

**A MODEL FOR THIRD PARTY MONITORING OF
THE EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE
IN THE MANITOBA REGION**

Prepared by the
Social Planning Council of Winnipeg

Prepared for the
Canadian Council on Social Development
Canadian Institute of Child Health
and the
Roehrer Institute

February 28, 2002

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Social Planning Council of Winnipeg would like to acknowledge the contributions made by the following participants of the reference group that guided the development of this document.

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Introduction

The Social Planning Council of Winnipeg (SPC) is a membership-based organization in the voluntary sector committed to providing leadership in social planning and effecting social policy changes. The Social Planning Council is keenly interested in the implications of social policy on Manitoban children. The Council is pleased to have been asked by the Canadian Council on Social Development (CCSD), the Canadian Institute of Child Health (CICH), and the Roeher Institute to provide input into the model for third party monitoring of the Early Childhood Development Initiative (ECDI) as it relates to Manitoba. The development of the proposed third party monitoring model for Manitoba was guided by a reference group comprised of individuals and representatives from organizations and government with specific knowledge and interest in the implementation of ECDI in Manitoba.

Unlike some other provinces for which the implementation of ECDI has been limited or insufficiently transparent, the Manitoba government has made a concerted effort to enhance existing early childhood programs and develop additional programs. An important question for monitoring ECDI in Manitoba is not only whether early childhood programs have been enhanced or developed, but whether these programs are actually effective in improving the outcomes for children, and the extent to which the programs build individual and community capacity.

The following paper analyses the applicability of the base model for third party monitoring, as proposed by CCSD, CICH and the Roeher Institute, within the context of Manitoba. Revisions to the model are outlined along with the rationale for the changes. More importantly, the third party monitoring model of ECDI in Manitoba attempts to move the agenda forward from simply monitoring the existence of early childhood development programs to measuring the effectiveness of the programs based on broadly defined outcomes and indicators, incorporating the principles of individual and community capacity building.

Background

Since April 2000, the Manitoba government has made a total investment of \$171,133,100 in programs and services that fall under the four Early Childhood Development (ECD) action areas: pregnancy, birth and infancy; parenting and family supports; early childhood development, learning and care; and, community supports. The total investment includes approximately \$29 million dollars of incremental funding to early childhood development initiatives. Of the \$29 million incremental investment for ECD, the Federal government contributed \$11.1 million in 2001/2002 (Manitoba Government, 2001).

The Manitoba Premier established the Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet comprised of the Minister of Family Services and Housing, Minister of Health, Minister of Justice, Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs, Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, Minister of Education, and the Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism. The

Committee's purpose is to implement the Healthy Child Plan and to identify the components of Manitoba's Early Childhood Development Continuum. The following is a list of the nine program areas that form the continuum and a brief description of each program.

Healthy Baby – Prenatal benefit for income eligible pregnant women and support services.

BabyFirst – Three-year home visiting program for newborns and their families.

STOP FAS – Three-year mentoring program for women at risk of having a child with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) or Fetal Alcohol Effects (FAE).

Parent-Child Centred Approach – The establishment of community coalitions that support parenting, improve child nutrition and literacy, and develop community capacity.

Child Day Care – Expansion of child care spaces, improving salaries for childhood educators, and integration of children with disabilities into the child care system.

Early Start – A three-year home visiting program to enhance children's readiness to learn for families with children who have special needs and are currently attending licensed child care.

Manitoba Education, Training and Youth – An ECDI initiative that will assist school divisions and districts in their efforts to provide services to pre-schoolers to facilitate their readiness to learn.

Children's Special Services – A community-based service that provides support to children with mental and/or physical disabilities.

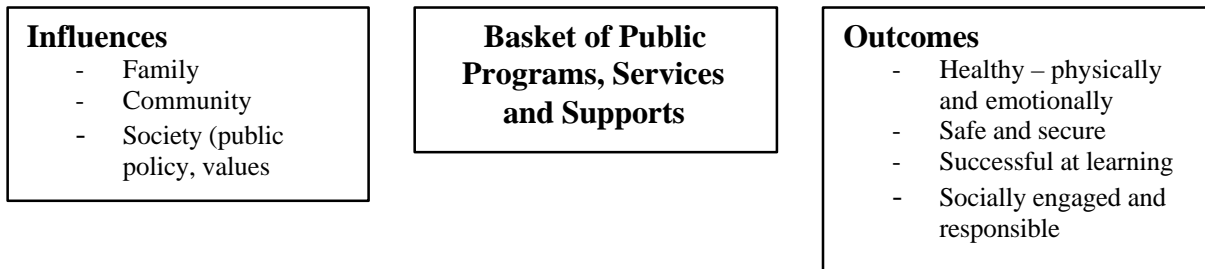
National Child Benefit Restoration – As of July 2001, families with children age six and under receiving Employment and Income Assistance will not have the National Child Benefit reduced from their provincial benefits.

