



NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release
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Research partnership between Red Deer College and Family Services of Central Alberta aimed at strengthening community for children

RED DEER, AB - Red Deer College is partnering with Family Services of Central Alberta (FSCA) to conduct research that will help identify local resources and services available to families in support of their children's early learning.

Faculty from the Geography Department at Red Deer College will work with FSCA on the Understanding the Early Years (UEY) Initiative, a national research project that enables communities across Canada to better understand the needs of young children and families as they prepare for formal schooling.

"The project is phased over three years," said Dr. Donna Morrison, an instructor in the Early Learning and Child Care Department at the College who has been contracted by FSCA to oversee the research for the project. "By the end of the project, we should have a body of knowledge about how young children are developing in our community and what is influencing their progress."

Morrison says the research will help us to understand the influences on a children's development and to make more informed decisions about how to enhance the learning of young children.

Laurie Lafortune, UEY Project Coordinator with Family Services of Central Alberta, says year one will focus on gathering resources, identifying gaps in service, and communicating this information to the community. An inventory of community programs and services for children will be developed. Red Deer College's Geography Department will involve their students as they map the services and present social and economic factors that present the character of the community.

The second year will focus on collecting information about the development of kindergarten children and interviewing parents to learn more about family and community experiences, according to Morrison. In the final year of the project a research report will be developed that will result in a community action plan to address the needs of children under six years of age.

The research project is the result of an investment of \$358,660 in Red Deer by the federal government announced in June. Red Deer was the only community in Alberta to be chosen to receive federal funding under this initiative.

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Understanding the Early Years Initiative is funded by Human Resources and Social Development Canada. For further information, visit www.hrsdc.gc.ca.

Red Deer College is a comprehensive community college that has been educating students since 1964. Red Deer College is committed to being the leading comprehensive college serving learners and communities through excellence and innovation.

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