BC Regional Innovation Chair (BCRIC) for Aboriginal Early Childhood Development (AECD)  
February 11, 2011 Meeting Summary

Participants: Stella Bates (Principal, Aboriginal Education, School District 68), Mary Burgaretta (BC Aboriginal Child Care Society), Marcia Dawson (Aboriginal Success by Six), Dianna Elliott (Aboriginal Infant Development), Grace Elliott (Tillicum Lelum), Joan Gignac (Aboriginal Head Start), Sheila Grieve (VIU ECEC), Kathleen Haggith (Associate Dean, Health and Human Services), Sharon Hobenshield (VIU Aboriginal Education), Ada Mawson (Coast Salish Employment and Training), Joyce White (Kwumut Lelum).

Regrets: Joe Elliott (VIU First Nations Advisory Council & Chemainus Native College), Florence James (Elder in Residence, VIU), Becky Wesley (Snuneymux’w Child Care) Debbie Williams (Hiiye’yu lelum).

Please note: Rather than tracking our discussions according to the order in which they occurred, I have structured them to fit with the agenda. Hopefully this provides a helpful approach. My thinking is that it provides documentation of the work accomplished with appropriate attention to the related discussions and helped me to identify any areas that may require further discussion.

1. Introductions –
   Linda provided opportunity for meeting participants to introduce themselves and to suggest changes/additions to the agenda.

2. Overview of the BCRIC AECD Work –
   Linda provided an overview of the AECD including: historical context of the BCRIC for AECD initiative, overall intent, goals, and objectives of the initiative. (Copies of the powerpoint with key points was circulated. This will be attached to the summaries of the individuals who were unable to attend the meeting.) As well participants were informed about some of the current and planned activities for the AECD Chair. This part of the agenda was interactive with a number of questions raised, and discussion occurring. Some of the general comments relating to this part of the agenda are summarized as follows:
   • In response to a discussion about the resistance of First Nation communities to the idea of ‘researching’ AECD in communities, participants talked about how reframing research as “asking questions” about the ‘whys’ and ‘hows’ – so describing the questions we want to ask of communities – might create a more positive view of what the AECD Chair and the community together might undertake. There was agreement that communities respond well to the idea of understanding what is happening, what is working, and why but
because of the language we use, research is often perceived as being imposed on communities by mainstream institutions. The term ‘ta’alt’ was believed to capture the idea of answering questions together rather than ‘researching’.

- Incorporate more community language and protocol (rather than institutional/academic language and protocol) may help to dispel some of the discomfort. There was discussion about the importance of being ‘protocol forward’ – that is, remembering to use protocols that are preferred and accepted by the communities rather than using standard processes. (For example, hand delivering invitations to meetings/discussions in communities, involving the Advisory committee in organizing meetings to enhance appropriate protocols, using appropriate and familiar language.)

- Involve Aboriginal students in meetings to enhance capacity building.

- There was agreement that approaching Chief and Council for permission to meet in and with community was an important step. It was suggested that I could ask Chief and Council to provide direction in regards to whether they would appoint someone to assist with meeting planning in community or whether they would provide names and that I would contact those individuals for assistance.

- One of the participants raised the concern that the processes must also fit with VIU protocols. This lead to discussion about the importance of VIU’s willingness to find new ways of understanding standards/criteria. For example the idea of establishing outcomes was seen as workable providing it is understood that there will be different ways of ‘getting there’. In fact, it was agreed that in some cases, outcomes themselves may need to look different depending on the direction provided by the communities and the Advisory committee.

- The ideas of reciprocity and equity was reinforced by participants – i.e. the discussions both with the community and the Advisory committee must be considered as ‘equal’ in importance as what might be desirable from an institutional perspective.

3. Proposed Terms of Reference –
Linda provided some of her initial ideas regarding the terms of reference (based on experiences with other Advisory committees). While it was recognized that the language will need to be adjusted and some changes made to ensure the appropriate protocols and processes are in place, the group felt that the terms made sense and would ‘fit’ for the AECD Advisory committee. A modified version of the Terms of Reference is attached with the meeting summary. It was agreed
that the details related to Terms of Reference could be ‘hammered out at the first/next Advisory meeting.

4. **Task and process objectives to guide the work of an AECD Advisory Committee**
   Comments and suggestions related to the members and roles/responsibilities and processes are noted below.