It is important to note that of the nine program areas targeted by the province for early childhood development since the introduction of the ECDI agreement, three are new programs (Healthy Baby, Parent-Child Centred Approach, and Manitoba Education, Training and Youth); five have received additional funding for expansion as a result (BabyFirst, STOP FAS, Child Day Care, Early Start, Children's Special Services); and, one has been partially restored (National Child Benefit Restoration).

An Adapted Ecological Model for Third Party Monitoring in Manitoba

The adapted basic ecological model for use in monitoring improvements and expansions of ECDI programs, as provided by CCSD, CICH and the Roeher Institute, is premised on the idea that interventions such as social programs are key determinants between influences (family, community, society) and child outcomes. The interventions are conceptualized as a “basket of services” that provide the link between the ecological model and the template for monitoring the ECDI. (Refer to Figure 1)

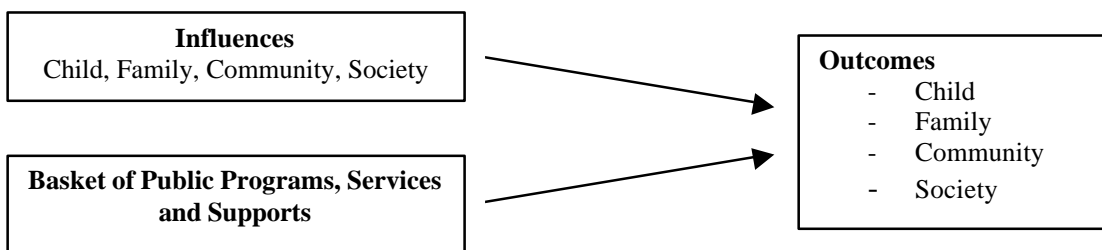
Figure 1: Adapted Ecological Model A.



The reference group agreed with the notion of a “basket of services” to represent the broad list of services and programs that contribute to child outcomes. It was noted, though, that the adapted ecological model (A.) required further modification as the group saw “influences” (family, community, society) as having an equally significant impact on outcomes as the basket of programs, services and supports. The original diagram implies that programs and services are responsible for certain outcomes, all of which are positive. Yet the group believed that services/programs cannot affect outcomes independently of other influences, such as family and community. Also, it cannot be assumed that these outcomes are all positive.

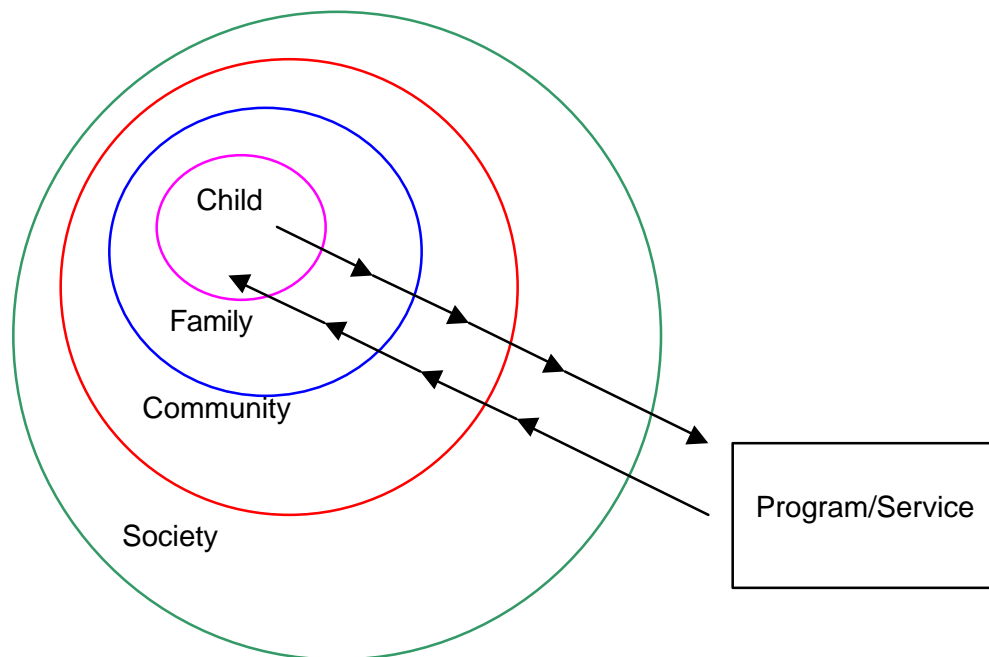
Children, their families, communities, and society are interdependent players in an environmental whole and share a role in influencing child well-being as much as they share the outcomes of varied influences. The linear nature of the original model was considered inadequate to the task of reflecting the complex, interactive and holistic nature of child well-being. The group proposed initial revisions to the model (B.) (refer to Figure 2) that begin to address these issues.

