

The Children and Youth in Challenging Contexts Network (www.cyccnetwork.org)

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NCE RCE



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“Children need a safe place.”

**Lt. Gen. Roméo Dallaire (Ret'd), Chair of the
Senate Committee on The Commercial
Sexual Exploitation of Children and Youth**

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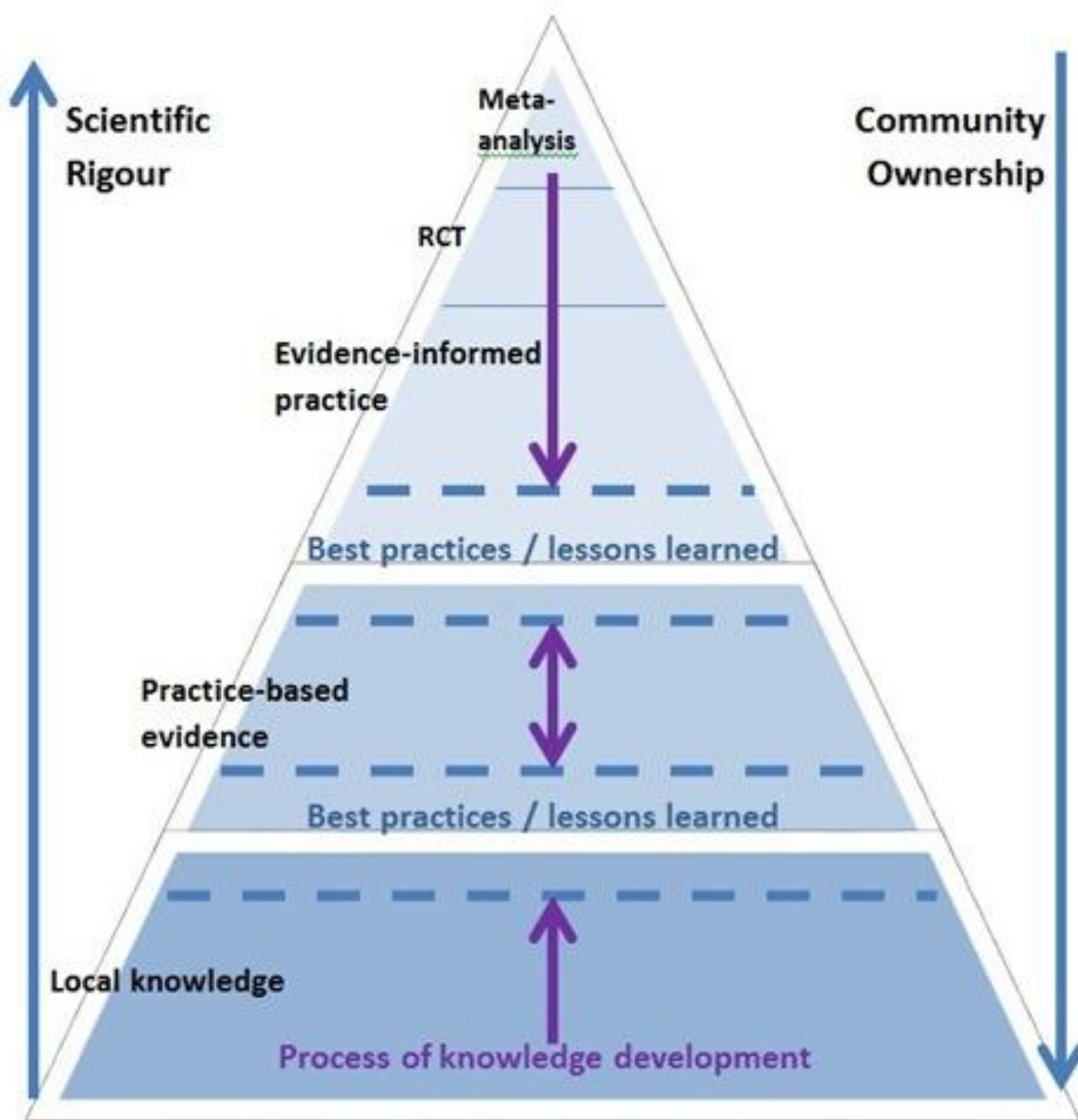
- A Networks of Centres of Excellence of Canada-Knowledge Mobilization Grant
- Initiated by three research teams at Dalhousie:
 - The Resilience Research Centre-RRC
 - The Centre for Foreign Policy Studies-CFPS
 - The Centre for Research on Family Health-CRFH
- More than 50 organizations and 50 academics are involved in Canada and overseas (and very quickly growing!), along with great Research Associates

