

Research and Knowledge Translation Newsletter

GROWING SEED: Developing an early years network in Northern British Columbia that fosters relationship building, knowledge mobilization, and research opportunities to promote positive childhood health and wellbeing



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WHY CREATE AN EARLY YEARS NETWORK IN NORTHERN BC?

Early childhood is a crucial time for growth and development; during this time, individual families have diverse needs for support. Services in the early years are distributed across many sectors, such as primary care and community health services, specialist health care, education, Indigenous communities and agencies, and not-for-profit organizations. Each sector has its approach, procedures, and priorities for supporting families. In northern British Columbia (BC), the loss of programs and targeted funding for early years coordination has impacted

families with young children, especially equity-deserving groups and those facing more complex life situations, who may need greater support or enhanced services to support healthy development. In our region, we have experienced that through collaboration across sectors, we can reduce service gaps and better support the needs of families. Our mission is to support positive early childhood experiences and healthy development for all children in the early years (0-8 years) and their families in northern BC through an intersectoral network that fosters relationship building, knowledge mobilization, and research opportunities. This network has been named SEED BC, which

stands for Sharing to Change Early Childhood Experiences and promote healthy Development in northern BC.

HOW WE STARTED

In 2018, a small group of early years professionals in Prince George undertook training and mentorship in Compassionate Systems Leadership (CSL) over one year delivered by [Human Early Learning Partnership members](#). This was followed by a [Michael Smith Health Research C2 award](#) that allowed us to develop and deliver a virtual early childhood summit to bring sectors together to learn and share how we can use CSL to collaborate better to support



families in northern BC. At the Summit, we heard there was interest in working together to weave together the patchwork model of early years services but that all sectors are needed at the table for this work. We have shared our Summit experience and findings through [publications](#) and [presentations](#).

WHERE WE ARE NOW

We recognise that many obstacles exist for families and ourselves in accessing and delivering services, further exacerbated by geographic disparities and provincial changes that often impact rural and northern contexts to a higher degree. The principles of CSL have assisted us in inspiring partners, fostering positive inclusion, and building enthusiastic cross-boundary (intersectoral working). Following the Summit, we continued to build relationships and, in 2022

established a Regional Advisory Table. The Advisory Table has membership from across northern BC with representatives from the northwest, northern interior, and northeast. It provides an open forum for connection, discussion, and collaborative action across sectors for healthy early childhood development, early intervention, and early care and learning. The group meets quarterly to exchange ideas, identify existing and latest trends or topics affecting early childhood development in our region, and inform potential opportunities to collaborate to coordinate improvements and changes across services.

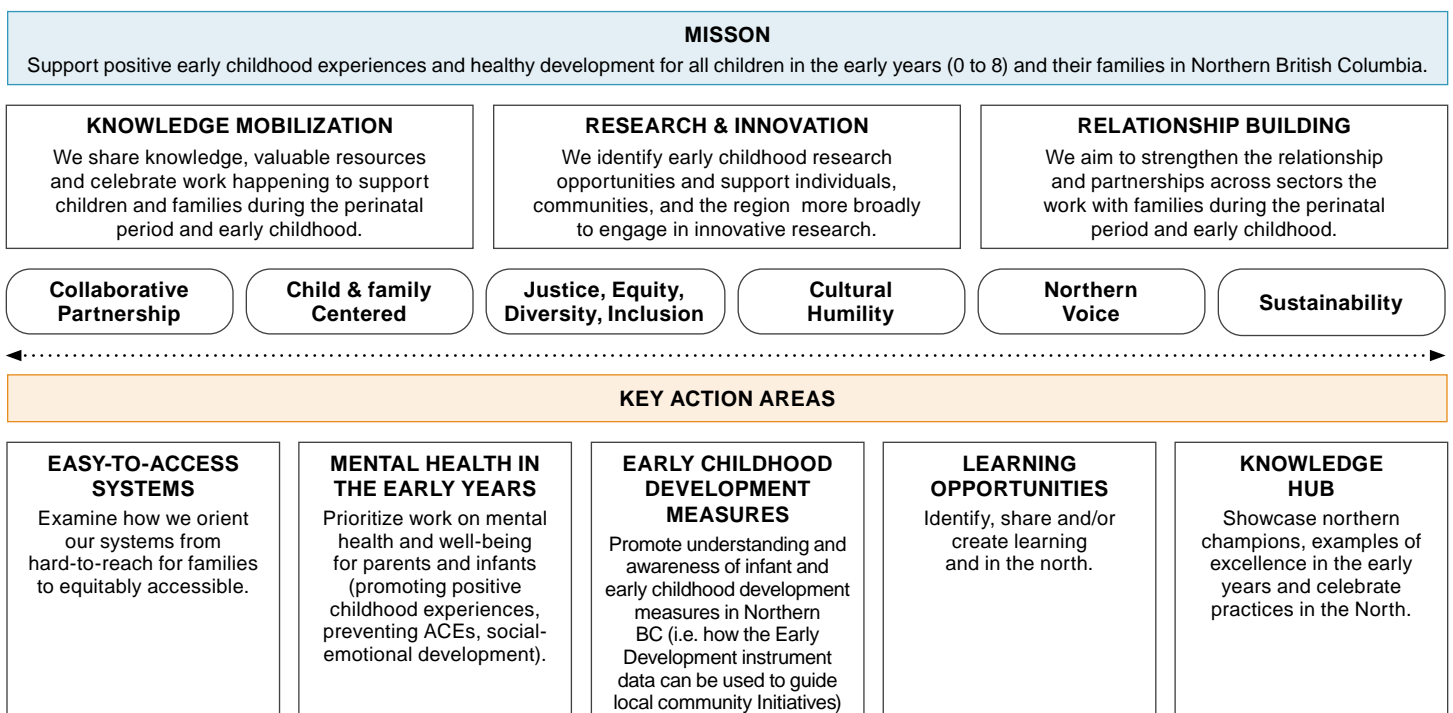
In our first year, the Advisory Table created an [action plan](#) specific to our region of the province to guide how we approach our work and to name key action areas the group would like to focus on together (see summary figure below).

