards a certification in School Psychology (Plymouth State University, 2005)

Some programs initiated by the Whole Village Center itself are very similar to offerings developed through the Whole Child Project. The WVC has operated a teaching kitchen to help families with appropriate meal planning, nutritional knowledge, and home budgets. A Play & Learn Group operates weekday mornings on a drop-in basis for parents and pre-school children, with activities and parenting information available. The Techlink Computer Lab makes computers available for public internet use, with free computer classes and individual tutoring available.

Other activities at the WVC reflect the local context and site environment: on-site picnic area, teaching garden, and seasonal farmers' market. Obviously the local environment differs greatly from the Yukon!

An article examining the implementation of the Whole Village Center (Davis, Meyer, & Terrasi, 1995) concluded that

The limits to developing alternative models lie in creativity. If a community agrees on the concept of a center as a common goal and dedicates efforts to achieve that goal, then methods will eventually emerge which best utilize existing and cultivate new fiscal, human, and physical plant resources. (p. 27-28)

These motivational words appear to fit well with the WCP experiences reported in this Manual, and may inspire confidence in the potentially effective methods and creative models emerging in your community through your own social development efforts.

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