



BUILDING RESILIENCE: SOARING EAGLES PROJECT FOR LBC IN CHINA



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Who are LBC in China ?

The Chinese registration (*hukou*) system institutionally, economically, and socially segregates rural and urban areas to prevent rurally registered people from accessing public education and health support in cities. In addition, urban living costs, especially housing, are unaffordable for poor families. Consequently, many low-income migrant parents from rural areas leave their children in home villages. Many of these parents visit their children only once every couple of years.

Left-behind children (LBC) is a term that describes children in China who are left in rural home villages after their parents migrate to cities for work. LBCs are victims of both China's industrialization and institutional segregation.



A left-behind schoolgirl must take care of her younger brother during class.

Literature Review

Studies by Ye & Pan (2011), Lv (2007), Zhao *et al* (2014) demonstrate:

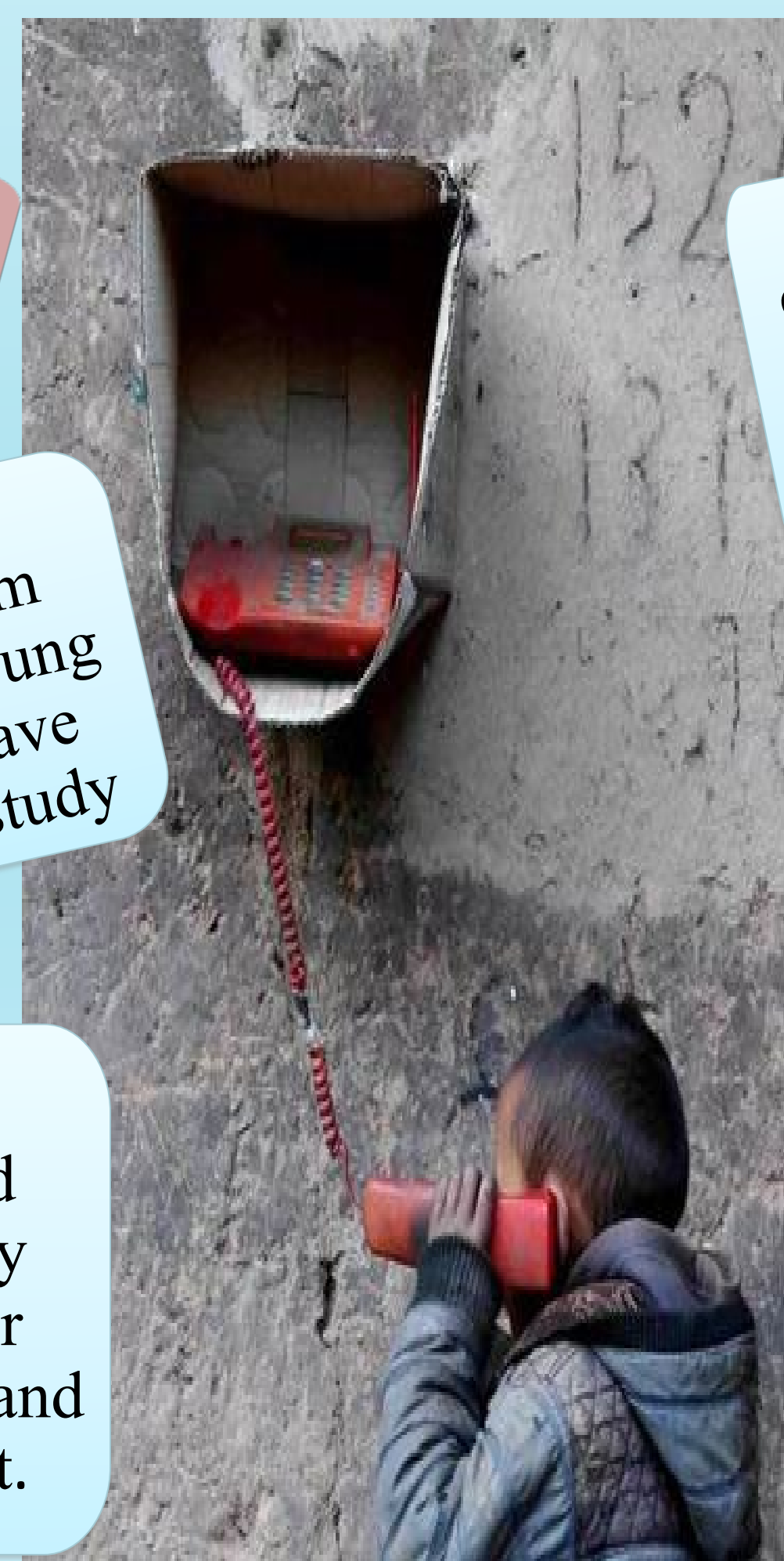
Poor nutrition and heavy housework (including farm work and taking care of young siblings) leads them to have little time and energy to study

The neglect of LBC's emotional, spiritual, and psychological needs may continue to damage their psychological well-being and personality development.

