

High Prairie & District  
Children's Resource Council

Brighter Futures Program

Community Development Evaluation

2002

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## 1.0 Introduction

In 1993/94 interested agencies and professionals from High Prairie and surrounding communities came together to develop the Brighter Futures program. A community needs survey was undertaken to identify the community and an application for CAPC funding was prepared by representatives from the communities of High Prairie, Enilda, Jousard, Grouard, Peavine and Gift Lake, with The Children's Resource Council acting as sponsor. Board members were recruited to represent different segments of the population, different community agencies and different communities.

The Brighter Futures program began operations in January of 1996. From the beginning Brighter Futures was designed to have a strong Community Development orientation. *“Implicit in the proposal is the aim to demonstrate to each community an understanding of their needs and develop delivery methods that will work in each unique community with a willingness to start in family settings as a foundation for support system.”* The original community development strategy was *“to establish delivery programs, communication, and support networks within each community and to work with each community preparing residents to take over and continue the family life education process.”*<sup>1</sup>

The community needs/agenda identified through a survey of five communities continues to act as a guide for Brighter Futures programming. Needs identified by the communities include:

- |                   |                               |
|-------------------|-------------------------------|
| Parenting         | Nutrition                     |
| Child Development | Access to Play School         |
| Anger Management  | Access to Community Resources |
| Family Violence   | Alcohol Abuse                 |

The Brighter Futures program has brought quality programs and services to children and families in High Prairie and surrounding communities for the past nine years, by working in partnership with communities and agencies. Over the past two years, loss of personnel from satellite communities (Jousard, Gift Lake, and Peavine) as well as loss of partners' Early Intervention Program resources in many of these small communities has had a major impact on Brighter Futures programming. The impact has been most significant in the satellite communities. The satellite toy libraries have been disbanded and merged with the main toy library in High Prairie. Due to lack of resources for worker salaries, the personnel budget has been adjusted to provide one full time family life coordinator who will service all communities. Good Start worker hours have been expanded to full time.

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<sup>1</sup> Taken from original program objectives.

## High Prairie Brighter Futures – Community Development Evaluation - 2002

### High Prairie – Brighter Futures Community Development Programming Overview 2001

Communities Served: High Prairie; Peavine; Gift Lake; Jousard; Grouard; Succer Creek

Ongoing Programming	Workshops – Periodic or Time Limited Programming	Ongoing Engagement Activity	Community Events	New Developments & Training Initiatives	Community Partners and Network Support
Drop-In Programs Resource Centre Toy Libraries  Regular Direct Programs Parent Network Collective Kitchens Taming the Dragon  Connector Program Play School Sponsorship  Awareness Program Radio Tips Newspaper Tips	Nobody’s Perfect A-LAPS Dare To Read  Babysitting Course Caring for Kids Kid Care Kits Baby Massage  Budgeting/Credit Mng  Parenting Workshops in response to community needs/interests	Community Workers  Home Visits  Community needs/interests assessment & response	Beach Day  Family Day  Fishing Tournament	Home Visiting Proposal  Invest In Kids Training  FAS Workshop  Nobody’s Perfect Facilitator Training	FAS Good Start – CPNP Sucker Creek – Women’s Shelter  Baby Welcome Coats for Kids Santa’s Helpers Food Bank Screening (for 1 year only)

This year the High Prairie & Region Children's Council underwent a thorough internal management review to ensure continued alignment with community, sustained programming effectiveness and efficient program management. The review included:

- Review of program model and structure (trends, CD/direct programming balance, organization chart)
- Community input re needs
- Alternative sources of funding
- Cultural profiles of communities (for culturally relevant programming)
- Review of Vision, Mission, Goal

### **1.1 Goals**

As a result of the overall strategic review and planning, the goals of the High Prairie & District Children's Resource Council were revised and consolidated. The following goals represent the most recent 2002 updates.

1. **PROMOTION:** Community-based and culturally appropriate services, networks and programs designed to support and strengthen children and families are available.
2. **PREVENTION:** Develop a continuum of resources, programs and services for children, families and communities that will empower them to take responsibility for their own social health and well-being.
3. **PROTECTION:** Increase awareness of social issues and pressures that affect children and youth through equitable, accessible and flexible programming.
4. **ORGANIZATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY:** Working collaboratively with many partners and stakeholders, develop sustainable funding initiatives and innovative methods of maximizing available resources.
5. **COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT:** Develop initiatives that are wanted and supported by community with the underlying principle that the community will work towards taking responsibility and ownership of the program.

### **1.2 Results of Strategic Review and Planning**

Board members are generally satisfied with the current direction taken by Brighter Futures and are committed to continuing with a community development approach. It has been suggested that Brighter Futures narrow its focus a bit to concentrate limited resources on existing core programs. This may involve being more discriminating regarding involvement in broader community events. Another proposed strategy for increasing Brighter Futures' visibility in the community is to offer more programming from its own space versus use of community meeting space (e.g. church). Implementation of this strategy will depend on availability of resources and space.

### 1.3 Theoretical Framework for Community Development Evaluation

One model for evaluation of community development initiatives is the use of “capacity domains” which represent the broad based outcomes typically resulting from community development activity.

Community capacity is a process as well as an outcome; it is complex, multidimensional and ecological (operating at individual, group, organizational, community and policy levels), dynamic and context specific. Capacity exists in a dynamic state and develops in stages of readiness that must be taken into account in selecting capacity-enhancing interventions.<sup>2</sup>

Some of the most commonly identified community development capacity domains or outcomes include the following:

**Shared Vision**

(community agenda)

**Participation**

(expanded, diverse, different levels of engagement for different purposes)

**Increased Skills and Knowledge**

(personal skills, community skills)

**Increased Networks**

(personal/social; systemic/inter-organizational)

**Increased Resources**

(physical; financial; in-kind; expertise; infrastructure)

**Emergent Leadership**

(community, formal/informal, shared)

**Sense of Community**

(sense of belonging, relationships, trust, norms, history, etc.)

**Ability to Influence Change**

(make progress on goals)

**Critical Learning**

(reflection; evaluation)

Community development capacity building processes and outcomes occur at number of different levels, including:

- **Individual/family capacity building** – new awareness, skills, strengths & assets, personal/social support
- **Organizational capacity building** – infrastructure, administrative support, management expertise, leadership development
- **Community capacity building** – increased community resources/services, opportunities for community collaboration & contribution (e.g. cross sectoral), and increased ability to engage and support community members

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<sup>2</sup> Goldman et al, 1998.

High Prairie Brighter Futures engages in a range of activities intended to build capacity at these various levels. Activities include:

- Direct services and workshops
- Training for professionals and community members
- Connecting/facilitating access to existing community services (e.g. Play School Sponsorships, resource information, Food Bank application screening)
- Expertise to community partners (e.g. helping with a workshop, consulting with schools or play schools)
- Opportunities for organizations to work together (as partners) on community activities/services
- Opportunities for parents and families to get involved in community activities
- Opportunities for community members/organizations to contribute to their community
- Infrastructure and sound administrative support to new initiatives and smaller community initiatives
- Attraction and/or development of new resources/services within the community