**Membership:**
The participants reiterated the concept of ‘less is more’ throughout the meeting, reinforcing the idea that while it is desirable to ensure good representation across the communities and organizations, it is not necessary to engage large numbers of people. Rather, it could be helpful to focus on those who may represent different perspectives. Also, the concept of ‘less is more’ also applies to the number of meetings and the structure of the Advisory Committee. It may be that creating two levels of Advisory - one to provide the broader input and feedback and one that might be more involved with the project direction and the day to day activity planning (outlined below) – would be both efficient and effective. It was believed that the best structure would evolve as individuals decided their own availability and ability to continue their involvement.

- There was general agreement that both the rural and urban communities should be included in the Advisory membership. Participants agreed to let Linda know if there were individuals that they think should be included in the AECD Advisory membership.
- There was some discussion about whether it might work best to have both a smaller working committee that would meet more regularly and a larger Advisory committee that would meet less often. It was agreed that meeting participants would consider their own availability and ability to be involved in an Advisory capacity to the BCRIC AECD and would let Linda know their willingness to participate and the level of involvement that would work for them.
- It was agreed that members should ‘reply all’ to Linda’s email about other potential members so that we can create a list of those who would provide a needed perspective and then do some initial decision making via email.

**Roles and responsibilities of Advisory Members:**
• Participants were clear that they did not wish to be involved in a ‘rubber-stamping’ role or capacity. They believed it essential that they be visible as contributing professionals and that their involvement be valued with respect to who they are as First Nation/Aboriginal women (and men as applicable) and AECD professionals.

• In the Terms of Reference discussion, members saw themselves as functioning in an advisory capacity rather than actually producing work and the AECD Chair, work opportunity students, and staff would undertake the actual work of the AECD initiative.

• Some of the roles considered by participants included: attending and participating in meetings on a quarterly basis (perhaps less if a working group is established); provide advice to the AECD Chair related to planning initiatives and activities; assisting with decision making and direction setting; sharing information with communities, organizations, agencies about initiatives and activities; provide information and suggestions based on personal/professional expertise (as might be required); and suggest relevant resources to inform and support the work undertaken;

• May take on role of chairing some meetings and assist with the social aspects of bringing the group together (for example, organizing meeting space refreshments) when meeting is held in their community/organization.

• Some participants suggested that they would bring along ‘mentees’ to the meetings in order to enhance capacity building of ‘new’ members.

Processes:

• Meeting participants thought we would have to avoid ‘institutionalization’ of the committee – that is, both the content and the form of the meetings should reflect the communities involved with appropriate attention to community protocols related to invitations to attend meetings, opening and closing prayers by an Elder (or Elder committee member comfortable with this role); other First Nation/Aboriginal relevant traditions and approaches to facilitating meetings.

• Advisory Committee Meetings could be held in different organizations/agencies/communities as applicable to advisory members. Meeting Chair would rotate with the person who is organizing the meeting in their community functioning as the Chair.
• BCRIC AECD Chair has a budget to support meetings in the community – for example, providing dollars to purchase refreshments when meetings are held off (VIU) campus.
• As discussed with the First Nations Advisory Council (FNAC) they will appoint a member to the AECD Advisory Committee. The BCRIC AECD will also liaise with FNAC to ensure timely transfer of information between the two committees.

5. Immediate Next Steps:
• When Linda returns to work March 7, she will circulate meeting notes and send an email providing some direction regarding the Advisory membership brainstorming and response to the request for Advisory Committee participation with a suggested deadline for response.
• Linda will proceed with the plan to update communities about the AECD initiative and to ask some initial questions regarding community AECD programs and services in keeping with the activity plan submitted to the Leading Edge Endowment Fund as part of the project proposal. (Linda will circulate the draft questionnaire for feedback once we have the committee membership identified.)
• A second meeting will be planned over the next few weeks and will involve those individuals who have agreed to Advisory membership. At that time, a more detailed plan for next steps will be discussed and timelines identified.
• Linda will continue with the work already started (by work opportunity students) to 1) complete and environment scan of AECD programs, services, agencies; 2) Plan and coordinate community meetings for the purposes of updating and information sharing (with those communities and organizations with whom the AECD committee worked prior to proposal development.); and 3) to meet with other AECD organizations and programs for information sharing purposes.

Next meeting – TBA.