



## News From a Tiny Seed

### Government Cutbacks Affect SOE in BC

Seeds of Empathy (SOE) will lose some of its programs in BC this year following recent budget cutbacks from the Government of British Columbia. In September, the government announced a \$2.8 billion deficit, and since then numerous school boards and non-profit programs in the province have received notice their funding will be cut, including many programs for children.

The Government of British Columbia is not renewing SOE funding in 2009-10 at the same level as previous years. Fortunately, we have received funding for 14 Aboriginal Centres, honouring the government's commitment to closing the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children.

In total, SOE will run 37 BC programs this year – seven fewer than last year. By cutting back on travel and training

and not introducing the program in any new Centres, we have been able to preserve the program in the majority of Centres. Roots of Empathy (ROE), SOE's "older sibling," will have a more difficult year, as its funding has been eliminated entirely (as a result, ROE in BC will operate with fewer than 50% of last year's programs).

"Although the cuts are heartbreaking, we still feel fortunate that in this recession the Government of British Columbia was able to fund Seeds of Empathy at all, and we are grateful for their past support," says Mary Gordon, SOE Creator and Founder/President, ROE. "Our challenge now becomes sustainable funding in BC for next year." ❧

#### How YOU Can Help

Do you have a good story to share about the difference SOE makes to children, SOE volunteer parents and communities? Or can you sum up how you feel about SOE in a sentence or two? Then we would love to hear from you! Email [communications@seedsofempathy.org](mailto:communications@seedsofempathy.org) your story or testimonial to us as soon as possible. Please include your name and city or community and explain how you have been involved with SOE in the past. We will gather all testimonials and use them as we approach existing and potential funders. Many thanks in advance for your time and assistance.

### H1N1 and SOE

With flu season upon us, SOE has put together guidelines about the H1N1 virus, which have been recently shared with SOE Centres. The underlying

principle behind the guidelines is that SOE respects the individual policies and procedures at all Centres and will always hold the baby's and children's safety as paramount. ❧

### A New Resource



In June this year, SOE Centres in Alberta had a ray of sunshine heading their way in the form of a new board book called *Faces of Tomorrow*. Sponsored by the Government of Alberta through the Ministry of Employment and Immigration, the book aims to

welcome and support immigrant families in the province who have young children. It is also a wise and playful read for all babies, children, and adults, and a useful resource to explore the power of parenting.

Created by Mary Gordon, the book contains portraits of ten babies with accompanying text in five languages (English, French, Spanish, Punjabi, and Chinese). All Alberta SOE Centres—and families of SOE babies in programs in Alberta—have received a copy. ❧

### Art and Heart

In May 2009, all second-year SOE Centres in British Columbia and Alberta received a copy of the *Art and Heart* professional development tool. The 30-minute DVD, featuring footage from SOE Centres, explores the importance of art as a tool for social and emotional development in children. The DVD contains three 10-minute segments:

- Art is the Poetry of the Soul
- Art is the Start: Developing Young Artists (the stages of scribble and phases of picture making)
- Every Child is an Artist Until Someone Tells Them They're Not

In addition, Centres that received the DVD participated in conference calls, where they shared reflections, stories, questions and comments. *Art and Heart* is SOE's first professional development tool and represents a milestone in the development of the program. ❧

## Weaving Empathy in Prince George

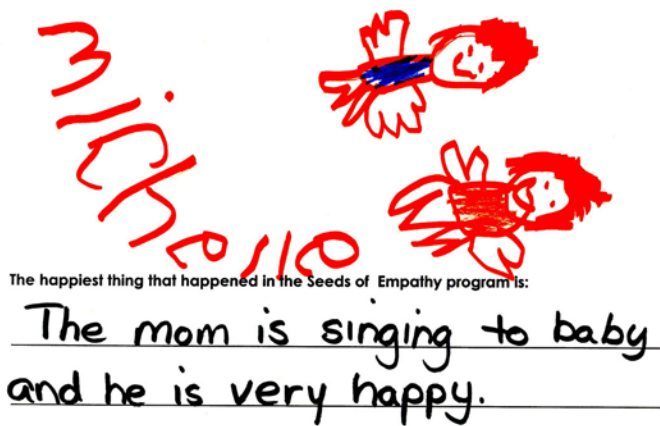
Also in May 2009, SOE co-hosted an event titled “Weaving Empathy Through Communities” with the Prince George Native Friendship Centre in BC. The event attracted more than 125 community members from the province’s North, who came to hear Mary Gordon speak about the synergies between SOE and its “older sibling,” ROE.

The event began with a welcome to the Territory by Leidleh Tenneh Chief Dominic Frederick. He spoke of the importance of our children and of finding ways to ensure healing for families and a better way for children. Friendship

Centre Executive Director Barb Ward Burkitt also provided a warm welcome and spoke of the importance of acceptance and love for all our families.

Community members from a number of SOE Centres attended the event, including (from Prince George) the Power of Friendship Preschool, Prince George Aboriginal Head Start and the Porcupine Pals Centre at the University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC), as well as the Wit’suwit’en Child and Family Centre (Smithers, BC) and the Little Moccasins Learning Centre (Williams Lake, BC). ↪

## Sharing Circle



Four-year-old Michelle from the Norwood Child and Family Resource Centre in Edmonton, AB, has been deeply affected by the loving relationship between the SOE baby and mother. Her happiest memory from ten Family Visits was when the mother sang to her baby.



Not only is this SOE volunteer mother attuned to her baby in this clapping game at the Power of Friendship Preschool in Prince George, BC, but so are the children. When we say “love grows brains,” we are usually referring to the development of the baby, but in this case, neurons are firing and wiring in the children’s brains as well.

## Have You Heard?

### Empathy: A Preventative Approach to Aggression

Research shows that early aggressive behavior is the single-best predictor of delinquency and later aggression in children. Seeds of Empathy is an important early prevention program. One of our goals is to reduce aggression and increase pro-social behavior – both

in the early years and later in life. Increasingly, empathy is considered the base of pro-social behavior. When children witness empathy in the parent-baby interaction, mirror neurons in their brains are activated, facilitating their development of empathic understanding. ↪

*“Seeds of Empathy is a pedagogy of hope, because in our children we have an opportunity to create a new order where our differences can be acknowledged but our similarities will be our uniting force.”*

~ Mary Gordon, Founder/President of Roots of Empathy and Creator of Seeds of Empathy

### Why is our newsletter called Lavender Blanket?

In Seeds of Empathy Centres, children gather around a lavender blanket where the loving relationship between a parent and baby is the lever for learning. The blanket is where learning and sharing takes place—and that’s what we want this newsletter to be, too! Lavender Blanket is an update on what’s happening with Seeds of Empathy. If you would like to be added to our distribution list, or to unsubscribe, please e-mail [lavenderblanket@seedsofempathy.org](mailto:lavenderblanket@seedsofempathy.org)

250 Ferrand Dr., Suite 800, Toronto, ON M3C 3G8 t: 416-944-3001 f: 416-944-9295 mail@seedsofempathy.org www.seedsofempathy.org

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