
A Model for Building A Culturally Sensitive Child Care System

An Evaluation Report



Rainbow Research Inc.

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Prepared for

Cultural Beginnings

by:

Theartrice Williams
Ketmani Kouanchao

*Rainbow Research, Inc.
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621 West Lake Street
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55408
612.824.0724*

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Project Description

Cultural Beginning (CB) is an initiative of the Minnesota Child Care Resource and Referral Network (CCR RN) that is designed to work with the Minnesota child care industry to build a more culturally-appropriate child care delivery system. The licensed child care system in Minnesota has very few providers who are people of color. In addition, very few families of color use the existing licensed child care system for their children. Some of their concerns are related to their lack of confidence that those licensed child care providers are familiar with their different cultures and life styles to provide adequate child care. CCR RN initiated CB to work toward changing the formal care system to be more inclusive of families of color, to support the informal child care system and to increase cultural sensitivity among child care providers. Legislation passed by the 1990 Minnesota Legislature (cultural dynamics training for licensed child care providers) provided increased incentive and potential access to resources for CCR RN to pursue the issue.

CCR RN convened a small group of 10 people, including one African American and one American Indian to explore the issues and talk about what needed to be done and how to proceed. They decided to focus on how race and ethnicity were affecting access and capacity of child care to families of color in Minnesota. First, this group developed a statement of purpose which it used to help secure a planning grant from the Emma B. Howe Foundation, then it addressed the lack of diversity within its own ranks.

The working group used the planning process to develop a project idea that comprehensively addressed the issue of culturally sensitive child care in Minnesota and disseminated a concept paper about it to the respective communities of color. This paper was used to conduct 26 interviews in the respective communities of color across the State of Minnesota. Several people were identified through this process who subsequently became members of the Cultural Beginnings Steering Committee.

Project Documentation

Cultural Beginnings (CB) engaged Rainbow Research to assess its progress in implementing strategies that would help create a more culturally sensitive child care system throughout the State of Minnesota (and have that system be) more accessible to families of color. In order to plan appropriate strategies, Cultural Beginnings needed additional information about the child care needs for the different ethnic and cultural population groups in Minnesota, particularly Southeast Asians. Rainbow Research divided its work into two phases. In Phase I we produced “An Assessment of Child Care Status and Capacities of Southeast Asian Communities in Minnesota.” The first report was about assessing the child care capacity of a community in order to assist that community in planning for its child care needs. This report is about assessing the progress CB has made to date in implementing its program and will be organized into four sections, including lessons learned:

1. Progress to Date

- **First, the Committee provided its members with opportunities to learn about other cultures.** Being members of a “minority group” did not mean that the Committee necessarily knew or trusted one another. They needed to learn about their respective cultures in order to communicate intelligently and civilly amongst themselves.
- **Second, the Committee had to learn how to work together.** The dynamics of the Steering Committee’s work enabled people of different racial and cultural experiences to learn about one another. They learn what interests they held in common and how to work together to achieve common goals.
- **Third, the Steering Committee has grown in size and voice.** It has evolved from the ten people who first met in 1991 to a group of over 20 persons who participate in the Committee’s work. It has grown from having just one or two persons of color participating in the meetings to now having a majority of members persons of color.
- **Fourth, the Steering Committee is community driven.** The Project Director and several respondents said that the Committee has always wanted to be community driven, but did not seem to understand what that meant initially. They since have learned a great deal more about what community driven means.

- **Finally, the Committee continues to work to increase and sustain its own diversity.** Although the Committee is now more racially and culturally diverse than ever, the members we interviewed believe that diversity is still an issue of some concern.

2. Challenges

The Minnesota CCRRN documented in its study “Minnesota Study on Race/Ethnicity in Child Care” that licensed child care providers from communities of color were “scarce to none.” So, how does CB see its progress in the light of its overall goal and its starting point? We cite the following among criteria to be used in assessing CBs progress:

- **First, systems change is a high priority for members of the Steering Committee.** Changing a child care system to have it be inclusive of the needs and interest of people of color throughout the state of Minnesota is difficult and will take a long time. The Committee wants to see a system that is accessible to families of color and the child care providers of any race or culture will be knowledgeable, sensitive, and caring of children from any background.
- **Second, growth and involvement in the capacity of the Steering Committee can be claimed as progress for CB.** The Project Director likes to talk about progress in terms of the role the Steering Committee has played in the process. He often refers to them as a “think tank.” They are the group who bring many ideas to the table for discussion from the many different perspective as exist within the group. *The Steering Committee helps to bridge the gap of knowledge and understanding among the various cultures and CCRRN and the community at large regarding critical child care issues. Members of the Steering Committee credit Cultural Beginnings with providing people of color with a forum for getting involved with enough flexibility for them to determine how they wanted to be involved..*
- **Third, ownership is an important feature of CB’s progress to date.** Both Cultural Beginnings Project Director and Steering Committee members cite “ownership” as critical to its progress. Ownership is very important to the people of color serving on the committee. *They see it as a project to benefit their communities and as such it should be controlled by representatives from those communities.* This means that they define the issues and the resolution to them. *Moreover ownership is about having voice and taking responsibility for caring for the children and knowing “what goes on in our community.”*

