



**Media Release**

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**ANTI-BULLYING PROGRAM REACHES OUT TO RURAL AND REMOTE  
COMMUNITIES**

The WITS anti-bullying program, developed with community partners at the University of Victoria, has demonstrated its value in reducing peer victimization and bullying in Greater Victoria schools. Now, with the help of \$180,000 in funding from the Public Health Agency of Canada, WITS leaders want to take the program into BC's remote and rural schools and evaluate its success there.

The first phase of the expansion program involves identifying and meeting with school administrators, teachers, RCMP and parents in rural and remote communities who are interested in offering the WITS program (Walk away, Ignore, Talk out conflicts, and Seek help if bullied). The programs are designed for students in kindergarten to Grade 6.

"We've been offering WITS programs since 1998 in Victoria and have documented evidence that it has reduced bullying and peer victimization," says program leader and UVic psychologist Bonnie Leadbeater. "We now have the funding to expand that service and are willing to tailor the programs to meet the needs of rural and remote schools if they prefer. Rural and remote communities can help us promote children's healthy relationships and stop bullying."

WITS will provide participating schools with program training and materials (including \$1,000-worth of books and program manuals each year). Schools that participate in the research portion but don't implement the WITS program will also receive an annual \$1,000 stipend for each of the three years of the program. There will be an honorarium for teachers who complete the assessment questionnaires. The manuals include Aboriginal content.

The WITS Primary Program is offered to children in kindergarten to Grade 3. The follow up WITS LEADS program is for children in Grades 4 to 6 and specifically targets relational victimization (such as gossiping and spreading rumours). LEADS stands for Look and Listen, Explore points of view, Act, Did it work? and Seek help. Both programs are included in the expansion and research programs.

School administrators interested in learning more about the WITS expansion and research program are asked to contact Leadbeater at 250-721-8929 or [bleadbea@uvic.ca](mailto:bleadbea@uvic.ca).

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**Media Contacts:**

Bonnie Leadbeater (Psychology) at 250-721-8929 or bleadbea@uvic.ca  
(*Leadbeater is only available on Feb. 23 and 24*)  
Patty Pitts (UVic Communication) at 250-721-7656 or ppitts@uvic.ca

**UVic Communications Services, PO Box 1700 STN CSC Victoria, BC V8W 2Y2**  
**Tel. (250) 721-7636 Fax (250) 721-8955 E-Mail: ucom@uvic.ca**