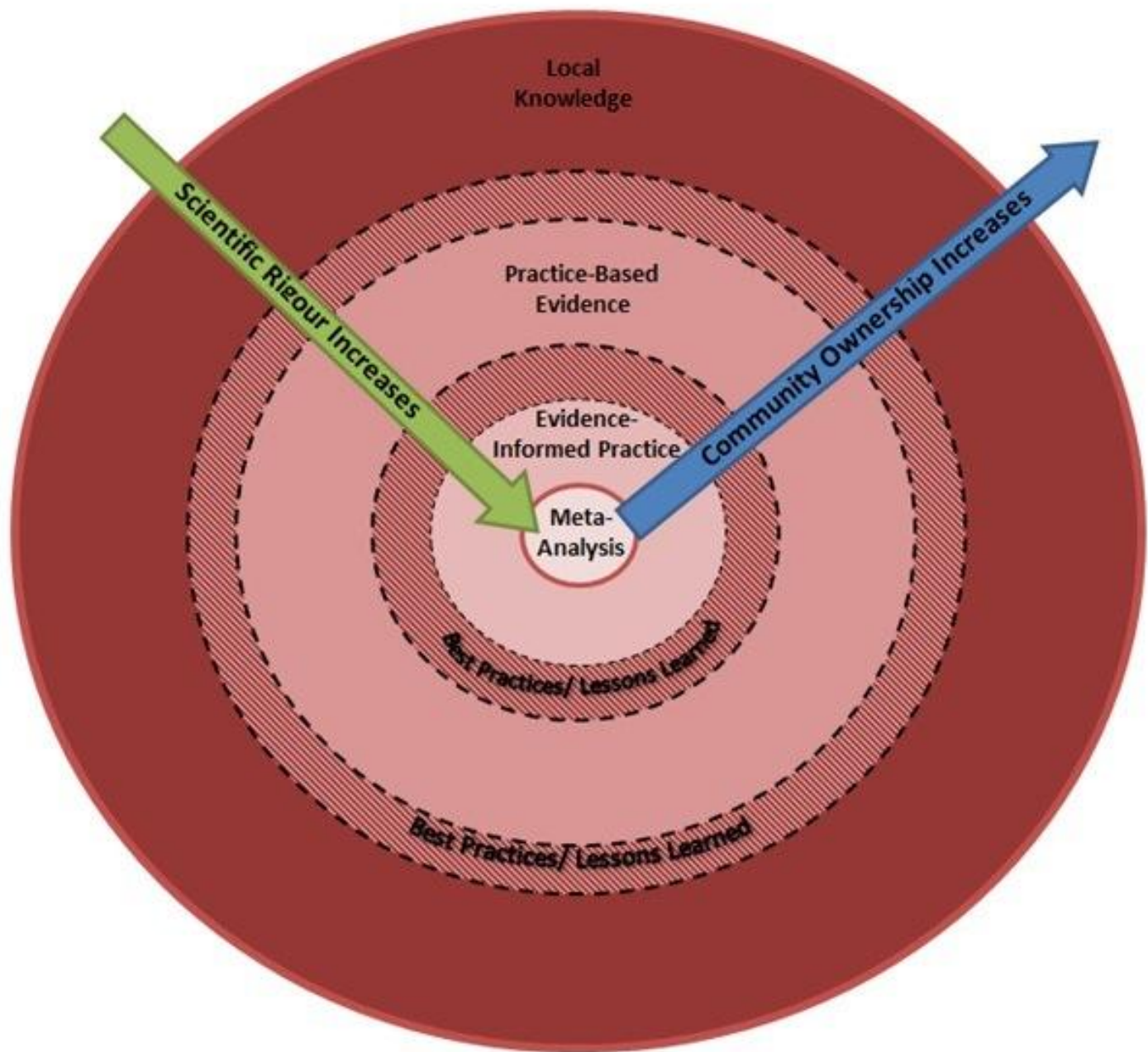
Two Goals

- To explore best practices, then format, share, and adapt knowledge of those practices in ways that encourage organizations to adopt effective strategies for working with vulnerable children and youth
- To innovate new ways of sharing best practices between mental health professionals (Knowledge Mobilization)

Children in Challenging Contexts are Exposed to:

- **War and organized violence** (war-exposed, displaced, child soldiers, youth gangs, children of military families)
- **Displacement** (immigration, refugees, homelessness, natural disaster)
- **Child labour** (children and youth in the workplace, human trafficking)
- **Care institutions** (foster care, juvenile detention)
- **Health-related challenges** (disabilities, chronic illness, mental illness)
- **Historical oppression and Marginalization**





