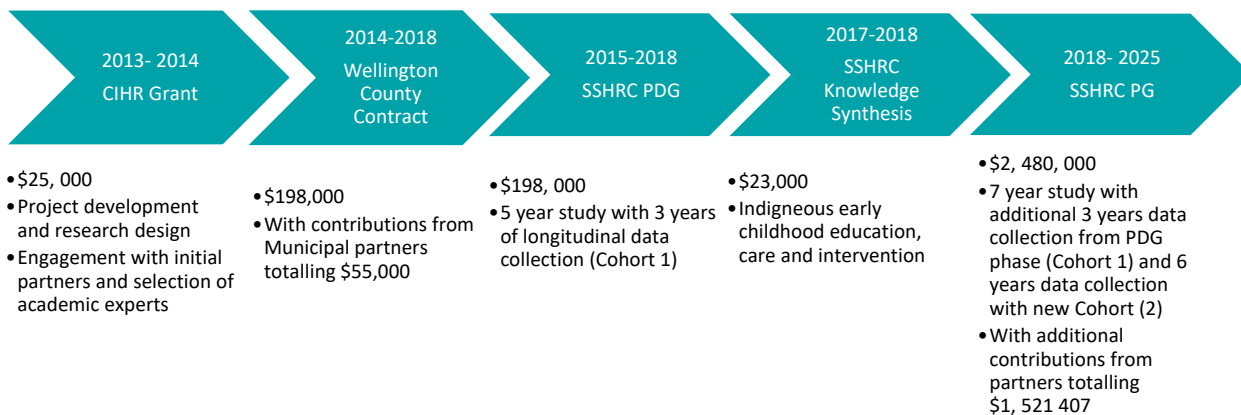


## From the Project Director

Greetings to all our Partnership Members:

This is a long overdue communiqué. I have been remiss in sharing all our news, but we have been busy over the last year. This communiqué comes as we begin our final year of the SSHRC Partnership Grant funding. As you will recall, the IECSS project has been possible through multiple funding opportunities. However, we have been actively working to consider our next steps. Many of you will have heard from me already, and if you have not, you will! Our project is a collective action toward understanding child and family experiences that are tremendously diverse, in terms of disability experiences, and interactions with service systems, but also in terms of economic, racial, geographic, and colonial relationships to each other and to society. This is an important body of work. It is for that reason that the next steps are so important. We now have a responsibility to the families who have shared their experiences and expertise, and to ensure that our research findings are shared with those who can mobilize for change. As a reminder of the stages of our research, and to reiterate our thanks to our funders, here is a summary that can also be found on our website.



### Team news:

First, we have had a number of staffing changes in our office. Both Abneet Atwal and Laura Feltham have moved on to new initiatives. I want to thank both of them for their extensive contributions to the project. Both Abneet and Laura were actively involved in interviewing, data management, and analysis. You will notice that they both contributed to publications, and each of them led additional initiatives.

Abneet was the primary person to recruit and support all of our Youth Advisory Committee members since our first meeting in 2018 at Carleton. Abneet continued those relations for many years. See below for updates on the Youth Advisory Committee. On April 16, 2024, Abneet successfully defended her doctoral dissertation, which examined IECSS data on human movement and disability. It makes a substantial contribution to our understanding of how international migration, inter-provincial or territorial, and travel to access services, share some theoretical and practical attributes with consequences for children, families and institutions.

Laura led our ethics application process. Many of you will have heard from Laura over the years, as they supported the ongoing reporting and application to 17 different ethics boards and processes. This requires organization, communication, and knowledge of the project. I am deeply grateful for this work, which I could not have done on my own. Katie Ceolin is now working on coordinating this ongoing project, with the intention of closing some of the applications in our final year of the SSHRC Partnership Grant.

We continue to have Katie Ceolin, who returned from a maternity leave last year, working as our Administrative Coordinator. Alison Smith also returned in January from her second maternity leave on a limited time basis, until child care is fully in place for baby Ariyah. Alison will be supporting some of the administrative tasks when Katie goes on leave in August. Alison also continues to work toward her PhD, examining Black experiences in the IECSS data.

Melanie dos Remedios, the mapping, transcribing and data entry research assistant extraordinaire, also returned from maternity leave. Welcome to Melanie's baby Kian. There are more IECSS babies out there, but these are the newest members of our family.



Ariyah



Kian

Thank you also to Catriona Kollar, who has stepped up as a Project Coordinator to lead our quantitative data input and coordination of interviews alongside the other Project Coordinators. Asshwi Krishnagopal has stepped into the role of Project Coordinator, to fill the gap left by Abneet and Laura. We have fewer participants now that we have completed data collection for our first Cohort (9 years of interviews) and have some attrition from Cohort 2. Finally, but not least, thank you to Thanh Thanh Chung, who continues as our Data Coordinator, keeping us all apprised of the work needed to stay on schedule in our longitudinal data collection.