NEXT STEPS

Our next steps as a Regional Advisory Table are to identify objectives and actions within these key action areas, which we can work towards together. We also continue to use and develop our website, seedbc.ca as a “Knowledge Hub” to share opportunities and resources along with our tri-annual newsletter (Winter, Spring & Fall editions). This year, we aim to apply for research funding to support work in these key action areas.

LEARN MORE

You can learn more about our work on our website, www.seedbc.ca, or by contacting our team at seed@unbc.ca. If you want to stay connected and receive updates, please [join our mailing list](#). We also welcome new members to our Regional Advisory Table if you are interested in participating.



MITACS, HELPING HEALTH ORGANIZATIONS, NOT-FOR-PROFITS, AND INDUSTRY DEVELOP STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS TO ADVANCE INNOVATION



Authors

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Building research capacity in the health care system is crucial to developing evidence-informed practices improving health services, and allowing healthcare organizations to adapt to changing circumstances (Cooke 2005, 2015, 2018; Kislov et al. 2014). However, there is often a disconnect between the development of research knowledge and its dissemination and integration into healthcare systems. This gap in translation is attributed in part to research that does not address the needs of the healthcare system and healthcare organizations lack of adequate influence on research questions (Walshe & Davies, 2013). Without research it is challenging for healthcare organizations to innovate. This can lead to wasted resources and reduced standards of care. Unfortunately, several factors prevent healthcare systems from developing research capacity, including high workload, research training, multidisciplinary complexity, lack of organizational alignment (priorities), access to funding, talent, or financial resources (Pager et al. 2022, Bowen et al. 2019).

Healthcare delivery in rural communities is particularly challenging as these communities are often under-resourced (Graham et al. 2017; McCarthy et al. 2016), and geographically isolated making it difficult to rely on neighbouring communities for support (Graham et al. 2017; Pong et al 1999). Critically, health sciences research has fallen behind in Canada (Young and Chatwood 2011) and in rural areas (Walsh et al. 2021), though efforts have been made to improve research capacity among rural health-care professionals (Walsh et al. 2021).

One avenue to develop research capacity among healthcare organizations is to embed experiential learning opportunities within a long-term partnership with academic researchers (Cooke et al. 2015; Kislov et al. 2014). This will allow the healthcare system and academic partners to access a wider network of assets and resources and form dynamic partnerships that will allow implementation of research that can support organizational priorities and generate impact (Cooke 2018). Developing such



connections takes time, funding, and resources. This can be a limiting factor in areas with limited academic expertise, high clinical workload, or lack of resources (Pager et al. 2022). Fortunately, there are ways to overcome these limiting factors.

Mitacs is a national, not-for-profit organization committed to powering a world-class innovation ecosystem, strengthening Canada's competitiveness, and helping organizations solve real-life problems while students get crucial on-the-job skills development. Mitacs assists partner organizations, including industry, non-for-profits, municipalities, and hospitals in finding the academic experts they need to tackle research,



innovation, and development challenges while providing funding for the project.

Research projects funded by Mitacs are collaborative in nature and require the end users of the research – the healthcare team – to be involved in co-developing the research objectives along with the academic partners. This is key to ensure the research is relevant to the real world issues faced within the healthcare system (Cooke et al, 2015). When academic researchers as well as the host “healthcare team” are involved in research and subsequent knowledge mobilization, it enables greater capacity building and active continuous participation to achieve shared goals; in addition, healthcare teams develop transferable skills that equip them to adapt to change, take in new information, and innovate (Kislov et al., 2014).

Over the past two years, Mitacs has supported our university partners in over 138 hospital projects in Canada. These projects include partnerships between 69 universities with over 64 distinct hospitals.



Mitacs programs are designed to help partners tap into national research networks to bring highly educated students to collaborate on real-world projects. With Mitacs’ support, partners access funding, resources, and the expertise needed to move innovation forward and develop solutions while building research capacity at the same time. Mitacs has already supported research collaborations with hospitals and health authorities across Canada.