DIMENSION	KM	PAR/CD
Overall goal	To ensure the transfer and integration of knowledge between actors; knowledge exchange	To advance/acquire knowledge that will have a practical advantage to participants; knowledge to action
Goal in applied health and social science	To bridge the gap between research and practice; Integrate research findings into health systems and their practices that improve health care outcomes	Improve health inequities, address social determinants of health, and identify practice based knowledge by involving communities most affected by health challenges
Focus of the literature	Processes; systems; models; barriers to implementation	Power structures; the politics of health services; the active role of those researched
On “knowledge”	Emphasizes the dissemination and mobility of knowledge; Knowledge is most likely from clinical trials; evidence-based practice is most valued	Focus is on who has access to knowledge; what constitutes “good” knowledge; indigenous knowledge and practice-based evidence is most valued
Primary relationships	Researcher-policy maker and researcher-clinician relationships most discussed	Researched–Researcher and Researched as researchers communicating directly with professionals and policy makers relationship
Role of context, generalizability	Growing recognition for the importance of context (e.g., “Aboriginal KT”); emphasis on scaling up best practices	Context is central; all research findings are considered contextually specific, culturally relevant; emphasis is on single case studies
Overlapping theory and practice	<p>KM proponents are exploring “participatory action KT”, “social interaction KT” and “Aboriginal KT”; linkage and exchange models of KM.</p> <p>PAR and CD proponents are introducing participatory models of research in health settings; consumer/client/patient empowerment; indigenous healing practices</p>	

Our First Area of Focus

- 1) What are effective strategies to help children who have been exposed to *violence* overcome trauma and feel safe in their families, schools, and communities?



Promising Practices to Help Children and
Youth who have been Exposed to Violence
Discussion Document

Prepared by:
David Morgan and Dalal Abdul-Razzaq

Advisory Committee Members:
David Black
Ian Manion
David Este
Christine Wekerle

Programs

- Seldom do we read in the academic journals about what works
- Examples:
 - Youth Advocate Program
 - Pathways to Education
 - Psychoeducational programming with parents of Military families

Our Second Area of Focus

- 2) What strategies have been shown to work *engaging* youth as full members of their communities and promoting citizenship by ending feelings of disempowerment and abandonment?



Working with Children and Youth in
Challenging Contexts to Promote Youth
Engagement
Discussion Document

Prepared by:
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Advisory Committee Members:
Michael Ungar
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Silvia Exenberger
Isabelle LeVert-Chiasson
Linda Liebenberg
Jimmy Ung

Programs

- Few youth engagement programs have a rigorous evaluation of outcomes
- Examples:
 - Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada: Game On! and Go Girl!
 - Social Enterprise Interventions

Our Third Area of Focus

- 3) Which innovations in *technology* are known to be effective helping children and youth in the most challenging of contexts nurture resilience, prevent mental health problems, and build a special place for themselves in the collective life of their communities?



Using Technology to Provide Support to
Children and Youth in Challenging
Contexts

Discussion Document

Prepared by:
Emily Zinck

Advisory Committee Members:
Patrick J. McGrath
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Programs

- Technology programs are so new there is very little documentation on their effectiveness
- Examples:
 - My Word: A digital story telling project, Rigolet, Labrador
 - MYMsta (South Africa)
 - Strongest Families Institute

The Big Things We've Learned

- Embrace technology
- Keep children safe
- Build partnerships (with schools, families, communities)
 - Individual interventions work better when they include collaborations
- Include youth as co-researchers, co-designers, and co-workers

A KMb Simulation

- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CkfKTH7ynYQ&feature=youtu.be>

The Big Things We've Learned

- Always think about culture, context, resources, and the meaningfulness of interventions
- Focus on strengths
- Evaluate, evaluate, evaluate (in whatever way is possible)
- Develop communities of practice and opportunities for knowledge mobilization

What we've learned about KMb and smaller organizations:

- People look to people they know or people whom their colleagues know for evidence of best practices. The more credible the individual, the more program effectiveness data will be perceived as trustworthy.

- While search engines, websites and social media might be used during the preliminary stages of a search for innovative programming, participants preferred to make direct contact with the individuals who are operating programs. Even better, participants preferred to hear first hand from both service providers and clients regarding the effectiveness of a specific intervention.

- Participants perceived a need for knowledge brokers to build bridges between individuals who hold evidence of effective practices and those who need access to that evidence. Funders were perceived as being ideally suited to play this role.

- The more proximal the source of the evidence the more it was preferred and considered trustworthy. Local wisdom was viewed as more likely to be contextually relevant and easier to access through professional networks.

- Participants tended to look for information about what they had already heard about through the media, professional gatherings or word of mouth. Very little consideration was given to conducting surveys of the extant literature documenting services for a specific population.

- Service providers wanted to talk with other service providers, policy makers wanted to talk to policy makers. Each professional cohort wanted to find someone who could get them “up to speed quickly” on new interventions and share knowledge relevant to their role in the decision-making process.

- Participants wanted others to notice what they were already doing right. A good exchange of knowledge is characterized by recognition that all those involved in the exchange have something positive to share.

- Participants responded best to a new program idea when there was a champion for the idea with whom they could interact. The more credible the champion, the more a program was perceived as effective.

- Participants wanted “just in time” knowledge and easy to access mentors.

- The sharing of stories describing the effectiveness of an intervention is better than the sharing of data.

Small vs Large Organizations

- Larger organizations tended to prefer data and systematic reviews to make decisions about programming

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