Figure 2: Adapted Ecological Model B.



Unlike Model A in Figure 1, Model B implies that child outcomes are part of the monitoring process along with family, community and societal outcomes. As a program is introduced or expanded, it has an impact at all four system levels – child, family, community, and society. In turn, all four system levels influence one another and contribute to the overall effectiveness of the program. For example, if parents are included in the decision-making structure of a program, their input helps to shape how the program is delivered which impacts child outcomes, effects the community, and has an impact on social policy (societal impact) (Refer to Figure 3). When families, community and society are viewed as active participants with a stake in the outcome rather than as passive influences on child well-being, the program is more likely to result in positive child outcomes. The greater the extent of the impact on all four levels, the greater the chances are that the program will be sustainable over the long term.

Figure 3: Adapted Ecological Model C.



Broadening the focus of the ECDI monitoring process to include child, family, community and societal outcomes is indicative of the community capacity building concept. Community capacity building is based on an individual's, family's, and community's assets as opposed to deficits. Seen in this light, programs/services build on an individual's, family's, and community's existing strengths, which lends itself to sustainable outcomes at all levels (Kretzmann and McKnight, 1993). To monitor ECDI on the basis of child outcomes only does not provide a complete understanding of the extent of the impact, and subsequent success, of ECD programs/services. A more thorough evaluation of ECDI includes family, community and societal outcomes. As well, child outcomes may not be evident for several years after the program has been introduced, such as improved physical health, and therefore difficult to measure.

Outcomes at the family level, such as increased involvement in the community, are likely to be apparent earlier on in the monitoring process.

Determining the Basket of Services/Programs

The primary purpose of third party monitoring of ECDI is to determine the extent to which the provincial government has enhanced or developed early childhood programs, and to determine the impact on child outcomes. As indicated in the proposed model, the basket of services/programs to be considered as part of the monitoring process should be determined based on the extent to which they fall into one or more of the “interrelated areas” that have a positive effect on children, as outlined by the National Children’s Agenda (NCA):

- Supporting parents and strengthening families;
- Enhancing early childhood development;
- Improving economic security of families;
- Providing early and continuous learning experiences;
- Fostering strong adolescent development; and,
- Creating supportive, safe and violence-free communities.

The basket can be further categorized, as proposed in the original model, by the Early Childhood Development Action Areas (Refer to Page 1). Categorizing the existing early childhood development programs in the province according to the NCA and ECD areas is important as it assists in determining the “gaps” in services/programs for young children and their families. The ideal result of the ECDI is that there is a continuum of services and programs that address the needs of children, and in doing so, positively impacts families, communities and society. In the case of Manitoba, the nine components of Manitoba’s ECD continuum would form the “basket of services” and would be the initial focus of the ECDI third party monitoring process.

Both sets of areas identified by the NCA and the ECD reflect the outcomes for not only children, but for families, community and society. For example, the area of improving economic security of families is being addressed in Manitoba by the restoration of the National Child Benefit (NCB). Increased income to families results in improved purchasing power for families, e.g. healthy food, which has a positive impact on the physical health of children. Healthier families have a positive impact on communities, and in turn influence future social policy (societal level), such as completely restoring the NCB to families.

Monitoring Improvement and Expansion of ECDI

The language used in both the First Ministers’ Meeting Communique (2000) and the proposed third party monitoring model is unclear. The terms “improvement”, “expansion”, and “enhancement” are similar in definition, and thus their meaning and use within the context of third party monitoring requires clarification.