For example, Mitacs has supported Northern Health research collaborations. During the COVID-19 pandemic there has been an increase in medical misinformation, meaning there is an increased need for effective health communications approaches from health authorities and experts. Northern Health Authority worked with Mitacs and University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC) to determine how an information system and technology solutions could help support health communications approaches. “My professional and technical skills have grown immensely from the project,” said Colton Aarts, UNBC Master’s student in Computer Science and Mitacs Accelerate intern on the project. “Working in a group setting with multiple users and communicating and organizing the project between them all was an invaluable experience. On top of that, working on an application and receiving feedback from the end users helped develop both my programming skills as well as my communication skills.”

Mitacs has also supported BC Children’s Hospital to develop a project with UBC researchers looking for establishing a research pipeline for precision oncology solutions at their BioBank [Optimizing precision oncology at BC Children’s Hospital | Mitacs](#).

Mitacs is committed to bringing innovation into reach. Through programs, such as [Accelerate](#) and [Elevate, Mitacs](#) supports students and postdoctoral fellows in collaborative research that help businesses and not-for-profit organizations reach their goals and achieve results. Projects are co-funded by Mitacs and the partner organization and give the trainee the opportunity to work on-site at the partner’s hospital or clinical setting, office, laboratory, or industrial site for part of the internship. Funding from partners is matched by Mitacs and then paid to the students as a stipend from the academic institution.

Mitacs helps partners find new strategic collaborations, de-risking their investment in talent, building research capacity, and building an R & D pipeline to implement solutions. Our team of Advisors has strong links with Academic institutions in Canada and Industry across many sectors. This means that researchers and partners have access to Mitacs’ national network at the tip of their fingers.

For over 20 years, Mitacs has assisted organizations in reaching their goals, has funded cutting-edge innovation, and has created job opportunities for students



and postdocs. We are committed to driving economic growth and productivity and to creating meaningful change to improve quality of life for all Canadians.

Our mission is to build a world-class, diverse community of innovators through our collaborative model, attracting and deploying top talent to industry, and matching need with expertise to create ambitious solutions to real-world challenges.

We believe that increasing Canada's productivity and prosperity will be driven by successful innovation and we're passionate about developing the next generation of researchers who will work to fuel Canada's knowledge-based economy.

To learn more about Mitacs, reach out to [our team](#) anytime.

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NH LIBRARY SERVICES COLLECTION HIGHLIGHTS

The NH Library offers a variety of subject guides to help staff explore curated, topic-specific research content. These are developed in consultation with subject experts and we are always seeking recommendations and input on new topics. Current guides include resources on Quality Improvement & Lean, Literature Searching, Clinical Education and more. If there is a topic you'd like to see a subject guide for, please submit your suggestions and feedback to library@northernhealth.ca

EVENTS AND MORE

2023 RESEARCH AND QUALITY CONFERENCE: LOOKING TO THE FUTURE: HEALTH IN THE NORTH

This bi-annual conference is a forum enhanced with resources and skill development workshops to share health and health services research,

evaluation, evidence-based practice and quality improvement initiatives in the North. It has been designed to highlight Northern BC research, evaluation, and quality initiatives and will provide learning experiences as well as informal opportunities for participants to learn from each other.

This years theme:
**Looking to the Future:
Health in the North**

Dates: November 7 to 9, 2023
Location: University of Northern British Columbia, Prince George Campus (virtual options available)

Registration opening soon!

More information, email:
hri@unbc.ca or
research@northernhealth.ca

BC SUPPORT UNIT: PUTTING PATIENTS FIRST CONFERENCE: CHANGING LANDSCAPES AND LEARNING TOGETHER FOR SUSTAINABLE PATIENT-ORIENTED RESEARCH"

Date: Oct 24, 2023
Location: Vancouver, BC

Putting Patients First (PPF) is an annual conference that fosters

collaboration and learning about patient experiences in the health system. Join on October 24 in Vancouver, BC, to help build a provincial care system with patients and families at the centre. Learn more here:

<https://healthresearchbc.ca/event/putting-patients-first-2023/>

NH AND UNBC MOU IN ACTION: SUPPORTS FOR RESEARCH CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOPS

As part of the ongoing work of the MOU between NH and UNBC, the Research and Knowledge Translation working group invites interested staff, clinician, faculty or trainees to submit proposals with the goal to conduct workshops that develop and enhance the research capacity in the Northern region.

There are new dedicated small grants to support the delivery of research-enabling workshops. Eligible expenses can be applied towards:

- Travel to deliver a workshop
- Venue booking and catering
- Additional (required supports)

Do you have an idea in mind, or want to discuss a specific proposal?, send us an email to: research@northernhealth.ca or hri@unbc.ca



WOULD YOU LIKE TO WRITE AND PUBLISH A SHORT HEALTH RESEARCH ARTICLE?



The Research & Knowledge Translation Newsletter is accepting articles for future editions. We are open to all areas of health research and knowledge translation as well as evaluation, data analytics, quality improvement or innovation projects.

If interested to include an article or to share information about an upcoming event, email: research@northernhealth.ca