### **1.4 Evaluation Process**

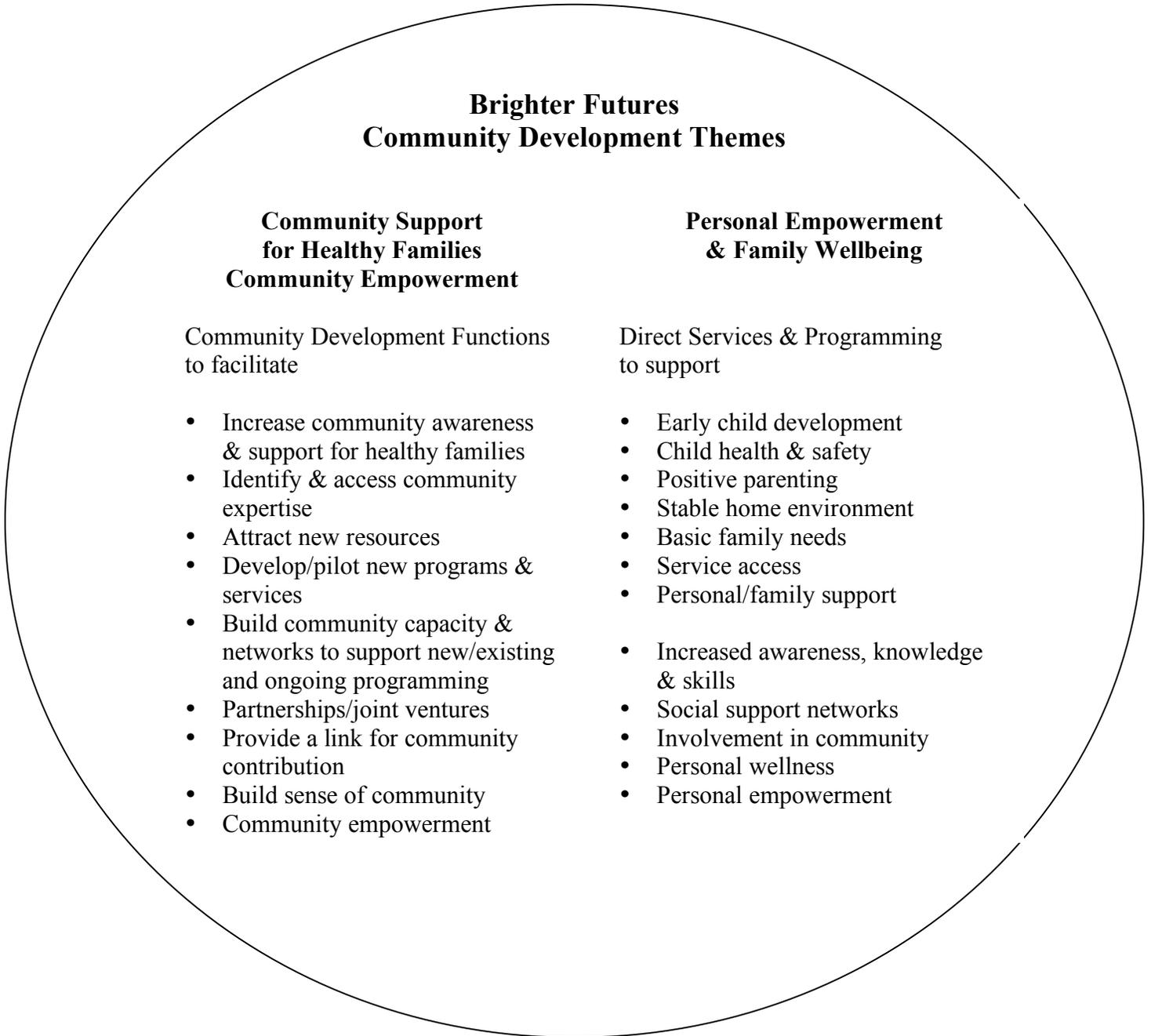
Methods used for the Brighter Futures Community Development evaluation included:

- A survey of program participants based on a stratified sample of participants from different programs and different communities. The survey was designed by the evaluation consultant and targeted to assess potential community development outcomes. Surveys were conducted by local community members and Brighter Futures participants. (See sampling plan in appendix)
- A survey of community organizations who have worked in collaboration with Brighter Futures. This survey was conducted by a respected community member from High Prairie - an individual who has recently facilitated the Board's internal strategic review and planning process.
- An ad hoc survey of general community members as part of a one day awareness booth at the local grocery store.
- Interviews with staff and board members.
- Observation/visit to program site.
- Review of annual meeting minutes, past evaluation reports, program statistics, etc.

The evaluation relies on mix of quantitative and qualitative data. The depth and richness of Brighter Futures effects are often best described through anecdotal feedback and personal comments. The sampling target for participant surveys was 80, with 74 surveys completed. The sampling target for partner interviews was 25, with 24 completed. In addition, existing data was used from the annual Brighter Futures survey (sample of 89 participants) and from a recent survey of the Parent Network group.

### **1.5 Understanding the Community Development Programming Structure**

Brighter Futures addresses two main themes in its community development approach. The broader community development theme involves *Community Support for Healthy Families* based in a notion of *Community Empowerment* (community capacity building) and development of a strong *Sense of Community*. The more targeted theme related to direct programming efforts is that of *Personal Empowerment* (individual capacity building) and *Family Wellness*.



## **2.0 Shared Vision**

In an organization whose operations are based on a community development philosophy, a vision that is shared with the community is essential. Community development should support the community in determining its own agenda or needs, and help to engage community strengths and resources to address that agenda or need. A shared vision helps to create a sense of commitment and responsibility for moving forward to achieve the common goal.

### **2.1 Community Agenda**

One of Brighter Futures strengths is its careful **attention to the community agenda**. During the project development phase in 1993, the **community was surveyed** to determine what families of preschool children needed in the High Prairie district. The needs identified continue to guide Brighter Futures programming.

*“Brighter Futures offers unusual, unique services – different from others that have been offered – services that are needed. They are responsive to community needs.”*

Community partner

### **2.2 Flexible Programming**

Brighter Futures has maintained a **high degree of flexibility** in its programming in order to be **responsive to community defined needs**. Strategies such as hiring community development workers from within the satellite communities of Gift Lake, Grouard, etc. has helped to keep the Brighter Futures **agenda aligned with grass roots community** vision. This year cultural profiles were developed for each satellite community, identifying existing services, needs and trends to help guide Brighter Futures planning.

*We collaborate a lot on different things involving kids and their families – Car Seat Education, Family Day, etc.*

### **2.3 Responding to Emergent Needs**

One way that Brighter Futures is able to determine the needs and interests of the community is through the questions and information requests they receive from parents through their Family Resource Centre. When a trend or theme emerges in the information requests they are receiving staff will organize a community workshop. A good example of how satellite community workers can respond to unique and emerging community needs is the healing and supportive Grief Workshop offered in *Gift Lake* after there were a number of accidental deaths and suicide.

*Brighter Futures has been very supportive of programs for Women’s Shelter clients.*

Feedback from program and workshop participants is another approach to determining community needs and interests. Workshops such as 123 Magic, Sensory Integration and ADHD are a few examples of this type of responsive programming.

Survey feedback provides another source of information re community needs. *“When we saw that financial difficulties often surface as a concern of parents, we responded with the introduction of the Good Food Box program.”*

### 2.4 Working Collaboratively

Another strategy for ensuring a close alignment with identified community needs is **work collaboratively with other community organizations** to address a particular emergent issue. Work with the FAS committee is a good example of this strategy.

✓ **85%** of community organizations interviewed said that Brighter Futures had “**supported their organizations work or agenda**” a great deal.

*Brighter Futures has been involved with our Network Against Violence Committee for the past four years. They have participated in the walk against violence each June, by hosting the face painting and Child ID kits.*

### 2.5 Engaging Satellite Communities

Satellite communities take an active role in directing Brighter Futures through their designated positions on the board. Grouard, Peavine and Gift Lake all have active representatives on the board of directors. Brighter Futures also provides service to some communities who were not part of the original planning process (i.e. East Prairie and Sucker Creek). East Prairie has indicated they would like to be included in the Brighter Futures’ CAPC renewal application.

While shared vision can be considered a community development outcome in itself, it is also closely linked with participation. The question of whose agenda is being addressed has implications for the project’s long term sustainability and relevance (i.e. the ability to attract and retain participants, and to replenish membership over time).

## 3.0 Participation

Participation is a key indicator of the health and effectiveness of a community development project. At Brighter Futures participation includes grass roots community involvement, program participants (both registered and drop-in), and organizational involvement (i.e. partners).