For the purpose of Manitoba’s third party monitoring model of ECDI, the term “expansion” will be interpreted to mean increased funding, increased number of program spaces, and increased services attached to the program. The term “improvement” is interpreted as improved accessibility and effectiveness. The term “enhancement” is seen to encompass the meaning of “improvement”, and is therefore redundant. Expansion can be viewed as part of improvement, but for this exercise expansion is monitored separately.

Prior to determining the improvement and expansion of ECD programs, it is important that the existing early childhood development programs/services are mapped out at the outset of the monitoring process and that the funding attached to the program/service is identified. The latter is especially important when comparing progress of the ECDI from year to year. For example, decreased funding for a particular program from one year to the next is an important factor in the success of ECDI in the province. The next step is to identify which of the existing programs are new (established within the last government fiscal year) and which have received increased funding (expanded). It is also important to identify if the program’s funding is new, or if it has been taken from one program and re-distributed to another. The third step is to categorize where the existing programs fall on the ECD continuum of services according to the four ECD Action Areas so that gaps in programs/services can be identified. The initial stage of the monitoring process is demonstrated in Table 1 using the example of Manitoba’s Health Baby Program.

Table 1: Mapping Existing ECD Programs

Program Type	Program Name	New or Expanded	Funding	Increase or Decrease	Funding Source
Pregnancy, Birth, Infancy	Healthy Baby	New	\$4.1 million	Increase	Replaced W.I.N. program but with fewer restrictions.
Parenting and Family Supports					
Early Childhood Development					
Community Supports					

The key indicators for this first stage of the monitoring process are:

1. The extent to which early childhood development programs span the continuum of services required.
2. The level of funding.

3. The extent to which the funding has been augmented or has simply been shifted from one program to another.
4. The extent to which ECDI has resulted in new or expanded programs/services for children and families.

Once the “map” of existing services has been established, the second stage of the monitoring process is to determine the extent to which ECD programs have been expanded. As stated earlier, expansion is reflected in indicators such as increased funding, increased number of spaces, and increased number of services. The increase is determined on the basis of a comparison between baseline expenditures and current fiscal year expenditures. The key indicators are outlined in Table 2 and illustrated using Manitoba’s STOP FAS program.

Table 2: Expansion of ECD Programs

Program Type	Program Name	% Increase in Funding	% Increase in Spaces	Increase in Services (Y/N)	Description of Additional Services
Pregnancy, Birth, Infancy	STOP FAS	Approximately 40%	Unknown	Y	Expanded from two to three sites.
Parenting and Family Supports					
Early Childhood Development					
Community Supports					

The expansion of ECD programs/services through increased funding, spaces, and scope of services does not necessarily imply that a program has improved. Improvement of ECD programs is determined by increased access for children and families and improved effectiveness in terms of positively impacting child outcomes, as well as family, community and societal outcomes. Determining the improvement of ECD programs is more difficult than determining expansion. However, of the two, the former is most important within the context of the third party monitoring process in Manitoba. The next section attempts to illustrate a model for determining effectiveness of ECDI in Manitoba.

Measuring Improvement of ECDI Programs

When viewed within the broader context of community capacity building, it becomes evident that in order to monitor and evaluate the efficacy of programs under the ECDI, indicators should be identified for all four system levels that demonstrate pre-determined outcomes. The data that informs each of these indicators will either be qualitative or

quantitative in nature. Both types of data are important to the assessment of the outcome(s). For example, gathering data on the number of children enrolled in a program (quantitative) as well as the parent's perception of the usefulness of the program (qualitative) both provide useful information regarding the degree of program effectiveness. It should be noted though that not all outcomes will have both quantitative and qualitative indicators for each level. Accessibility to programs for children and families is considered to be an outcome of ECDI programs, and is therefore taken into consideration when measuring program effectiveness. The outcomes, as outlined below, are purposely broad in nature so that they can be applied to all types of early childhood development programs.

Outcome 1: The program/service is accessible to children and families.

Type of Indicator	System Level Indicators			
	Child	Family	Community	Society
Quantitative	- Increase in number of children entering the program from previous year. - Reduced waiting list.	- Increase in number of families applying to the program from the previous year.	- The number of referrals made by other organizations.	
Qualitative		- Parents perceive the application procedure to enter the program is inclusive and easy to follow.	- The community demonstrates support for the program, e.g. promotion.	

