



eccdc
early childhood community development centre
Understanding the Early Years

COMMUNITY DIVERSITY BRIEF – NIAGARA FALLS, ONTARIO

Excerpts from preliminary findings of:
Communities Survey (2002, 2005) - Statistics Canada

Understanding the Early Years (UEY) is a Government of Canada national Initiative aimed at helping communities better understand how their young children are doing physically, socially, and cognitively and how families and the community are supporting their children. The Initiative involves the participation of parents, teachers, schools, school boards, community organizations, and others interested in the well-being of children. Niagara Falls, Ontario is one of seven communities that have participated, since 2001, in the second pilot phase (UEY-II Communities). The other six communities are Hampton, New Brunswick; Montreal, Quebec; Dixie-Bloor of Mississauga, Ontario; South Eastman, Manitoba; Saskatoon, Saskatchewan; and Abbotsford, British Columbia.

As part of the UEY Initiative, Statistics Canada conducted two rounds of the Communities Survey in Niagara Falls, which was adapted from the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth (NLSCY). The first cycle of data was collected in 2001-2002 and the second in 2004-2005, using the same instruments and data collection procedures. Human Resources and Social Development Canada (HRSDC) is producing a report that provides an update for the Niagara Falls Community, based on the analysis of these two cycles of data. This report will provide a portrait of kindergarteners in the Niagara Falls Community, in major domains of child development including physical health and well-being, cognitive skills, and behaviours. The report will also explore factors that may be related to children's developmental outcomes, by looking at changes in demographics, family processes, and community factors between 2002 and 2005.

This brief is based on preliminary analysis of the data collected in the Communities Survey, the early childhood developmental outcomes in Niagara Falls, and changes between 2001 and 2005 that are related to community diversity.

The growing diversity of the Niagara Falls community is perhaps more reflected in the changes in the first language(s) the Niagara Falls children acquired at home outlined in the

Distribution of kindergarten children's first language, Niagara Falls and UEY-II Communities (percentage, 2001 and 2005)

First language learned at home	Niagara Falls		UEY-II Communities	
	2001	2005	2001	2005
English only	94.5	88.6	56.7	65.2
French only	-	0.2	23.7	14.8
English & French only	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.2
English & French & Other	-	-	-	0.1
English & Other (no French)	-	1.5	0.8	1.9
French & Other (no English)	-	-	0.4	0.8
Neither English nor French	5.3	9.5	18.0	17.0
Total Percent	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

table at left. In 2001, about 95% of Niagara Falls children spoke English as their only 'mother tongue'. By 2005, this proportion was down by 6%. Over this period, the percentage of children who spoke languages other than English or French as their first language(s) almost doubled, up from 5% in 2001 to about 10% in 2005.

*Source: The Communities Survey, 2001-02 and 2004-05 (Statistics Canada)