Generally as a community development outcome we are looking for participation that is expanded (i.e. increasing number of community members involved), diverse (i.e. reflective of the community demographics) and inclusive (i.e. engages the skills/talents of community members).

However, it is also true that different types and levels of participation or involvement play different roles in supporting and maintaining the effectiveness of a community development project. Different types and levels of participation have implications for the potential for individual capacity building (see community participation map). A more complete explanation of community participation map is contained in the appendix.

Due to the broad range of community development activities, community collaboration and programming activity, Brighter Futures is able to generate a variety of important effects through participation.

Brighter Futures has approximately **147 families registered** on the Resource Centre database. There were **5,586 direct contacts** with families and professionals over the period April 2001 to March 2002. While this level of contact was significantly lower than that reached during the previous year (2000/2001), it was still 24% higher than the contact level in 1999/2000. Approximately 75% of total contacts were with parents and children and 25% were with professionals.

### 3.1 Participation Strategies for Individual Capacity Building

There are two different strategies useful in engaging community participants for **individual capacity building**. One strategy is to involve participants in **regular intensive programming**. A second strategy is to provide **frequent opportunities for contact** through which “incidental learning” can occur over time. Brighter Futures effectively employs both of these strategies.

#### 3.1.1 Intensive Programming

**Regular intensive involvement** in programming activities provides the best opportunity for both personal/family and community capacity building. In the High Prairie District Brighter Futures program these opportunities are contained within a relatively small segment of their overall programming, including such offerings as Parent Network/Moms and Tots, Collective Kitchen, Toy Library, and Tame the Dragon. Brighter Futures attracts good levels of regular participation through these programs. About two thirds of regular participation occurs through the parent groups (Parent Network, Parents & Tots) and the Toy Library. The programs have been consistently offered over a number of years.

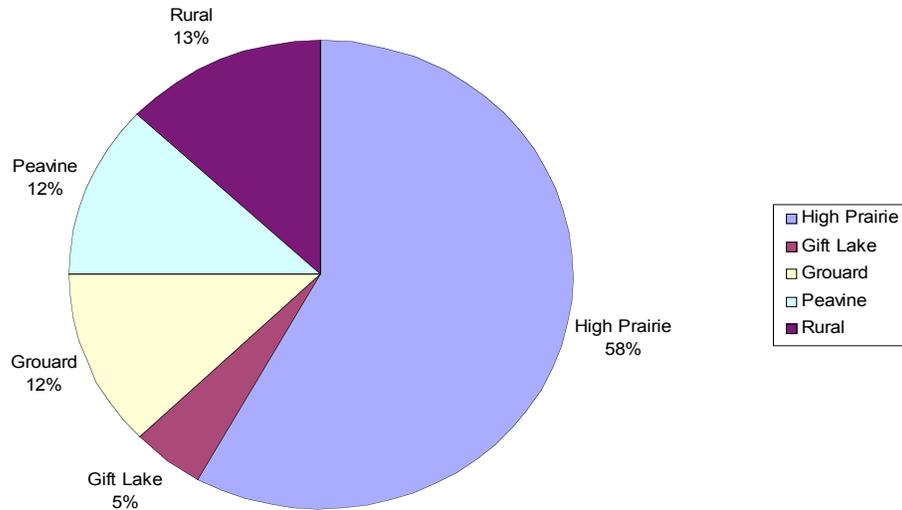
*From the very beginning Brighter Futures has been **consistent** with some of their projects/programs (i.e. newspaper articles on parenting tips, Moms & Tots program). They have been an **excellent resource for parents.***

Community partner

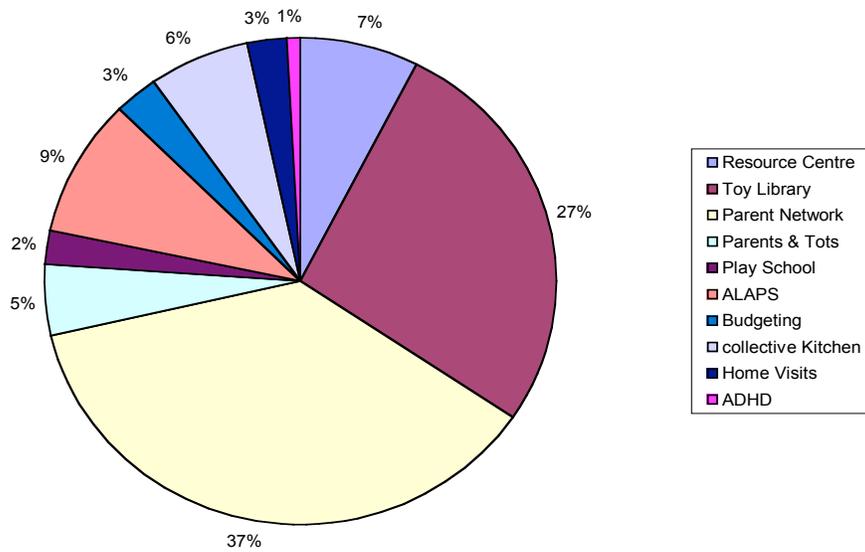
One of the challenges with intensive programming is the inherent limitation in the numbers of regular active participants that can be engaged. In small rural communities, expanding participation in these higher intensity programs is even more challenging due to the thinner population base, distance and transportation issues.

# High Prairie Brighter Futures – Community Development Evaluation - 2002

**Brighter Futures Activity**  
Based on 5,586 Contacts in 2001/2002



**Brighter Futures Activity Types**  
Based on 5,586 Contacts in 2001/2002



### 3.1.2 Multiple Points of Contact

Another strategy for engaging and impacting families is to provide **multiple points of contact or entry with frequent opportunities for involvement**. Programming in this case tends to be of briefer duration or lower intensity. However, over time these “**incidental learning**” opportunities increase awareness and knowledge (e.g. of child development or effective parenting) and are influential in a gradual change of attitude, and social values (e.g. drinking and pregnancy), all important precursors to behavior change. This strategy also supports the development of informal personal networks, helps link community members to resources, and creates a “sense of community”.

### 3.1.3 Expanded Reach

Through this strategy of multiple entry points, Brighter Futures has **successfully expanded its reach** to include larger numbers of community members. These lower intensity program offerings include such things as periodic parenting workshops, radio and newspaper parenting tips, special projects (Coats for Kids, Car Seat Safety, Child ID, baby welcome kits, etc.) and involvement with large scale community events (Family Day, Beach Day).

*Brighter Futures offers a place where the community can help children and help their parents in the process.*  
Community Partner

✓ **24%** of client contacts are with new participants

✓ **24%** of participants surveyed through Brighter Futures annual questionnaire indicated they listen to the parenting tips on radio, and **22%** said they read the newspaper parenting tips (n = 89).

✓ **62%** of Brighter Futures program participants surveyed had used **4 or more Brighter Futures services**.

*Brighter Futures is really supportive of low-budget clients with their Toy Library and Moms & Tots. Their programs are very accessible.*

### 3.1.4 Increasing Access

Brighter Futures also **increases accessibility** for rural families by **including satellite communities** (Gift Lake, Jouard, Grouard, Peavine) in the development, operation and use of Brighter Futures programming; by providing of a **welcoming and supportive environment** including the use of **staff hired from the local communities**; and by offering **free or very low cost service**.

Brighter Futures also proactively **links families with necessary resources**. Examples of this strategy include the Play School Sponsorships for low income families, involvement with food bank screening, coats for kids, and other such initiatives.

*Brighter Futures offers opportunities for low-income families to participate in programs they would otherwise not have access to.*  
Community partners

### **3.2 Participation Strategies for Community Capacity Building**

The primary strategy for broader community capacity building has been the engagement with other community organizations through **collaborative partnership work**.