- **Fourth, Cultural Beginnings has made progress in building its organizational capacity.** Its strengths *include solid support from CCRRN, a strong and actively involved Steering Committee and a highly competent and capable project director who works well with the Steering Committee and CCRRN leadership. Four Community Specialists positions, African American, American Indian, Asian, Hispanic/Latino have been filled and they are working in their respective communities to help develop linkages with the child care system in support of CB's mission. Key linkages have been established in two different Asian communities, Worthington and St. Paul. Efforts to create similar linkages in American Indian Communities are ongoing.*
- **Fifth, CCRRN Steering Committee representatives report on personal growth and development.** CCRRN Executive Director talks about progress in many of the same ways as has been previously described, but he adds a rather personal dimension to it. *His experience with CB has affected how he interacts with others outside of CB and CCRRN.* It has been a growth experience for him that has implications far beyond his role on the Steering Committee or as the head of CCRRN.
- **Finally, the CB Community Specialists are providing increased access for communities of color to the Minnesota child care system.** The presence of Community Specialists on staff is a sign of progress. These positions are designed to be filled by persons who can facilitate access to key communities. The American Indian, the specialist second to be hired, is currently working to gain access to American Indian communities across the state. This is a slow and labor intensive process that will require support and understanding from the Steering Committee.

3. Next Priorities

Cultural Beginnings still has some work to do in helping the broader community appreciate the importance of culturally appropriate/sensitive child care. Except for those families in search of culturally appropriate child care it may be difficult for others to see how they may benefit. High on CB's list of priorities should include:

- **First, finding ways to educate the public on the value of culturally sensitive child care and how the benefits extend beyond the immediate participants in those child care settings.**

- **Second, as one respondent put it, “find ways to make participation more fun.”** She was thinking especially about increased community and parental involvement. She thought planning picnics and other kind of outings where children could come would help. This, she believes could be an effective strategy in smaller communities, particularly in Greater Minnesota.
- **Third, some respondents believe that racism and racial discrimination are still issues to be faced.** Education and training can be relied upon to some extent, but some community organizing may be required in some instances to help demonstrate and illustrate the negative impact that racist practices can have on the growth and development of a community’s children and families.
- **Fourth , finding the funding support that will continue to support community self determination.**
- **Fifth, at least two of our respondents believe that Cultural Beginnings must concentrate on improving its cross-cultural communications.** There has been a lot of growth in that area since the program began, but there continues to be times that the different cultures misconnect, fail to communicate or either send or receive the wrong messages.
- **Finally, Cultural Beginnings must continue to pay close attention to the composition of the Steering Committee.** The Committee is the life line of Cultural Beginnings and it must be kept healthy.

4. Lessons Learned

Rainbow Research has identified the following as key lessons that can be drawn from this evaluation project with Cultural Beginnings:

- *Building necessary capacity to challenge the insensitive racial and cultural practices of the child care system requires the early involvement of representatives from communities of color who are connected with their communities and knowledgeable of the communities’ child care needs.*
- *Changing institutionalized negative racial or cultural attitudes and behavior is a long term process that requires the commitment and support (including resources) from key players in the child care system.*

- *Do not assume that people of color have experience with cross-cultural communication. Time and opportunity must be provided for cross-cultural communication to grow and develop.*
- *Where necessary, assistance should be provided to facilitate improved communications. Guidelines or principles to be followed during group or committee meetings can facilitate inter-group communications.*
- *Strong leadership at the staff and policy level is important to helping to build the kind of capacity required to effectively challenge long standing practices of the child care system.*
- *It takes time to build statewide capacity; therefore priorities must be set regarding where to start. The reality of the situation probably will dictate that the starting point is related to resources and opportunity. The organization needs to be flexible enough to respond accordingly.*
- *There needs to be a long-term strategy for keeping the organization healthy. This means paying attention to the composition of the key decision making arm of the organization, viz., the Cultural Diversity Steering Committee.*
- *CCRRN commitment to cultural diversity should be reflected in its policies and mission statement as well as its continuing support for Cultural Beginnings.*

INTRODUCTION

Cultural Beginnings (CB) engaged Rainbow Research to assess its progress in implementing strategies that would help create a more culturally sensitive child care system throughout the State of Minnesota (and have that system be) more accessible to families of color. (In this report, the terms “people of color” or “family of color” refer primarily to African-Americans, American Indians, Asian-Americans and Hispanic/Latino). In order to plan appropriate strategies, Cultural Beginnings needed additional information about the child care needs for the different ethnic and cultural population groups in Minnesota, particularly Southeast Asians. Rainbow Research divided its work into two phases. In Phase I we produced “An Assessment of Child Care Status and Capacities of Southeast Asian Communities in Minnesota.” The first report was about assessing the child care capacity of a community in order to assist that community in planning for its child care needs. This report is about assessing the progress CB has made to date in implementing its program and will be organized into four sections including lessons learned:

- **Progress to Date.** This section will cover how Cultural Beginnings was started, how it operates, developmental and capacity changes, and how it defines and describes progress.
- **Challenges.** This section will identify and discuss Cultural Beginnings’ progress some key challenges will face in the future.
- **Next Priorities.** This section will discuss how Cultural Beginnings may proceed in identifying and establishing priorities that can support and sustain continued progress.
- **Lessons Learned.** This section will discuss key lessons learned thus far about building a culturally sensitive child care system.