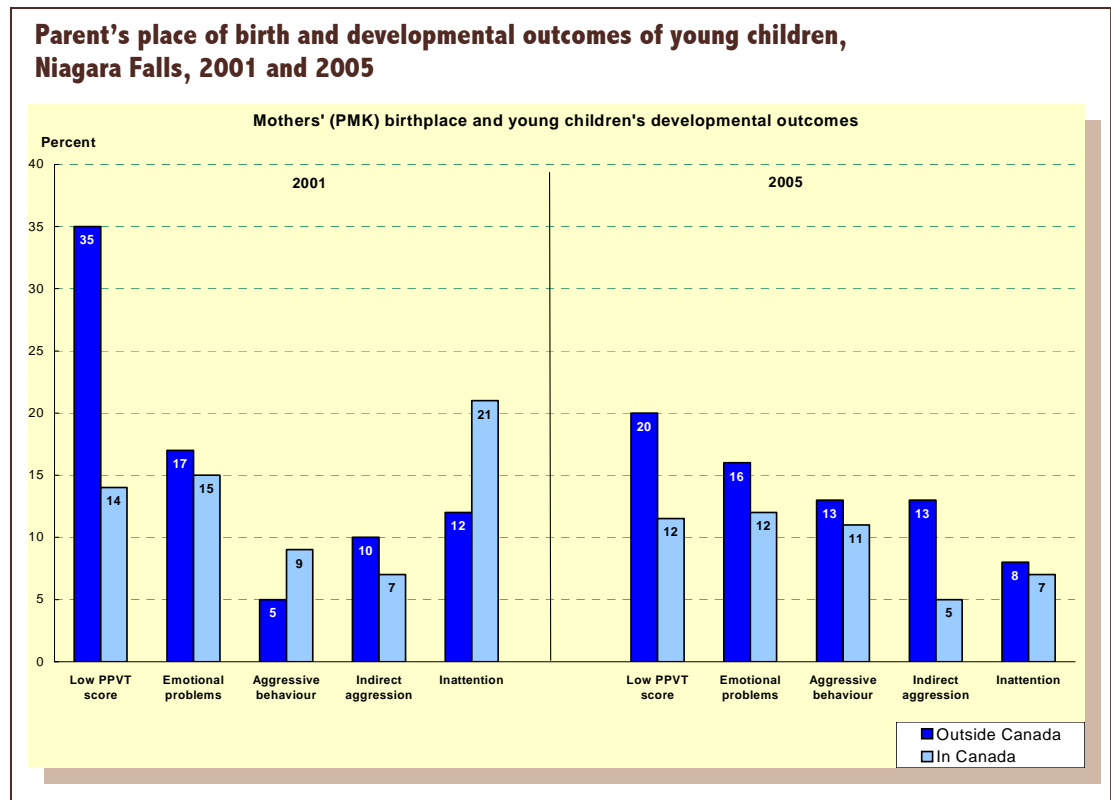
The fact that the Niagara Falls community has become more of a multiethnic community is reflected in the proportion of parents born outside of North America and Europe, which had increased significantly over the period between 2001 to 2005 (see table below).

Distribution of kindergarten children by parents' place of birth, Niagara Falls and UEY-II Communities (percentage, 2001 and 2005)

Parent's Place of Birth	Niagara Falls		UEY-II Communities	
	2001	2005	2001	2005
Canada	87.7	79.4	70.7	69.5
USA	1.5	2.8	1.0	1.1
Europe	6.3	2.4	5.0	2.5
Asia	2.1	3.8	7.1	6.8
Others	2.4	11.6	16.2	15.2
Not Stated	-	-	-	4.9
Total Percent	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

*Source: The Communities Survey, 2001-02 and 2004-05 (Statistics Canada)

The data demonstrated in the graph at right suggests that there is a significant relationship between mothers' birthplaces (born in Canada vs. other countries) and various children's outcomes. For example, children with mothers born outside Canada were much more likely to experience delay in vocabulary development: 35% of them received low PPVT scores in 2001, compared to 14% of children with mothers born in Canada. The gap was even wider in 2005, with 39% of



children with mothers born outside Canada being considered as 'delayed' in vocabulary development, compared to 12% of children whose mothers were born in Canada. The data also indicates that children of mothers born outside Canada were slightly more likely to show signs of emotional problems.

Summary

The function of the UEY projects is to provide community-specific information on:

- the development of kindergarten children;
- family and community factors that influence children's development;
- local programs and services for young children and their families; and
- local socioeconomic characteristics.

With this information, community organizations and individuals can identify gaps in services and programs for young children and their families and foster partnerships among community groups and individuals to make informed decisions about the best programs and services for young children to thrive.

For information on the availability of the full HRSDC community study for Niagara Falls, and other inquiries concerning the Understanding the Early Years, Niagara Falls project, please contact Glory Ressler, Understanding the Early Years Coordinator, by calling 905.646.7311 ext. 319, email gressler@eccdc.org, or visit the website at www.uey.eccdc.org.