Outcome 2: The program meets the needs of diverse communities.

Type of Indicator	System Level Indicators			
	Child	Family	Community	Society
Quantitative	- The number of Aboriginal/new immigrant children participating in the program. - Increase/decrease from the previous year.		- The number of Aboriginal/new immigrant organizations/groups consulted in planning the program.	
Qualitative	- Aboriginal/new immigrant children feel as sense of belonging.	- Family members feel that their cultural values are respected and incorporated into the services they receive.		- Social policy reflects the program needs of Aboriginal/new immigrant families.

Outcome 3: The program contributes to the health and well-being of children and families.

Type of Indicator	System Level Indicators			
	Child	Family	Community	Society
Quantitative	- The number of times a child accesses the health care system.	- Parents access fewer “last resort” services, e.g. emergency rooms, food banks.	- Decrease in youth crime.	
Qualitative	- Children demonstrate fewer behavioral difficulties.	- Families feel supported and empowered.	- Community members feel safer in their communities.	- Social policy includes child and family well-being as a priority.

Outcome 4: The program builds community capacity through participation.

Type of Indicator	System Level Indicators			
	Child	Family	Community	Society
Quantitative	- Number of children more engaged in the community as a result of the program.	- Number of parents participating in the program’s decision-making process, e.g. board membership.	- Number of community members volunteering or hired in the administration of the program.	
Qualitative	- Children feel they have choices, abilities, skills as a result of participating in the program.	- Parents believe that they have opportunities to provide input and effect in the program planning.	- The extent to which local organizations are aware of the program.	- Social policy incorporates community directives in program planning and evaluation.

The above-noted outcomes and table of indicators provides a model of measuring program effectiveness from a broad perspective. The indicators can be tailored to the individual program, but the outcomes should remain consistent for all programs. It is recognized that the data required to implement this model may not be readily available, and at the very least, will need to come from a variety of sources. The next section attempts to address the issue of data availability by outlining the factors involved in the implementation of such a model.

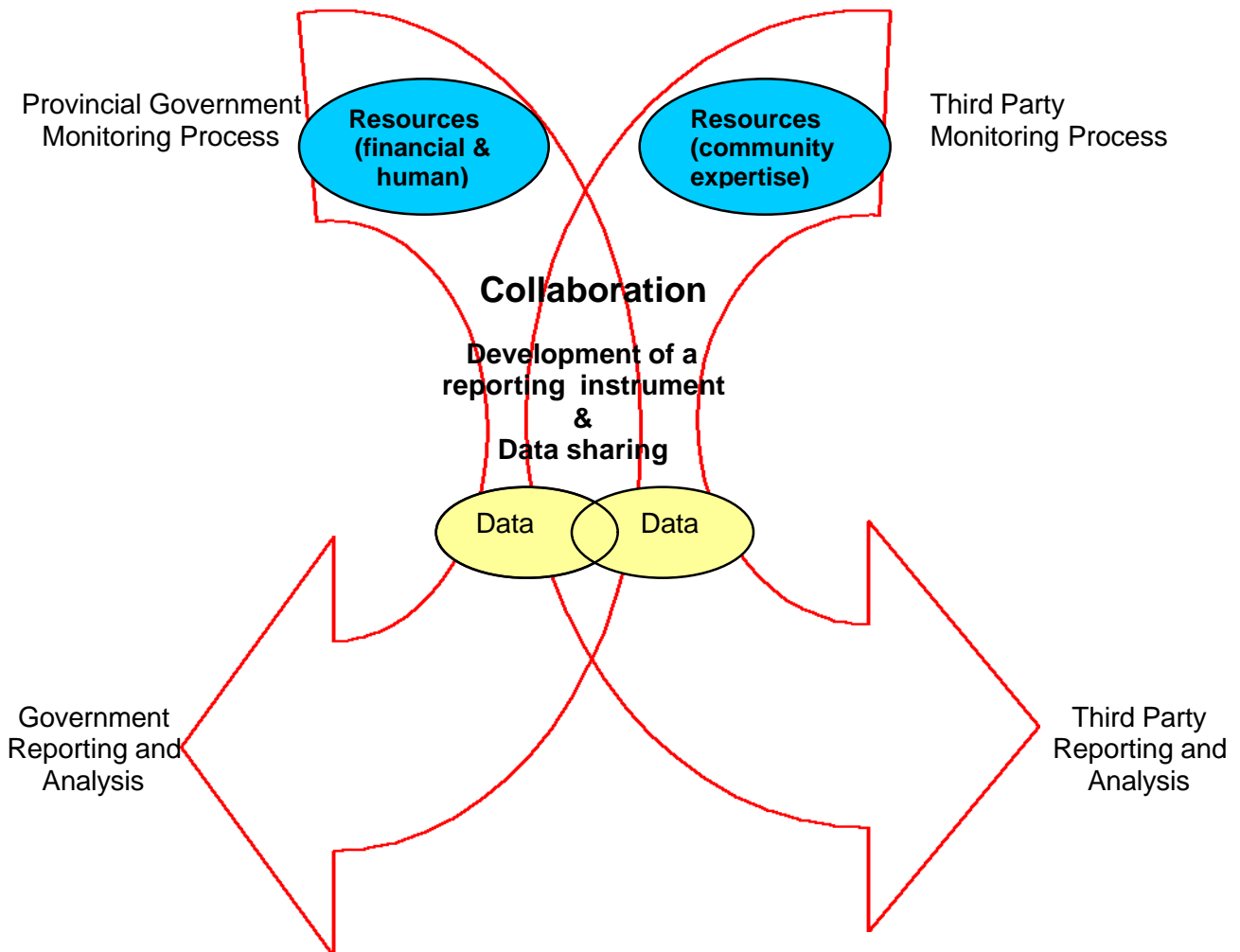
Implementation of a Third Party Monitoring Model of ECDI in Manitoba