Methodology

Rainbow Research used primarily focus group and individual interviews with staff and Steering Committee members and the review of steering committee and sub-committee meeting minutes. Individual interviews were conducted with the Cultural Beginnings project director and two staff members. We conducted two focus group interviews (6 people), three telephone interviews and one face-to-face interview with members of the steering committee. Eight out of the ten persons interviewed were people of color and four were members of the original committee. See Appendix for a list of persons interviewed.

PROGRESS TO DATE

What is Cultural Beginnings? Cultural Beginning (CB) is an initiative of the Minnesota Child Care Resource and Referral Network (CCR RN) that is designed to work with the Minnesota child care industry to build a more culturally-appropriate child care delivery system. The licensed child care system in Minnesota has very few providers who are people of color. In addition, very few families of color use the existing licensed child care system for their children. Some of their concerns are related to their lack of confidence that those licensed child care providers are familiar with their different cultures and life styles to provide adequate child care. CCR RN initiated CB to work toward changing the formal care system to be more inclusive of families of color, to support the informal child care system and to increase cultural sensitivity among child care providers. Legislation passed by the 1990 Minnesota Legislature (cultural dynamics training for licensed child care providers) provided increased incentive and potential access to resources for CCR RN to pursue the issue.

How was CB started? In the summer of 1990 CCR RN began a process that led to the creation of a cultural diversity committee to begin addressing cultural diversity issues. Several Success By 6 volunteers played key roles in the early work of the cultural dynamics committee. The people in the CCR RN field offices recognized that regardless of how good a job they appeared to be doing in developing and promoting sound child care programs and activities throughout the state, there were key people not involved in the process. They were working almost entirely with people like themselves (European Americans). A subsequent study “Minnesota Study on Race/Ethnicity in Child Care” commissioned by CCR RN would further validate the need to focus more attention on the child care needs of families of color in Minnesota.

The established licensed child care system was not reaching people of color and the field staff expressed special concerns about non English speaking families. These families were mostly people of color with an added barrier of not being able to speak the English. This initial group (European Americans, one African American and one American Indian) met to explore the issues and talk about what needed to be done and how to proceed.

First they needed to decide on a focus. The decision was to focus on how race and ethnicity were affecting access and capacity of child care to families of color in Minnesota. It took several meetings for the committee to develop a statement of purpose which it used to help secure a planning grant from the Emma B. Howe Foundation. Second, the committee had to address the lack of diversity within its own ranks. They realized that it would be difficult for them to develop comprehensive strategies regarding how best to respond to racial and ethnic barriers

in the child care industry unless they had more direct participation from people of color.

The group decided to use the planning process to accomplish at least two things. First, they had to learn more about the status of the child care system and how it was responding to the needs of families of color. Second they needed to learn more about how to access key leadership in the different communities of color. They needed a way to share the thinking of the committee with the different communities and solicit feedback. They also wanted key people from those communities to become involved early enough in the process to help shape it into an initiative for which they could claim ownership.

The committee developed a project idea that comprehensively addressed the issue of culturally sensitive child care in Minnesota and disseminated a concept paper about it to the respective communities of color. Each committee member was asked to use her/his respective networks that extend into different communities to identify key people (who should receive the paper) and later follow up with personal interviews.

Altogether 26 people, mostly from the African American, American Indian, Asian and Hispanic/Latino communities across the state, were interviewed. Several people were identified through this process who subsequently became members of the Cultural Beginnings Steering Committee.

After receiving extensive positive feedback about the validity and value of the project idea, in the Fall of 1992 a decision was made to terminate the original cultural diversity committee and convene a new committee with people of color as the majority of its membership.

Approximately seven months following the Summer 1991 meeting a decision was made to start a new committee, Cultural Beginnings Cultural Diversity Steering Committee, (hereinafter, the Steering Committee) with people of color as the majority of its membership. Currently there are 22 voting members and 8 non-active members on the steering committee: four African Americans, five American Indians, four Asian Americans, four Hispanic/Latinos and five European Americans. Three of the non-active members are African Americans, three Hispanic/Latino and two European Americans. They are supported by a staff of six.

Most of CB's progress has been connected with its internal capacity building. It has been about building a structure with community input that could in turn work effectively with the community to help achieve mutually determined goals regarding improved cultural sensitivity in Minnesota's child care system. The goal is broader

and more inclusive than improved cultural sensitivity and it is not limited to the licensed child care system. CB is about transforming the system to one which is multicultural and multiethnic. In addition, CB wants to increase the informal child care system's access to the resources (especially training) it needs to be more effective in delivering its services.

