

# NEWS RELEASE

## Wilfrid Laurier University



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### WLU part of \$4-million project to research prevention programs

Researchers from three Ontario universities will conduct a \$4-million study to determine how best to improve the well-being of children in disadvantaged communities. More than 4,000 children and their parents in nine Ontario communities will participate.

UNDER EMBARGO UNTIL 10 a.m. TUESDAY, JANUARY 29th

The five-year study will be done by a consortium involving Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo, Queen's University in Kingston, and the University of Guelph.

Operating as a research arm, the consortium will evaluate the effectiveness of an ongoing government project to establish and run prevention programs in selected communities where children are thought to be at greatest risk to the problems associated with poverty.

Today the provincial government was to announce the allocation of another \$7.5 million to the \$20 million already earmarked for the overall Better Beginnings, Better Futures project and identify the sites.

They are in: Cornwall, Guelph, Kingston, Ottawa, Sudbury, Toronto (Etobicoke and Regent Park), and Native communities at Cape Crocker and on Walpole Island.

Plans call for a follow-up study of participating children and their families 20 years later.

The Better Beginnings, Better Futures project is intended to decrease the long-term emotional and behavioral problems in children at risk, promote their optimal development, and strengthen the ability of communities to respond effectively to the social and economic needs of these children and their families.

First announced in November of 1989, the project is funded by the Ontario ministries of Community and Social Services, Education, and Health; and the federal Department of Indian and Northern Affairs.

"In terms of its ambition and scope, it's a world-class project," said Dr. Gary Cameron, director of the Centre for Social Welfare Studies at Laurier and one of the study's 11 researchers. "The results will be of interest to people around the world."

The research will focus on the effectiveness of integrating the child-care, social services, and health and educational programs at the community level.

The programs will tailor services to each community's needs and desires, and involve the families in their administration. Individual programs will be geared to families with children either from the pre-natal stage to age four or age four to the end of Grade 3.

Dr. Mark Pancer, a research associate of the centre and also a member of the study team, said his experience with prevention programs and his work at a children's mental health centre has convinced him that help must be available to children before problems develop.

"If we want to be effective, we have to get there early and work with the whole community," said the Laurier psychology professor.

"The exciting thing about this project is the programs are being initiated and developed by the communities themselves, with the assistance of professionals. "

Cameron said the research will not only generate information for policy-makers, program directors, educators, and community leaders, but the community programs will also have immediate benefits. "They'll be dealing with real people and their needs and providing real services and support."

The research consortium, to be headed by Dr. Ray Peters of Queen's psychology department, was developed through collaboration among the Social Program Evaluation group at Queen's, the Department of Family Studies at Guelph, and the Centre for Social Welfare Studies at Laurier.

The study team includes researchers from the fields of sociology, family studies, nursing, psychology, and social welfare. It will be supported by more than 30 specialists from the three participating universities and other Ontario institutions.

The competition to select the research arm of the project involved six other proposals.

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For more information, contact:

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Dr. Gary Cameron, WLU, (519) 884-1970 ext. 4998

On Tuesday afternoon, Dr. Cameron and Dr. Pancer will attend a private reception for project participants in the main legislative building at Queen's Park.

In the morning, messages for Dr. Cameron can be left at the Chestnut Park Hotel, Toronto, at (416) 977-5000. Until noon, messages for Dr. Pancer can be left at Laurier's psychology office at (519) 884-1970 ext. 2272. In the evening, both can be reached at the Chestnut Park hotel.