### Data collection update:

Our original grant allowed for 6 years of data collection from 2 cohorts (beginning in 2014 and 2018 respectively). As a result of the pandemic, we moved all interviews to telephone rather than in person, which provided an opportunity to fund additional data collection. As a result, we were able to continue interviews for Cohort 1, up to 9 years. We now have data from interviews beginning at age of 2 up to age 9. We have informed Cohort 1 participants that we are now finished data collection, and where requested, we have sent the participants a copy of their map (electronic or print). We continue to interview Cohort 2 participants who are now beginning their year 7 interviews. We have applied for new funding to support this work, and we hope to be able to continue until year 9, in order to have matching data sets.

We have also applied for new funding to support analysis of the quantitative data. The need for new funding arises from the unexpected complexity of the data set, with start dates that are not all aligned by child's birthdate, or calendar date, and a much more complex set up of institutional interactions than we expected (note this is a key finding of the project).

### Publications and Knowledge Mobilization:

Over the last 2 years we have focused on knowledge mobilization. With the Let the Rivers Flow event (<https://www.torontomu.ca/inclusive-early-childhood-service-system/let-the-rivers-flow--a-gathering-about-responsive-early-childhood/>), we were able to bring together Indigenous partners, community members, and allies to share experiences of disability, colonization, cultural practice and recommendations for those working with Indigenous communities.

The Youth Advisory Committee has conducted a number of knowledge mobilization activities with videos, websites and ongoing active contributions (<https://www.torontomu.ca/inclusive-early-childhood-service-system/about/youth-advisory-committee/>).

We have now completed the podcast series, and I encourage you to listen (<https://www.torontomu.ca/inclusive-early-childhood-service-system/findings/podcasts0/>). A number of our partners participated in this series and brought important perspectives on how we understand our findings. Thank you very much to Kevin McShan for his work on this initiative. Kevin has an ongoing podcast series that covers a wider range of topics. I encourage you to explore Kevin's work further (<https://www.kevinmcshan.com/>).

#### The following new publications have been released:

- Atwal, A., Underwood, K., Moreno-Angarita, M., Wertlieb, D., Kissi, E.F., & Emmanuel, S. (2024). Are the rights of children with disabilities respected in their everyday lives? *Revue de l'Université de Moncton*, 52(2), 5-30. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1108449ar>. (in French)
- Nafisa, F.T., Wahid, K., Tanner, S., Alabassi, M., & Weber, J. (2024). Deaf to deaf (Dispatches). *Studies in Social Justice*, 18(1), 14-15.

- Tollan, K., Jezrawi, R., Underwood, K., & Janus, M. (2023). A review on early intervention systems. *Current Developmental Disorder Reports*, 1-7.
- Balter, A.S., Feltham, L., Parekh, G., Douglas, P., Underwood, K., & van Rhijn, T. (2023). Re-imagining inclusion through the lens of disabled childhoods. *Disability and Social Inclusion: Lessons from the Pandemic*, 11(1). 48-59.
- Tollan, K. & Underwood, K. (2023). IECSS Policy Brief No. 13: Disabled children's participation in a national childcare strategy. Inclusive Early Childhood Service System project.
- Park, J., & Ceolin, K. (2023). Let the rivers flow: A gathering of Indigenous and allied communities, youth, professionals, and families with children from across Canada, event technical report. Inclusive Early Childhood Service System project. Toronto, ON: Toronto Metropolitan University.
- IECSS. (2022). Policy brief no. 12: Policy recommendations for inclusive early childhood services. Inclusive Early Childhood Service System project.

One of our most effective knowledge mobilization activities is in the form participation in community consultations and events where we work to ensure that disabled children and their families' experiences are present. I have been attending a number of consultations and advisory meetings at the municipal, provincial, and federal level in response to the implementation of the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) agreements. I have also been invited to a number of professional development events to present on our methodology (at Finding our Power Together) and to infuse disability perspectives into equity and belonging focused workshops (at the invitation of Natalie Royer). Both Nicole Ineese-Nash and Alison Smith have included IECSS findings in presentations to healthcare and early learning professionals. I welcome any other requests to share IECSS findings.

### **New initiatives:**

I have been reaching out to our partners, co-investigators, Advisory committees, and staff, to consider our next steps with IECSS. We have 10 years of data about how services are organized in relation to the disabled children and their families. I am confident that there is no other project of this type in the world. The first step was to ask the Youth Advisory committee what our next steps should be. Their resounding response was to focus on Knowledge Mobilization, with a focus on social media as a mechanism to reach children and young people.

Our International Advisory committee has members from the UK, US, Nigeria, Ghana and Colombia. I have had conversations with both our colleagues in Nigeria and Colombia about how IECSS research methods and findings can support their work, and vice versa. We can see that they are many parallel and also divergent experiences, and we value collaboration for the purpose of developing stronger community led early years services.

Once we have more information about possible funding, we will be reaching out to our partners to seek a re-confirmation of commitment (intellectual and in practice) to the partnership. I want to thank Keepers of the Circle and Niwasa Kendaaswin Teg for their recent

letters of support and commitment to the project in the context of new applications for recognition.

Our ultimate goal is to create a more permanent archive of the materials that we have developed to document family experiences. This would allow us to share the data we have gathered and have the expertise that families have shared available to others.

Thank you so much to all of you for your efforts in this tremendous effort. Going forward, we will continue to speak with families and work toward sharing our findings in a way that brings good change and values the lives of disabled children and their families.

I wish everyone good health and a great summer.

*Kathryn Underwood*, Project Director

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