How has the Steering Committee influenced CB's development? The intent is to have the Steering Committee be truly representative of the different cultural and ethnic communities as well as knowledgeable of the child care field. Among its membership are child care providers, child care policy makers, child care funders and users of child care services. [We have already noted the racial and ethnic composition of the committee.] The Steering Committee is designed to be a working committee, but in the beginning there was no consensus as to what that meant. It was something that would have to be negotiated by the committee itself. It was clear that CCRRN did not want to control the committee.

To facilitate the work of the Steering Committee and to help it deal with some of its own issues around diversity the following "Guiding Principles" were created at the first Steering Committee meeting, December 8, 1992:

- Our work shall always be focused on the well-being of children
- Respect for the child-rearing values and practices of each culture
- Commitment to learning about the cultural values of each culture
- Permission to disagree and challenge
- Commitment to finding a group process that is conducive to each person's communication style, that is comfortable to everyone.
- Serious, but not too serious
- Regularly identify our accomplishments
- Ask for confidentiality when needed
- Permission to stumble, to not be perfect
- Permission to be open about racial/ethnic dynamics of the group
- Respect shall permeate all of the principles

From our interviews with Steering Committee members we learned how the Committee began to define its role and develop a culture of its own in the following ways:

- **First, the Committee provided its members with opportunities to learn about other cultures.** Being members of a “minority group” did not mean that the Committee necessarily knew or trusted one another. They needed to learn about their respective cultures in order to communicate intelligently and civilly amongst themselves. It was important that they learn to acknowledge and respect their similarities and differences. The “guiding principles” assisted the Committee to find their “common ground,” and safe space in which to communicate. One Committee member noted that she knew less about her other colleagues of color than she did about any member of the majority culture group. Out of necessity she has had to learn about “white people” for her own survival. That has not been the case for her in her relationship with her colleagues of color. The committee had to learn to work together. She learned that they had many experiences in common, particularly in relation to racial or cultural oppression.
- **Second, the Committee had to learn how to work together.** The dynamics of the Steering Committee’s work enabled people of different racial and cultural experiences to learn about one another. They learn what interests they held in common and how to work together to achieve common goals. Some close friendships have developed out the process of working together. Some committee members expressed that they have begun to apply the “guiding principles” and how they are used in the Committee in their personal and professional lives away from Cultural Beginnings. For example, some of the respondents said they could disagree and challenge others on important issues and they are not afraid to take issue with other persons of color.
- **Third, the Steering Committee has grown in size and voice.** It has evolved from the ten people who first met in 1991 to a group of over 20 persons who participate in the Committee’s work. It has grown from having just one or two persons of color participating in the meetings to now having a majority of members persons of color. Those one or two participants of color in those earlier meetings felt quite isolated, sometimes wondering if it were worth the effort. They called for more persons of color to be involved and now they are. One of those earlier participants shared with us that she use to deliberately show late for meetings because she did not want to be the lone person of color present. When she was that lone person it placed unrealistic expectations on her to represent people whom she didn’t know

and sometimes whose race or culture were different from her own. She is so pleased that is no longer the case. She feels freer to be herself and focus on representing her people.

- **Fourth, the Steering Committee is community driven.** The Project Director and several respondents said that the Committee has always wanted to be community driven, but did not seem to understand what that meant initially. They since have learned a great deal more about what community driven means. Its about community involvement and being aware of the issues. It means the representatives on the Committee are linked back in their communities and they keep their people informed about what's happening. It means that there cannot be any predetermined agenda that is taken to the community for support without the community having first played a role in helping to develop that agenda.
- **Finally, the Committee must continue to work to increase and sustain its own diversity.** Although the Committee is now more racially and culturally diverse than ever, the members we interviewed believe that diversity is still an issue of some concern. The Committee needs to make sure that it is reaching beyond the easy to reach. They must work harder to reach people in Greater Minnesota and those who don't speak English. There is a tendency to relate to the people nearby and convenient. Some Steering Committee would like to see its outreach expand to include some of the newer immigrants from Eastern Europe and Africa. There are no family child care providers on the committee and Head Start is not represented.

CHALLENGES

Cultural Beginnings is building its capacity to respond effectively to the challenges of creating a more culturally appropriate child care system in Minnesota. That process has involved staff and committee development and training and community organizing in select Asian and American Indian communities in the state. In assessing this initiative one should pay some attention to process and remember it is a work in progress. This assessment focuses on progress and not success or failure. Therefore, we asked CB to discuss its progress with us.