One of the strengths of Brighter Futures has been its ability to help **focus community interests and resources** for the benefit of families and children. Brighter Futures has been a key player in the collaborative development of community programs and strategies such as CPNP, FAS, ALAPS Literacy program, Collective Kitchen, Coats for Kids and the local Food Bank. It has acted as sponsor for the CPNP, FAS and Crime Prevention/Home Visiting programs. Other community organizations describe Brighter Futures as “*always partnering with other agencies, flexible and accommodating.*”

*I have partnered on many projects that would most likely not have happened without Brighter Futures support.*

*They are pro-active in helping agencies and not just in meeting their own needs.*

*They are the first organization I approach to partner with.*

### **4.0 Increased Skills and Knowledge**

The people who make up a community are the community's greatest resource. Therefore it is important for a community to recognize individual strengths and support the development of knowledge and skills among its members.

There are two types of knowledge and skills typically influenced through community development initiatives: knowledge and skills related to **personal or family wellbeing**, and those skills related to **working with others** (group process) in community development processes (e.g. facilitation, meeting skills, decision making, planning, etc.).

Typically within a community development project, only a small number of total community participants will be intensely enough involved to develop capacities related to working with others. These are community members who have had an opportunity to be involved on the board or in committee work, or who have been hired to assist with programming in the satellite communities. Some of the participants from the more regular and intense programming such as Parents and Tots group, Toy Libraries, or Community Kitchens also have had an opportunity to develop these types of skills.

During staff interviews, the Parents and Tots members were those noted as **demonstrating increasing levels of independence and autonomy** in the operation of their program. There may be opportunities to expand levels of independence and autonomy in other areas of Brighter Futures. Suggestions for improvement provided by partner organizations include a recommendation for increased parental involvement in parenting programs and Taming the Dragon, and having “an active community person running the Toy Libraries”. On the board of directors each year Brighter Futures has at least two parent representatives recruited from program participants.

✓ **32%** of participants surveyed said they had learned new skills for community participation as a result of their involvement with Brighter Futures.

✓ **39%** of participants surveyed said they would be interested in volunteering on a committee or board with Brighter Futures.

A much larger number of community participants will have an opportunity to increase knowledge and skills related to **personal or family wellbeing**. These individuals include regular participants as well as those engaged in periodic programming (such as parenting workshops, baby massage, etc.).

### 4.1 Increased Skills/Knowledge for Parents

Of the 74 families interviewed across programs, the majority indicated they had learned about **positive parenting techniques** (70%) and **child development** (64%). Slightly over half (53%) had developed **skills for use in their personal life**.

Some of the positive changes parents described include (listed in order of frequency):

- **Improved parenting**  
e.g. learning to share time with my family, take part in my child's development and know what to do to help that along, learned how to budget, bedtime routines, Nobody's Perfect-feel more in control
- **Better communication/bonding with children**  
e.g. learned easier way to communicate with children, learned patience, bonding with child, spending more time with children, discuss feelings
- **Parent/Child more patient/relaxed**  
e.g. try to be more patient, relax, slow down, downtime before bedtime with baby, holding my temper and listening more
- **Healthy nutritious family meals**  
e.g. knowledge about food safety, feeding baby, meal planning, preparing nutritional snacks at lower cost, diet changes, sitting down together as a family
- **Increased social support network**  
e.g. more sociable with members of community, know other parents to share babysitting, babysitting exchange

## **4.2 Direct Benefits for Children**

Families described how their **children benefit directly from Brighter Futures** programming through access to educational books/toys (64%), parents reading or playing more often with their child (53%) and child learning new social skills (54%).

Some of the positive changes parents describe include (listed in order of frequency):

- **Increased social skills**  
e.g. more manner, more patience, more involved, joining in play, sharing, patience, communication, more outgoing, positive interaction with other kids, independent, loved play school (through sponsorship) - wants to go to school, more polite, empathetic, more assertive, less shy
- **Positive child development**  
e.g. baby was healthy, child more secure and overcome attachment issues, child test in last three months, baby massage helped child's digestive system - good bonding time for mom and baby, option to play with educational toys, access to toys they wouldn't have otherwise
- **Awareness of feelings**  
e.g. more aware of feelings and how to voice them, greater self-esteem
- **Healthy eating**  
e.g. child eats better, have proper food to eat

## **4.3 Family Outcomes Described By Community Partners**

Community partners also describe the benefits for children and families that they have observed through their involvement with Brighter Futures.

*“There is more wellness in the community because Brighter Futures programs teach skills from parenting to budgeting to anger management. Their programs are of a preventative nature.”*

*“From what I have seen, through Collective Kitchen program a number of people have had a chance to learn budgeting skills. Brighter Futures is a real benefit to the community.”*

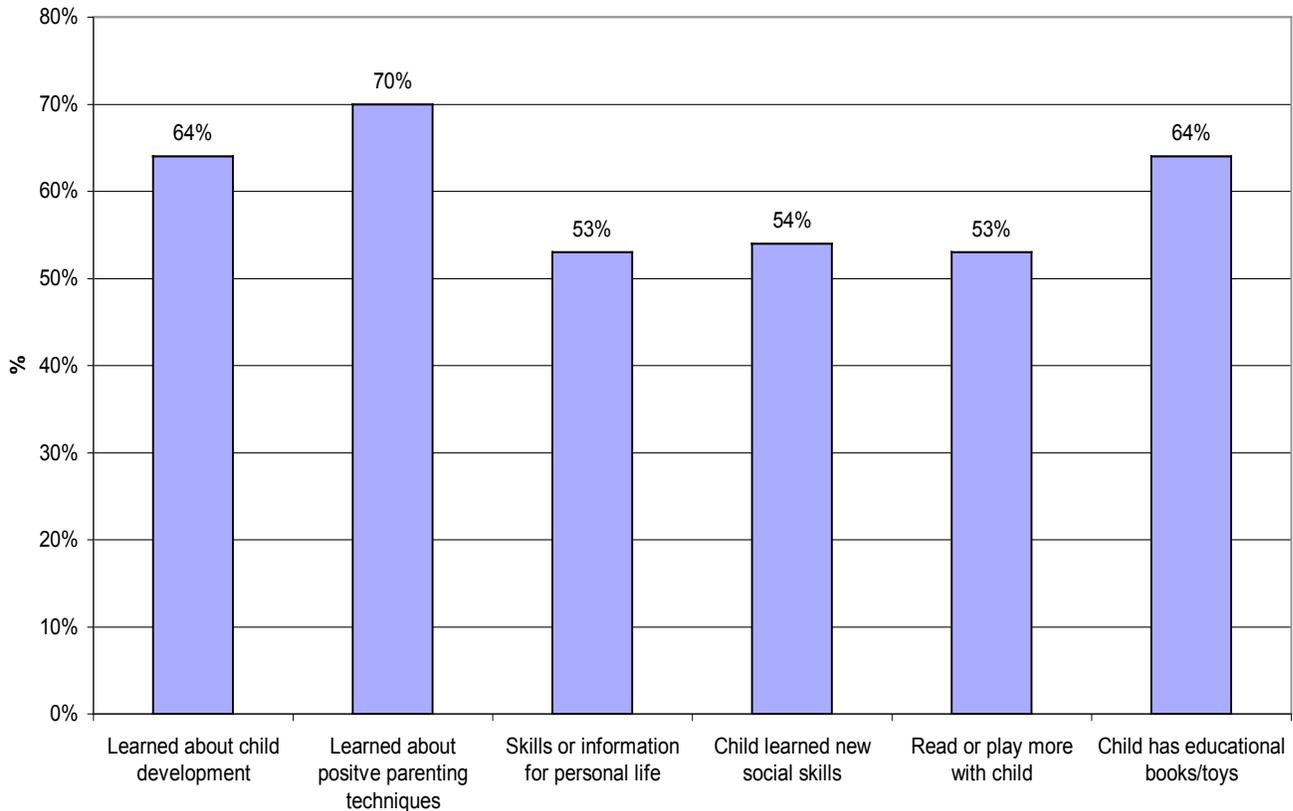
The Taming the Dragon program has *“decreased aggressive behaviors and increased oral discussion and working out conflict in small groups. It has increased knowledge of how to work through conflict.”*

Taming the Dragon creates *“awareness within the children of feelings and how to deal with them, plus knowledge of vocabulary to use when discussing feelings.”*

*“Parents often become involved in the Taming the Dragon program, so we can say families learn from this too.”*

*“The young children who participate in their programs benefit and seem happier.”*

**Brighter Futures 2002  
Parent/Child Development Outcomes  
N = 74**



#### **4.4 Organizational Skills Development**

Brighter Futures **supports skill development among partner organizations** and community professionals as well.