The success or failure of a third party monitoring model of early childhood development programs in Manitoba is dependent on three key factors: 1) A clear and comprehensive reporting mechanism for programs under ECDI that includes quantitative and qualitative data; 2) partnerships between the government, non-government organizations, and the broader community; and, 3) financial resources to develop and implement a program monitoring instrument. In Manitoba, there are existing partnerships between non-

government organizations (NGO's) and research organizations, as well as partnerships between NGO's and government, and established community coalitions working to further child wellbeing initiatives. This factor combined with the Manitoba government's will to follow through with the ECDI creates a climate in which to successfully implement the monitoring model outlined in the previous section.

Despite the potential for collaboration, it is still necessary that the province and the community conduct separate progress evaluations of the ECDI. The collaborative effort, though, will be extremely important in terms of data gathering and data availability. For example, the province and the community can work together in the design of the reporting instrument for the programs. As well, research organizations with access to large databases, such as the Manitoba Centre for Health Policy and Evaluation (MCHPE), can share information not retrievable through the reporting instrument, e.g. the impact of poverty on children's health. The analysis and reporting of the findings can be accomplished jointly as well as separately, depending on the degree of similarity in each of the party's objectives. What follows is a simplistic example of the implementation process.

Figure 4: Implementation of a Third Party Monitoring Model of ECDI in Manitoba



The potential barriers to implementing this model are a lack of will on the part of government, NGO's and research organizations to cooperate in sharing information, as well as a lack of available data specific to Manitoba communities. Limited availability of data specific Manitoba's First Nations communities is especially problematic. This model could potentially be a basis from which provinces and communities, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, can advocate for the need for the availability of more comprehensive data on which to measure the effectiveness of programs and services.

Concluding Comments

Manitoba is in a unique position as it relates to the Early Childhood Development Initiative. The Manitoba government's effort to establish a continuum of early childhood development programs combined with the existing partnerships among government, non-government and research organizations provides for an excellent climate in which to implement a comprehensive third party monitoring model of ECDI. The third party monitoring model described in this paper attempts to capitalize on the collaborative environment and the political will to improve child, family, and community well-being. The community capacity building concept provides the basis for the monitoring and evaluation of early childhood development programs as it incorporates the broad outcomes and indicators of child and family programs, recognizing the existing strengths of children, families, and communities, and their role influencing outcomes.

It is recognized that this model would not be feasible with provincial governments that have implemented ECD programs on a smaller scale and/or that have been less transparent with regard to their activities. It was the consensus of Manitoba's reference group, representing government and non-government agencies, that this process provided an opportunity to take advantage of Manitoba's unique position to move forward the agenda of evaluating early childhood development programs.

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