What criteria does CB consider in measuring its progress? Members of the Steering Committee and the CB Project Director believe that it is important, first, to understand what it is they want to accomplish and where they started from in order to appreciate the progress they have made. The goal is to change the Minnesota child care system to make it more culturally sensitive and accessible to families of different racial and cultural backgrounds. This is an enormous task that will take considerable time and resources to complete. In fact, it should be viewed not so much as a task to be completed by any date certain, but as a process to be put in motion where progress toward a desired goal will be measured periodically. Certain milestones can be established and work plans developed to reach those milestones. The Minnesota CCRRN documented in its study “Minnesota Study on Race/Ethnicity in Child Care” that licensed child care providers from communities of color were “scarce to none.” So, how does CB see its progress in the light of its overall goal and its starting point? We cite the following among criteria to be used in assessing CBs progress:

- **First, systems change is a high priority for members of the Steering Committee.** Changing a child care system to have it be inclusive of the needs and interest of people of color throughout the state of Minnesota is difficult and will take a long time. The Committee wants to see a system that is accessible to families of color and the child care providers of any race or culture will be knowledgeable, sensitive, and caring of children from any background. In addition, there will be people of color who are care providers in the system and they will have access to resources available to all other child care providers irrespective of whether they are licensed providers or not.. Progress in terms of *systems change* takes time to accomplish. This will require a commitment from all participants to be prepared to stay for the long haul. All participants in this process need to make long term commitments. This is especially the case for funders., both public and private. Cultural Beginnings will need to establish both short term and long

term goals. The short term goals will help build some progress momentum to help sustain the efforts that will be needed for the long haul.

- **Second, growth and involvement in the capacity of the Steering Committee can be claimed as progress for CB.** The Project Director likes to talk about progress in terms of the role the Steering Committee has played in the process. He often refers to them as a “think tank.” They are the group who bring many ideas to the table for discussion from the many different perspective as exist within the group. Through deliberate discussion and debate consensus has been forged on many key issues. So, *he believes that the existence and capacity for growth of the Steering Committee has to be counted as an integral part of Cultural Beginnings progress.* The Steering Committee is comprised of key leaders from the different communities of color and the majority community. They bring with them their many different experiences from their different cultures and take away the lessons they learn about how to work together as a group and maintain their cultural identity.. *The Steering Committee helps to bridge the gap of knowledge and understanding among the various cultures and CCRRN and the community at large regarding critical child care issues.* Members of the Steering Committee credit *Cultural Beginnings with providing people of color with a forum for getting involved with enough flexibility for them to determine how they wanted to be involved.* CB has been a forum to its own members for expressing their concerns about the child care system as well as convening other concerned citizens regarding how they all can join together to help make a difference. Another area of progress is the internal functioning of the Steering Committee itself. The members feel that they can take issue or challenge a position held by a committee member without creating a racial or cultural incident. One member credits an adherence to their “guiding principles” as partially responsible for that. Another reason is that they know one another better through committee meetings and other contacts. Another committee member talked about progress in terms of the committee “becoming more circular” in its operation instead of being so linear. She is more comfortable and operates at her best in a more “circular” environment.
- **Third, ownership is an important feature of CB’s progress to date.** Both Cultural Beginnings Project Director and Steering Committee members *cite “ownership” as critical to its progress.* Ownership is very important to the people of color serving on the committee. *They see it as a project to benefit their communities and as such it should be controlled by representatives from those communities.* This means that they define the issues and the resolution to them. In addition, they are in charge of determining the outcomes and how those outcomes are measured. They recognize the connections between Cultural Beginnings and CCRRN, but feel strongly that standards for measuring Cultural Beginnings performance should be established by Cultural

Beginnings (Steering Committee). Each person of color on the steering committee sees herself there as a representative from her community and is expected to be held accountable by her community for her behavior on that committee. Each Community Specialist is supported by a “cultural work-group” comprised of steering committee members from his/her cultural group. The work group membership may be augmented by community representatives from the particular culture in special instances (for example, American Indian). Consequently, it is important for the cultural group to be able to say: “this is ours; it belongs to us” and have it mean something. *Moreover ownership is about having voice and taking responsibility for caring for the children and knowing “what goes on in our community.”*

- **Fourth, Cultural Beginnings has made progress in building its organizational capacity.** Its strengths include *solid support from CCRRN, a strong and actively involved Steering Committee and a highly competent and capable project director* who works well with the Steering Committee and CCRRN leadership. Four Community Specialists positions, *African American, American Indian, Asian, Hispanic/Latino* have been filled and they are working in their respective communities to help develop linkages with the child care system in support of CB’s mission. *Key linkages have been established in two different Asian communities, Worthington and St. Paul. Efforts to create similar linkages in American Indian Communities are ongoing.* Communications with other programs concerned about diversity and cultural sensitivity in child care (e.g., Cultural Dynamics, Impact, Infant Toddlers and Early Childhood Professionals of Color) are underway.
- **Fifth, CCRRN Steering Committee representatives report on personal growth and development.** CCRRN Executive Director talks about progress in many of the same ways as has been previously described, but he adds a rather personal dimension to it. *His experience with CB has affected how he interacts with others outside of CB and CCRRN.* It has been a growth experience for him that has implications far beyond his role on the Steering Committee or as the head of CCRRN. He has gotten to know more people from different racial and cultural backgrounds than he had ever known before. He better understands that all participants in the child care system will benefit from improving the level of racial and cultural sensitivity of the child care providers. Finally, he believes that what he has learned about race and cultural will affect how he participates in his many other networks, both professional and social. He believes that other members of the Steering Committee may have been similarly affected.