✓ **71%** of partners surveyed say that Brighter Futures **helps to develop community expertise**

Examples of how Brighter Futures develops skill within the community include:

- Training for Nobody’s Perfect facilitators
- Training for FAS coordinator
- Train facilitators for Community Kitchens
- Provide seminars, FAS/ADD, Train the Trainer for Parenting
- Provided training to community workers
- Send people to workshops and courses

*Brighter Futures has supported me on a professional and personal level.*

*Having Brighter Futures’ staff on our committee and her knowledge about Community Kitchens – she knew how they are set up and how they work – she was a great help in getting one started in Slave Lake.*

## **5.0 Increased Networks**

One way of increasing a community's resources and overall vibrancy is by making connections among groups, organizations and people. These connections and partnerships form a network through which community members exchange support, information and resources. By linking otherwise dispersed groups and individuals, networks are indicators of a community's potential for collective action. According to Putnam, "fibrous networks" (those with multiple and overlapping connections) contribute to social capital.

In community development initiatives, two common types of network outcomes are personal support networks (e.g. inter-personal or person centered) and community networks (e.g. inter-organizational or partnerships).

### **5.1 Social Support Networks**

Personal networks decrease isolation and **increase social support**, an important determinant of health, and an effective way to **decrease parent stress**.

✓ **65%** of Brighter Futures survey participants said they have **made new friends**

✓ **64%** of survey participants said one of the benefits of their involvement with Brighter Futures was "**someone to talk to**"

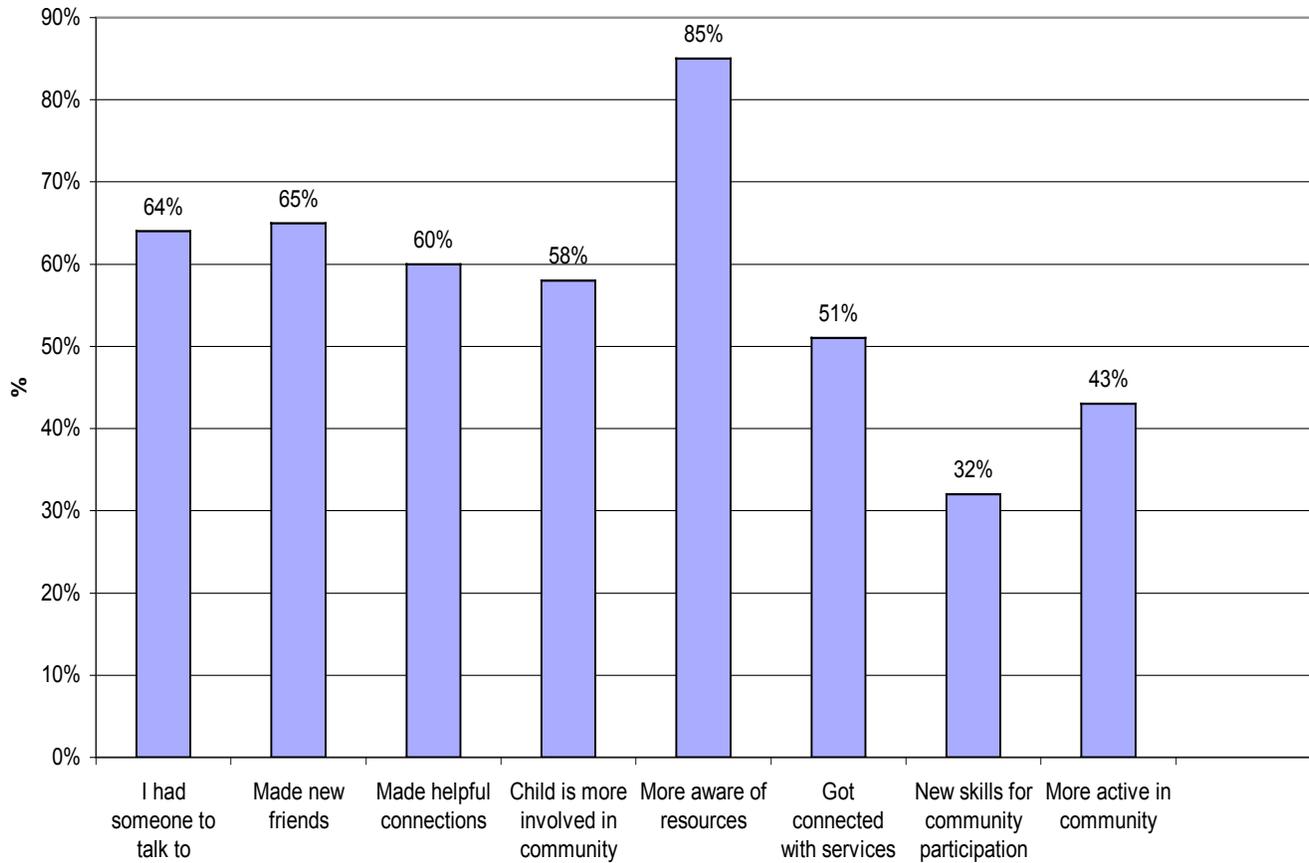
✓ **60%** said they have made **connections with people who have helped them**. Examples of the support accessed through these connections include trading babysitting, borrowing baby equipment, and sharing a ride.

*The toy library has connected me with other people who've told me about other things/events going on.*

*Brighter Futures informed me of other events happening in the community that I could become involved in.*

# High Prairie Brighter Futures – Community Development Evaluation - 2002

**Brighter Futures 2002**  
**Social Support Networks & Community Involvement**  
**N = 74**

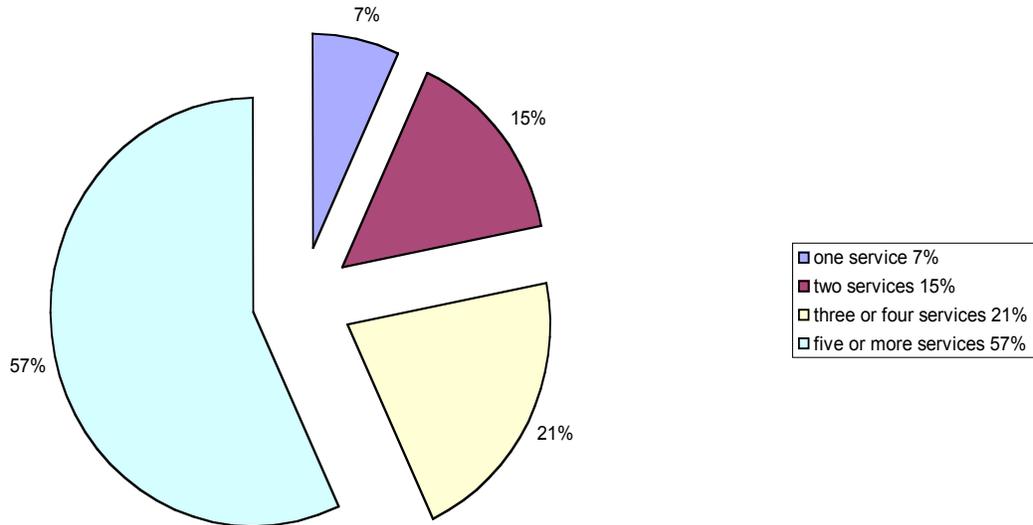


**5.2 Fibrous Networks**

According to Robert Putnam, multiple and overlapping connections create “**fibrous networks**” which are a sign of healthy **social capital**. Brighter Futures strategy of providing a broad variety of community programming allowing for multiple points of entry or contact helps to create these “fibrous networks”.