- **Finally, the CB Community Specialists are providing increased access for communities of color to the Minnesota child care system.** The presence of Community Specialists on staff is a sign of progress. These positions are designed to be filled by persons who can facilitate access to key communities. The American Indian, the specialist second to be hired, is currently working to gain access to American Indian communities across the state. This is a slow and labor intensive process that will require support and understanding from the Steering Committee. Separate standards may need to be developed consistent with the culture to measure its progress.

The Community Specialists talk about progress in terms of *increased access for CB to their communities*. This access often comes through cultural work groups formed at the community level to help facilitate community access. The community specialist working in the Asian communities has found her cultural work groups to be most beneficial because she often may be in a community whose culture is different from her own. Her ability to make progress can be closely tied to the kind of relationship she is able to develop with the cultural work group. Currently there are two work sites in Asian communities with a third under development.

While all of the community specialists will be working toward a common goal, their approaches to the individual communities will be different because one approach will not work for all. Consequently, different ways may need to be found to talk about and measure progress.

NEXT PRIORITIES

Moving an entire child care system to a better understanding of the value of culturally appropriate child care is a big responsibility that will require the support of many key people in both the public and private sectors, including public policy makers.

Cultural Beginnings still has some work to do in helping the broader community appreciate the importance of culturally appropriate/sensitive child care. Except for those families in search of culturally appropriate child care it may be difficult for others to see how they may benefit. High on CB's list of priorities should be:

- **First, finding ways to educate the public on the value of culturally sensitive child care and how the benefits extend beyond the immediate participants in those child care settings.**
- **Second, as one respondent put it, “find ways to make participation more fun.”** She was thinking especially about increased community and parental involvement. She thought planning picnics and other kind of outings where children could come would help. This, she believes, could be an effective strategy in smaller communities, particularly in Greater Minnesota. Parental involvement is a key ingredient in building organizational capacity to change the child care system.
- **Third, some respondents believe that racism and racial discrimination are still issues to be faced.** Education and training can be relied upon to some extent, but some community organizing may be required in some instances to help demonstrate and illustrate the negative impact that racist practices can have on the growth and development of a community's children and families. Community organizing would involve a group of concerned citizens in a given community coming together to focus their attention on the need to have a more culturally sensitive and appropriate child care system and using their power as a group to help transform the system.
- **Fourth , finding the funding source that will continue to support community self determination.**
- **Fifth, at least two of our respondents believe that Cultural Beginnings must concentrate on improving its cross-cultural communications.** There has been a lot of growth in that area since the program began, but there continues to be times that the different cultures misconnect, fail to

communicate or either send or receive the wrong messages. Some of this can be corrected through increased cross-cultural education. Because the cultures don't live and socialize together, there are fewer opportunities for them to take advantage of the informal opportunities to learn about one another.

- **Finally, Cultural Beginnings must continue to pay close attention to the composition of the Steering Committee.** The Committee is the life line of Cultural Beginnings and it must be kept healthy. Keeping it healthy means paying attention to who serves on it and how they are connected back into their communities.

Cultural Beginnings has to find ways to stay focused in order to continue to make progress toward building a more culturally appropriate and sensitive child care system. It must pay special attention to choosing where to focus. CB is a diverse program initiative. Five different racial/ethnic population groups are represented on the board and staff. Its mission is to help build a more culturally sensitive and appropriate child care system in the state of Minnesota. Cultural Beginnings is committed to maintaining a sense of cultural integrity in all of its work. With a full complement of staff in the office and an active Steering Committee this could mean 4-5 or more different work styles involved in carrying out the project's mission. In many ways this will enrich the quality of the product, but in others it could raise questions regarding how performance will be measured. It will be important for the Project Director and Steering Committee to arrive at some consensus with the community specialists as to how their performances will be measured.

Although the approaches or work styles of the staff and Steering Committee may differ, all are working toward a common goal. CB must find ways to synthesize these different work styles so that they may work toward answering a common set of questions that can be used to help build organization and community capacity to change the child care system.

Areas for focus should include:

- Who are the child care providers for families of color?
- Are child care providers for families of color in the formal or informal child care system?
- What do families of color look for, or value in their child care providers?
- What kind of linkages, if any exist between the two systems?

- Are there any opportunities for collaboration between the two system that would not violate the integrity of either system?
- How are European American child care providers being prepared to work with families of color?
- What is the quality of training available for child care providers who are interested in providing care for families of color?

Data from these questions must be collected and stored in a manner that makes it accessible to the key decision makers in Cultural Beginnings and CCRRN. This is data that can be quantified by racial/ethnic cultural grouping and stored in the computer for future use. In addition it can be similarly stored in its qualitative form using specialized computer software.

Answers to these questions and others may help Cultural Beginnings begin to measure Minnesota's progress toward transforming its child care system to a multicultural, multiethnic, more culturally sensitive and appropriate system.

LESSONS LEARNED

Rainbow Research has identified the following as key lessons that can be drawn from this evaluation project with Cultural Beginnings:

- *Building necessary capacity to challenge the insensitive racial and cultural practices of the child care system requires the early involvement of representatives from communities of color who are connected with their communities and knowledgeable of the communities' child care needs.*
- *Changing institutionalized negative racial or cultural attitudes and behavior is a long term process that requires the commitment and support (including resources) from key players in the child care system.*
- *Do not assume that people of color have experience with cross-cultural communication. Time and opportunity must be provided for cross-cultural communication to grow and develop.*
- *Where necessary, assistance should be provided to facilitate improved communications. Guidelines or principles to be followed during group or committee meetings can facilitate inter-group communications.*
- *Strong leadership at the staff and policy level is important to helping to build the kind of capacity required to effectively challenge long standing practices of the child care system.*
- *It takes time to build statewide capacity; therefore priorities must be set regarding where to start. The reality of the situation probably will dictate that the starting point is related to resources and opportunity. The organization needs to be flexible enough to respond accordingly.*
- *There needs to be a long-term strategy for keeping the organization healthy. This means paying attention to the composition of the key decision making arm of the organization, viz., the Cultural Diversity Steering Committee.*
- *CCRRN commitment to cultural diversity should be reflected in its policies and mission statement as well as its continuing support for Cultural Beginnings.*

APPENDIX A:

Interviewees

African American

Sharon Henry

Early Childhood Resource Center
1600 E. Lake Street
Minneapolis, MN 55407
612/721-0112

Beverly Propes

United Way of Minneapolis Area
404 S.8th Street
Minneapolis, MN 55404
612/340-7485
612/340-7675

Asian American

Pone Suryadhay

Community Specialist
CCR&R, Inc.
2166 Campus Drive SE
Rochester, MN 55904
507/287-2020

Hao Young

St. Paul Mayor's Office
390 City Hall
15 West Kellogg Blvd.
St. Paul, MN 55102
612/266-8516
612/266-8513 fax

European American

Nancy Okerlund

MN Department of Human Services
Lafayette Road
St. Paul, MN 55155-3832
612/296-1788

Jeremy Welty Wahlstrom

CCR&R, Inc.
2166 Campus Drive SE
Rochester, MN 55904
507/287-2020

Pat Gannon

MN CCR&R Network
2116 Campus Drive SE
Rochester, MN 55904
507/287-2497

Hispanic/Latino

Nydia Dixon

216 S. Fifth Street
Montevideo, MN 56265
612/269-6377 (h)
612/269-5629 (w)

Ofelia Lopez

The Children's Initiative
919 LaFond Avenue
St. Paul, MN 55104
612/642-2070

Native American

Carol Pierce

Kelly Lovelace

Community Specialist

CCR&R, Inc.

2166 Campus Drive SE

Rochester, MN 55904

507/287-2020

APPENDIX B:

Cultural Beginnings Steering Committee & Staff

Steering Committee

Updated 9/25/96

African American

Denise Bryan*

GMDCA

1628 Elliot Avenue S.
Minneapolis, MN 55404
612/341-1177
612/341-4356 fax

Debra Leigh

MN Minority Educational Partnership, Inc.

2211 Riverside Avenue S.
Minneapolis, MN 55454
612/330-1645
612/330-1510 fax

Norma Patterson

YWCA - Phillips

2323 11th Avenue South
Minneapolis, MN 55404
612/871-3987
612/332-0500 fax

Beverly Propes

United Way of Minneapolis Area

404 S.8th Street
Minneapolis, MN 55404
612/340-7485
612/340-7675

Patty Brown

AIOIC Day Care

1845 E. Franklin Avenue
Minneapolis, MN 55404
612/339-5506
612/341-3766 fax

Jackie Dionne

MIWRC

2300 15th Avenue South
Minneapolis, MN 55404
612/728-2020
612/728-2039 fax

Melanie Hough

RR 3, Box 288
Cass Lake, MN 56633
218/335-2241

Carol Pierce*^Ψ

1619 Upton Avenue North
Minneapolis, MN 55411
612/522-9092 (h)
612/297-5302 (w)
612/297-1949 fax

American Indian

* Executive Committee Member

^Ψ Chair

George & Melanie Spears

3543 22nd Avenue South
Minneapolis, MN 55407
612/721-3525

Asian American

Somly Sitthisay

Wilder Foundation
919 LaFond Avenue
St. Paul, MN 55104
612/659-6017
612/642-2088 fax

Mao Young

Ombudsperson for Asian Pacific Families
450 Energy Park Drive, Suite 106
St. Paul, MN 55108
612/643-2514
612/643-2539 fax

Paj Yang

Reuben Lindb Learning Center
3616 12th Avenue South
Minneapolis, MN 55402
612/825-8384
612/721-4002 fax

Hoa Young*

St. Paul Mayor's Office
390 City Hall
15 West Kellogg Blvd.
St. Paul, MN 55102
612/266-8516
612/266-8513 fax

European American

Patrick Gannon

MN CCR&R Network
2116 Campus Drive SE
Rochester, MN 55904
507/287-2497
507/287-2411

Nancy Johnson

Child Care Works
1628 Elliot Avenue South
Minneapolis, MN 55404
612/349-0543
612/341-4356

David Allen Jones

Institute on Cultural Dynamics & Social Change
1707 11th Street Southwest
Rochester, MN 55902
507/280-6421 voice/fax