✓ **93%** of community members surveyed **used more than one of Brighter Futures services and 68% used four or more Brighter Futures services**

**High Prairie Brighter Futures 2002  
Number of Brighter Futures Services Used By Participants  
N = 74**



### **5.3 Community Networks**

One of Brighter Futures strengths is its commitment to working in collaboration or partnership with other community resources in High Prairie and surrounding communities.

**81%** of partners interviewed said that Brighter Futures **strengthens local community networks**

*Brighter Futures works with a lot of different agencies. They are very active in inter-agency committee and sub-committees.*

*They provide relationships between teachers and their staff that we can access.*

*They take a flexible approach to partnering (i.e. for ALAPS they partnered with Head Start and Northern Lakes College).*

*Very effective, very efficient. They follow through well. They are dependable. If you want to know who your most effective contacts are – get in touch with Brighter Futures.*

### **6.0 Increased Resources**

Community building is based on the belief that communities have many untapped resources, which can be developed to positively affect community well being. Community resources include individual skills and abilities, leadership, money, volunteers, information and facilities. Developing or tapping into community resources strengthens the community's ability to take action and to achieve personal and/or community goals.

#### **6.1 Building on Strengths**

✓ **86%** of community partners surveyed say that Brighter Futures **make good use of community expertise**

Community partners provided the following examples of how this happens: hiring local staff and people to do workshops, using local resources, effectively utilizing other community resources (e.g. AADAC staff), taking good advantage of partnerships – *“they call with ideas to see what we think”*

## **6.2 Increasing Access to Resources**

A key Brighter Futures strategy for **increasing personal resources available to families** is to increase their awareness of and access to community resources.

✓ **85%** of survey participants said they were **more aware of community resources**

✓ **51%** said they **got connected with community services** through Brighter Futures. Examples of services they connected with include play school, prenatal classes, tax services, baby stuff, library, housing, collective kitchen, food bank, good food box, FAE, Parents and Tots, etc.

Brighter Futures helps other community organizations to connect their families with necessary resources. *They refer on an ongoing basis to a number of agencies. The clients really benefit.*

✓ **79%** of partners surveyed said Brighter Futures **helps people to connect with community resources**

*Brighter Futures is a resource that I can refer clients to. I am able to tell my clients where they can go for support and information*

*Feedback from clients has been very positive. Brighter Futures is very helpful in assisting clients to find the resources they need.*

*I can phone Brighter Futures for support to connect with community agencies in High Prairie.*  
(comment from satellite community)

## **6.3 Acting As A Resource to the Community**

Brighter Futures acts as **a resource to other community organizations.**

✓ **90%** of partners surveyed said Brighter Futures has **provided expertise to their organization** - quite a lot (68%) or some (22%)

*They are a wealth of information and quite flexible in trying to provide the things we ask for. They are an agency I can count on.*

*They have come out to Gift Lake many times to deliver or participate in a program or event.*

*Brighter Futures enriches our Head Start program with their resources. It's nice to have someone else come in to show us new approaches. They participated in our Head Start evaluation.*

*They have helped to write numerous proposals and assisted with workshops.*

***“They (Brighter Futures) are role models as well as resources.”***

### 6.4 Addressing Service Gaps

A key role played by Brighter Futures within their community development agenda is to address service gaps identified by the community. This may involve **finding and enlisting existing community resources** to develop new programming or working to **attract new resources** to the community.

✓ **81%** of partners surveyed say Brighter Futures helps to **address service gaps in the community**

Partners provided the following examples of some of the service gaps addressed by Brighter Futures: Coats for Kids, Taming the Dragon, Parenting programs, Nobody's Perfect, Toy Library, Good Food Box, Family Day, Children's Festival, etc.

*Brighter Futures is able to devote time and resources to the 0-6 age group.*

*They have done a very good job of identifying service gaps and meeting them.*

*They bring in different programs that no one else is doing and that are very much needed.*

### 6.5 Attracting New Resources

✓ **53%** say Brighter Futures has helped to **attract new resources to the community** “quite a lot” and an additional **47%** say they have helped “somewhat”

Some examples of where Brighter Futures has helped to attract new resource to the community include:

- Good Start (CPNP) - \$34,400 + additional \$4,000
- FAS initiative - \$74,000
- Crime Prevention initiative - \$39,778
- Healthy Families – home visitation plan (estimated \$70,000 per year for region)
- Collective Kitchen sponsorship – approx. \$500 from individuals + \$300 from Alberta Producers
- Coats for Kids – estimated \$1,200 to \$1,300
- Santa's Little Helper - \$1,200
- Baby Welcome Bags
- Business Donation to 0-6 family day contest
- Good Food Box

## **6.6 Providing Infrastructure Support**

One important resource that Brighter Futures provides to the community is a solid and **stable organizational infrastructure** (i.e. stable board, experienced staff, financial capabilities, facility, etc.). The Brighter Futures organizational infrastructure often provides a jumping-off point or base for the community's exploration and development of new programs and services.

✓ **74%** of partner's surveyed say that Brighter Futures **provides necessary infrastructure** for new or existing programs

Brighter Futures has been able to **act as a sponsor** for a number of important community initiatives such as Good Start (CPNP), FAS committee and most recently the National Crime Prevention project. By acting as sponsor, rather than taking complete control or ownership of the project, Brighter Futures **supports broad community participation** in the development of new services.

Brighter Futures also supports community organizations and initiatives by providing them with office space and other basic organizational infrastructure supports. Most recently Brighter Futures provided office space for the Sucker Creek Women's Shelter staff.

*Brighter Futures provides administrative support for various programs.*

*Brighter Futures has been an effective sponsor. They come to meetings with ideas to improve overall effectiveness. Financial reports are completed on time and in detail.*

*They provided funding for Hooked on Phonics program.*

*They provide in-kind contributions to various programs.*

*They support and monitor local community workers.*

## **7.0 Emergent Leadership – Increased Community Involvement**

Community leadership involves taking initiative, bringing people together in a welcoming environment that helps to build relationships, recognizing skill/abilities in others and motivating people to contribute in a way that makes everyone feel they are part of the action.

Brighter Futures provides opportunities to learn new skills for community involvement, become more actively involved in their community, and to practice and develop leadership skills. As an individual's confidence increases, they will be more likely to move into other leadership positions within their community.

✓ **32%** of participants surveyed said they had "**learned new skills for community participation**"

✓ **43%** of participants surveyed said they were "**more active in their community**" as a result of Brighter Futures

Examples of how participants “made positive changes in their community” include:

- **Getting involved in community activities**  
e.g. helped with crafts at Parents and Tots, donated supplies, more involved in children’s activities, help supervise on the playground, facilitate teen parenting groups, being more involved at school, volunteering more time to family days and activities that include children, help out at the Food Bank
- **Sharing information about services**  
e.g. letting people know about services, getting others to join, promoting toy library to other parents, sharing in groups, advocating for things needed for children with different abilities in the community
- **Supporting other parents**  
e.g. being a support for a mom with twins, telling other parents what they need to know, trying to educate young moms, encourage breast feeding to other moms, working together

Some parents described how they have increased their personal capacity and become more **involved in their community**.

*I started as a volunteer and then was hired to the FAS coordinator position.*

*I started at Brighter Futures and then went to the library and slowly out into the community.*

*I talk to housing myself now.*

*I am able to try and sit on committees.*

### 7.1 Community Ownership and Sustainability

Building a sense of community ownership helps ensure the sustainability of a project such as Brighter Futures. Community development workers and/or organizations often intentionally maintain a low profile in order to build community ownership. In a recent ad hoc community survey, community members were quite familiar with Brighter Futures’ programs but often unaware that they were sponsored or delivered by Brighter Futures.

✓ **30%** of participants surveyed say they have volunteered with Brighter Futures.