Nancy Okerlund*

MN Department of Human Services
444 Lafayette Road
St. Paul, MN 55155-3832
612/296-1788
612/297-1949 fax

Jeremy Welty Wahlstrom*

CCR&R, Inc.
2166 Campus Drive SE
Rochester, MN 55904
507/287-2020
507/287-2411

* Executive Committee Member

Hispanic/Latino

Victoria Amaris

United Way of Minneapolis
404 S. 8th Street
Minneapolis, MN 55404
612/340-7589
612/340-7675

Nydia Dixon (Hispanic)

216 S. Fifth Street
Montevideo, MN 56265
612/269-6377 (h)
612/269-5629 (w)
call work first

Ofelia Lopez*

The Children's Initiative
919 LaFond Avenue
St. Paul, MN 55104
612/642-2070
612/642-4068

Maita Maggi

Resources for Child Caring
450 North Syndicate Street
St. Paul, MN 55104
612/641-6636
612/645-0990 fax

* Executive Committee Member

Cultural Beginnings Staff

220 S. Robert Street
Suite 202
St. Paul, MN 55107
612/290-9704
612/290-9785 fax

Louis Alemayehu
Community Specialist
ext. 17

Angela Anderson
Administrative Assistant
ext. 15

Marisol Chiclana-Ayala
Community Specialist
ext. 18

Gene Ford
Project Director
ext. 14

Kelly Lovelace
Community Specialist
ext. 13

Pone Suryadhay
Community Specialist
ext. 11

Non-Active Membership List

Updated 2/23/96

African American

Doris Williams

Phillips Community Initiative for Children
2314 Elliot Avenue South
Minneapolis, MN 55404
612/871-0662

Sharon Henry

Early Childhood Resource Center
1600 E. Lake Street
Minneapolis, MN 55407
612/721-0112
612/721-0435 fax

Twanda MacArthur

MN Department of Human Services
444 Lafayette Road
St. Paul, MN 55155-3812
612/296-5254
612/297-7981 fax

European American

Cheryl Phelps

Tri Valley Opportunity Council, Inc.
102 N. Broadway, Box 607
Crookston, MN 56716
218/281-4832
218/281-6681 fax

Zoe Nicholie

MN Department of Human Services
444 Lafayette Road
St. Paul, MN 55155-3812
612/296-6086
612/297-1949 fax

Hispanic/Latino

Linda Lares

Freeborn County Community Action
Freeborn County Courthouse
Albert Lea, MN 56007
597/377-5199
507/377-5200

Lupe Serrano

221 E. Curtice Street
St. Paul, MN 55107
612/227-6912 (h)
612/292-0131 (w)
612/292-0925 fax

Patricia Ray

*Office of Ombudsperson for Spanish
Speaking Families*
1450 Energy Park Drive
Suite 106
St. Paul, MN 55108
612/643-2537
612/643-2539

Our mission is to help increase the effectiveness and impact of socially concerned organizations in responding to social problems. We work in support of organizations and communities to help them achieve their goals.

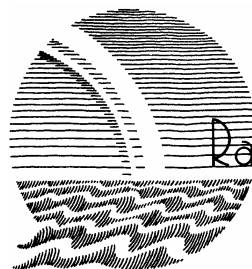
Your organization and community can experience these results from participation in Rainbow Research activities – tailored studies, workshops, and partnerships – and use of our tools and publications.

We can help you to:

- Improve your understanding** of key program elements that contribute to program effectiveness.
- Improve program impact** through integrating principles of program effectiveness into day-to-day operations.
- Improve management** of resources to achieve program purposes.
- Improve the fit** between your organization's activities and your community's needs and opportunities.
- Improve commitment** of staff and Board to your organization's mission.
- Improve communication** between your organization and its various stakeholders and publics.
- Improve linkages** between your organization and other like-minded organizations.
- Improve access** to tools and support services that strengthen program performance.

Related Rainbow Research Publications:

- **Cultural Beginnings: Lessons Learned from the Minnesota Child Care Resource and Referral Network;** T. Williams and Ketmani Kouanchao; *9 pages (1997); #186B — \$5.00*
- **Guidelines for Effective Adult Literacy Program;** Steven E. Mayer; *vii plus 43 pages plus appendix (1984); #078 — \$15.00*
- **El Puente Academy for Peace and Justice: A Case Study of Building Social Capital;** Sharon Ramirez and Tom Dewar; *49 pages plus appendices (1994); #148 — \$6.00*
- **Towards Permanency: The State of Children in Care in the State of Mississippi;** Becky Swanson Kroll; *x plus 47 pages plus appendices (1997); #185 — \$9.00*
- **The Norstar Survey II: Determining Our Strengths “Out and Counted”;** Becky Swanson Kroll; *xvii plus 59 pages plus appendices (1997); #172 — \$12.00*
- **SciMathMN Equity Initiative Progress Report: Phase I;** Vanessa J. McKendall and Becky Swanson Kroll; *14 pages plus appendices (1997)*



Rainbow Research Inc.

621 West Lake Street
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55408