✓ **47%** of participants surveyed say they have “helped out” (e.g. setting up or cleaning up) at Brighter Futures events or programs

## **8.0 Sense of Community – Relationship Building**

Community events and activities encourage community members to come together in a way that builds trust, strengthens relationships and creates a sense of caring among community members. At the inter-organizational level, trust and caring can be increased through co-operation, collaboration and networking.

Joining with other people, communities or organizations to **work collectively** increases the ability to take action and to impact important social issues (e.g. FAS).

*Brighter Futures encourages families to participate in family oriented events.*

Through participation in community events such Beach Day, Family Day, etc. Brighter Futures provides opportunities for people to come together, get involved and develop a stronger “**sense of community**”.

*They bring community people together.*

### **8.1 Increasing Grass Roots Involvement**

✓ **85%** of community partners interviewed say that Brighter Futures **increases grass roots community involvement**

*From the Church’s point of view, Brighter Futures provides an outreach opportunity for us as a Christian organization.*

✓ **86%** of participants say they tell other people about Brighter Futures and/or recruit new members.

### **8.2 Facilitating Community Collaboration**

Brighter Futures has also been effective in **building relationships among partner organizations.**

*“They were able to assist various agencies by providing a neutral support or cohesiveness to partnering projects when the agency mandates threatened that cohesion.  
(partner organization)”*

## **9.0 Ability to Influence Change**

One indicator of a strong community is their collective ability to make progress on their goals, influence decisions or make changes for the benefit of the community.

Through it’s collaborative community development approach, Brighter Futures has helped to **plan for new community initiatives** and **attract new resources** to the community. The High Prairie and District communities have been enriched in numerous ways by Brighter Futures presence and hard work.

*Given the resources they have – they're very active in the community.*

*They are role models as well as resources.*

*We can definitely use High Prairie's Brighter futures program as model to start a CAPC project in Slave Lake.*

Brighter Futures has implemented programs specifically aimed at influencing change in awareness, attitudes and behavior. For example, the Baby Massage program helps young mothers develop a stronger bond with their child, and Taming the Dragon helps young children better identify and deal with their feelings in appropriate ways, hopefully reducing school yard bullying and violence. Involvement in the FAS initiative and Good Start prenatal program helps to raise individual and community awareness of the dangers of drinking during pregnancy.

✓ **86%** of participants surveyed say they have become **“more aware of ways to make positive change in my community”**.

### 10.0 Critical Learning

Brighter Futures makes extensive use of the program logic model framework to plan and monitor their programs and overall project direction. The organization has a solid database system for tracking community participants and attendance rates which helps them to monitor service trends, demand and community needs.

Major workshops and standard programs are evaluated at the end of each session, while Play School and Moms and Tots programs are evaluated annually. Brighter Futures attempts to collect more specific demographic data from a fairly broad sample of their participants annually. Periodically Brighter Futures has undertaken more in-depth and extensive evaluation processes (e.g. outcome evaluation of the Toy Lending library program).

Most recently, the Brighter Futures board and staff have engaged in a comprehensive review of their original program vision and objectives. This renewal process will help Brighter Futures to more effectively organize the many initiatives which have been generated over the years in response to community.

Informal consultation with the general community (contact and conversation with community members coming through the local grocery store) indicates high levels of support for the Brighter Futures program, but also highlights the general lack of knowledge in the community about the full range of programming associated with Brighter Futures.

### **10.1 Summary of Strengths**

- Use a variety of participation strategies and opportunities
- Have a history of stable and effective management
- Viewed as a strong and helpful partner in the community
- Have developed, identified and attracted resources to the community in support of families and young children
- High levels of satisfaction from participants and partner organizations
- Responsive to community needs and agenda
- Inclusive and culturally sensitive - good at building relationships in the community and with satellite communities
- Support individual capacity building – for individuals, parents, children and professionals
- Provide multiple entry points and opportunities for broader community involvement

### **10.2 Summary of Challenges**

- Changing environmental context directly impacts Brighter Futures due to close ties with community partners. The collapse of partner programs due to elimination of Early Intervention Program funding has impacted Brighter Futures programs that were attached as an integral part of these multi-partner programs, especially in small communities. Other community-specific issues and loss of key community workers have impacted Brighter Futures' ability to develop programming within satellite communities over the past two years.
- Delays in implementation of home visiting program due to lack of funding approval has left the community disappointed after a large investment of development time and energy.
- Health Canada's recently enforced "no fee" policy limits programming strategies and the ability to encourage attendance at workshops.
- Strong sense of community ownership based on community development philosophy results in lower profile for Brighter Futures and less overall awareness of the full range of programming associated with Brighter Futures.
- Resource limitations make it difficult to provide service across five different communities while continuing to ensure community involvement and engagement.
- Community development goals such as having other community organizations take on Brighter Futures incubated initiatives have not been realized due to general lack of resources available within a smaller community.
- Opportunities for individual capacity building for community involvement are limited due to the broader approach to program participation (i.e. participant involvement is mostly occasional or short term involvement with insufficient time for this type of capacity building). Individual capacity building for community involvement occurs primarily within the Parent Network program and on the board of directors.
- Evaluating community development outcomes is an ongoing challenge

## **11.0 Conclusion**

## **High Prairie Brighter Futures – Community Development Evaluation - 2002**

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Brighter Futures programming has provided a wealth of support and skill development to families, children and to other community organizations. As an organization, they have established a history of stable and effective management.

Brighter Futures uses a variety of community development strategies to influence positive change in their community and with the families they engage. They have been particularly effective at the broader community level in working collaboratively to develop or access the services needed by the community. **Families and community partners attest to their program effectiveness.**

Recent changes in the environmental context within which Brighter Futures operates have had a major impact on programming content and strategies. The Regional Children's Council has used the changing context as an opportunity to review their goals, objectives and strategies for service delivery. There continues to be strong support at both the board and community level for the community development philosophy underpinning the Brighter Futures program.

## **12.0 Recommendations**

1. Consider moving to a **blended programming strategy** which involves delivery of some select core programming by Brighter Futures along with continued emphasis on broad community development strategies for community engagement. For example current contact information indicates that about half of contacts are with professionals and half with families (with children included as part of the family unit). This would seem to indicate that Brighter Futures expends about half of its energy in broad community development work (e.g. program development, partnerships, etc.) and about in direct service contact with families.
2. **Use experiential learnings to focus Brighter Futures programming efforts.** Over time it becomes apparent which programs work well for the community and which do not work as consistently. Goals related to having other community organizations take over Brighter Futures initiatives seem to have been unrealistic given community size and resources available.
3. Choose initiatives carefully in order to **avoid overextending limited resources.** Within recognized resource limitations, develop a relevant mix of programming that encourages regular ongoing participation, occasional or one-time participation (e.g. major annual workshop), and community development activity. Develop a plan that is specific about what core programming components will be offered consistently with some flexibility for response to emergent community needs.
4. **Increase concentration of some resources on more indepth programming** with careful attention to individual capacity building. Strengthen individual capacity building for community involvement by developing strategies to involve participants in program delivery and management wherever possible.
5. **Increase satellite community participation rates.** In cooperation with satellite community members and board representatives, use community profile information to develop new strategies for continued engagement, involvement and development of local program initiatives.
6. Continue to **pursue funding for a home visiting program** to complement existing CAPC programs.
7. Continue to explore and **further develop evaluation strategies and methods** suited to the mix of core programming and community development.
8. Add a **count of actual number of families served** (versus contacts) as a regular part of data collection.
9. Develop strategies to increase **community awareness of the full range of Brighter Futures activity** within High Prairie and surrounding communities.

## Appendix

### Partner Survey

A survey of **24** community partners demonstrates the community support for the work that Brighter Futures does.

Quite a lot Very much	Somewhat	Very Little	<b>Brighter Futures Outcomes/Effectiveness Related to Collaboration and Partnerships</b>
<b>96%</b>	4%	0	Effectiveness in working collaboratively
<b>86%</b>	14%	0	Make good use of community expertise
<b>85%</b>	15%	0	Increases grass roots community involvement
<b>85%</b>	15%	0	Supported your organization's work or agenda
<b>81%</b>	19%	0	Helped to address service gaps in the community
<b>81%</b>	19%	0	Strengthened local community networks
<b>79%</b>	14%	7%	Helped people to connect with community
<b>74%</b>	26%	0	Provided necessary infrastructure
<b>71%</b>	29%	0	Helped to develop community expertise
<b>68%</b>	22%	10%	Provided expertise to your organization
<b>53%</b>	47%	0	Helped to attract new resources

### Partners Surveyed

- Good Start
- Jossard School
- Church of the Nazarene
- Peavine Head Start Program
- Good Start/FAS committee members
- Massage Therapy
- Healthy Choices – worked as a partner with Community Kitchens
- South Peace News
- Sucker Creek Women's Shelter
- Gift Lake Community Services
- Gift Lake School
- St. Andrews School
- Peavine School
- Neegan Awasak
- RHA – Community Health Services – worked on FAS committee, Care Seat Education, Family Day
- Playschool
- Elementary School Teacher – Taming the Dragon – 4 years
- CKVH
- Aboriginal Community Development Worker

## High Prairie Brighter Futures – Community Development Evaluation - 2002

- Sucker Creek – partnered for parenting workshops
- AADAC – Slave Lake
- United Church
- Network Against Violence Committee
- High Prairie Elementary School

A survey of **74 Brighter Futures participants** illustrates the outcomes related to their involvement in various programs and services.

<b>Child/Parent/Family Development Outcomes Reported</b>	
N = 74	
Learned about child development	64%
Learned about positive parenting techniques	70%
Learned new skills or information for my personal life (e.g. community kitchen, budgeting, etc.)	53%
Became more aware of ways to make positive change in my life or with my children	86%
Feel more confident	43%
My child learned new social skills (how to get along with other, take turns, share, identify feeling, etc.)	54%
I read with or play with my child more often	53%
My child has more variety of educational books and toys to play with	64%
Seen positive changes in my child as a result of Brighter Futures involvement	74%

<b>Social Support and Community Involvement Outcomes Reported</b>	
N = 74	
I felt like I had someone to talk to one on one about parenting, family or personal issues	64%
I made new friends or got to know neighbours	65%
I made connections with people who have helped me	60%
My child is more involved in community activities or programs	58%
I am more aware of resources and services in my community	85%
I got connected with services or resources that my family needed	51%
Become more aware of ways that I can make positive changes in my community	86%
I learned new skills for community participation (e.g. chair a meeting, facilitate a group, organize an event, write a proposal, etc.)	32%
I have become more active in my community (e.g. volunteering, joined other groups, etc.)	43%
Have volunteered with Brighter Futures	30%
Would be interested in volunteering on a committee or board at Brighter Futures	39%

### **Type of Participation or Involvement Reported**

## High Prairie Brighter Futures – Community Development Evaluation - 2002

N = 74	
Use Brighter Futures service OR participate in activities, workshops	96%
Support child or family members' involvement with Brighter Futures (e.g. Taming the Dragon, Babysitting course, etc.)	50%
Tell other people about the service or recruit new members	86%
Help out (cleaning up, setting up,, etc.)	47%
Give suggestions for service improvement	23%
Help with planning or decision making (how service should be run)	23%
Help with running the service (e.g. volunteer)	26%

Type of Service Involvement N = 74	
Resource Centre	38
Toy Library	51
Play School Sponsorship	11
Home Visits	7
Parent Network/Moms & Tots	11
Collective Kitchens	37
Date to Read	2
Taming the Dragon	25
Parenting Education (e.g. Nobody's Perfect; Magic 123; A-LAPS)	29
Workshops – ADHD, Sensory Integration, Grief, Baby Massage, Budgeting, etc.	28
Child Safety Initiatives – Babysitting; First Aid; Caring for Kids; Kid Care Kits; etc.	15
Community Events – Family Day, Beach Day, Fishing Tournament	28
Parenting Information – Radio Tips, Newspaper	52

Amount of Service Involvement N = 74		
	# of participants reporting use	% with multi service involvement
Used 1 service	5	7%
Used 2 services	11	15%
Used 3 services	12	21%
Used 4 services	11	
Used 5 services	10	57%
Used 6 services	8	
Used 7 services	10	
Used 8 services	4	
Used 9 services	2	
Used 10 services	1	

## High Prairie Brighter Futures – Community Development Evaluation - 2002

The annual **Moms and Tots Parent Survey** provided feedback from 7 parents.

<b>Satisfaction with Opportunities to Participate</b>	
N = 7	
	Average Score (out of 4)
Opportunity to ask questions	3.9
Having a say in what's done	3.7
Opportunity for discussion	3.6
Having a say in other matters	3.4

<b>Satisfaction with Amount and Kind of Information Received</b>	
N = 7	
	Average Score (out of 4)
Information on the program	3.4
Usefulness of information on child development	3.4
Usefulness of information on parenting	3.4
Able to put the information into practice	3.4

<b>Extent to which program helped you to improve as a parent</b>	
N = 4	
	% indicating improvement
Confidence as parent	75%
Knowledge of child development	75%
Use of effective discipline techniques	75%
Understanding your child	75%
Relationship with your child	75%
Knowledge of parenting	75%
Communicating with your child	75%
Knowing your strengths as a parent	75%

<b>Differences noted in child</b>	
N = 7	
	% indicating improvement
Getting along with you	71%
Getting along with other children	86%
Accepting the limits you set	83%
Positive attitude	86%
Interest in books, colouring	83%
Behaviour	83%
Self-confidence	67%
Independence	67%

### Sampling Plan for Community Survey 2002

The community survey participants were drawn from the 174 families registered on the Brighter Futures database. The sample was distributed across communities and activity types (based to contact/usage data %).

Community	Sample size of 70 families	Sample size of 80 families
High Prairie	40	46
Rural	8	10
Peavine	8	9
Grouard	4	4
Gift Lake	8	9
Joussard	1	1
Succer Creek	1	1

Activity Types	Sample size of 70 families	Sample size of 80 families
Parent Network	10	15
Toy Library	15	15
Resource Centre	10	15
ALAPS	5	5
Collective Kitchen	5	5
Parents & Tots	5	5
Budgeting	5	5
Home Visits	5	5
Play School Sponsorships	5	5
ADHD	5	5

Participation Strategies and	Potential Effects or Outcomes	Program Examples
Inner Circle – Leadership Development . involvement of program participants on the board, including mentoring . involvement of satellite community members on the board . encouragement of increasing levels of autonomy re planning, organizing and operating programs (e.g. play group)	. increased skills, knowledge and experience of community involvement (e.g. assessment, facilitation, meeting skills, planning, decision making, etc.) . support for emergent leadership talent . increased leadership skills . increased autonomy of programs	Community members and participants on the board Satellite community workers Participants of the Moms and Tots Play Group Toy Library (in some communities) (suggest potential for Toy Library, Tame the Dragon, etc.)
Committed Members with Defined Roles . regular program participants	. increased personal social networks, social support . increased personal skills, knowledge . direct benefits for families and children . increased awareness of community resources and opportunities	Moms and Tots Toy Library Tame the Dragon Resource Centre? Parenting Workshops Community Kitchens Etc.
Active Members with Non-Defined Roles . one time service users . other community organizations involved in a variety of collaborative ventures	. sense of community . increased awareness of community resources and opportunities . increased breadth, effectiveness/impact of community programs . increased informal and formal networks – leading to increased social capital	. community organizations, partners, volunteers
Peripheral Members . community members who participate in large scale community events	. increased sense of community . increased access to information, expertise and resources . opportunity to support civil society (e.g. cross-sectoral involvement in strengthening community norms, values)	Beach Day Family Day