About 70 percent of LBC are cared for by aged grandparents, who carry great burdens to support the children and themselves

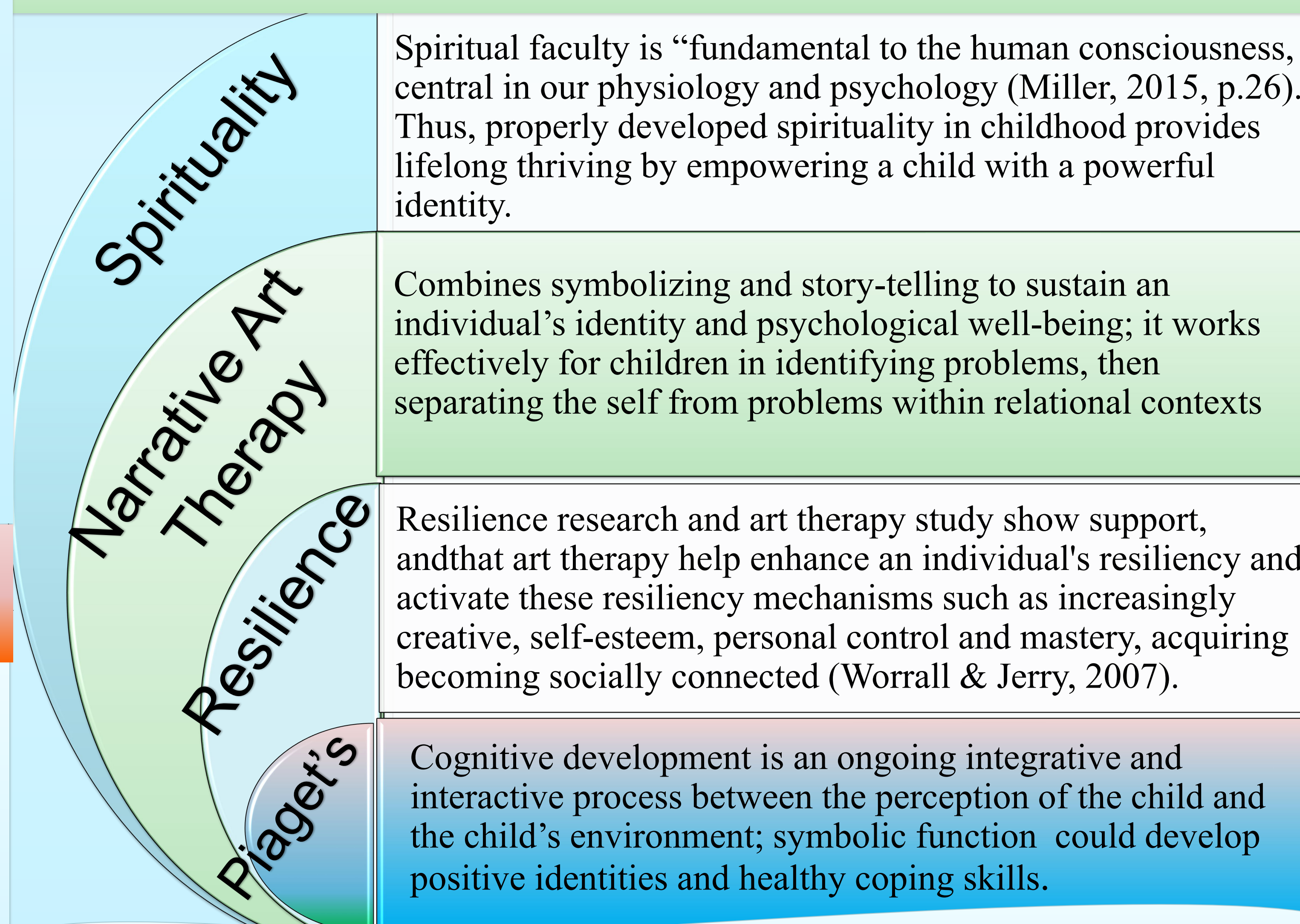
LBC's lack positive support and caring discipline for their academic development and emotional needs

LBC feel abandoned and not understood due to their lack of meaningful communication with adults; they suffer from high stress, anxiety, depression, and loneliness.



LBC are at great risk and needs therapeutic intervention for psychological well-being and positive personality development.

Therapeutic foundations of the project



Allen's Open Studio Process project theory (OSP) (2005 & 2016) frames resilience theories, developmental & narrative art therapy, and spirituality for an art therapy project to enhance the LBC's resilience and psychological well-being.

Description of

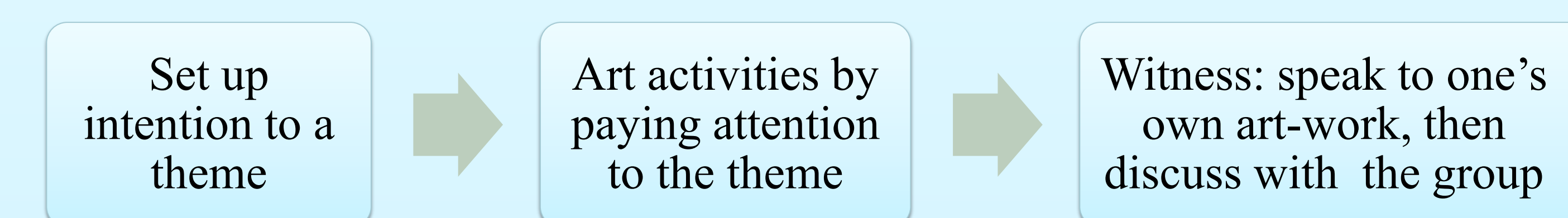
Soaring Eagles Project

Aim: to enhance LBC's resilience.

Goals: to improve communication, stress coping, and positive thinking skills, recognize negative influences, and develop positive self-concept

Structure: Closed themed, two art therapy-based groups: the Baby Eagles Group for children from Preschool to grade 2, and the Young Eagles Group for children from grade 3 to grade 8. Each group has two hours of programming per day at Summer Camp.

Typical session sequence: starting with snacks; follows Allen's OSP's framework ((Huss, 2015, p. 373; Allen, 2005).



Themes and art therapy activities: each day's session has therapeutic themes and corresponding art therapeutic interventions. The themes include relationship-building, being present, creative self-expression, positive self-concept and communication, negativities and positive self-talk, coping skills for self-esteem, goals and dreams and belief in self, hope and rebirth, powerful identity and positive self-concept, and a sense of belonging. Two groups share same themes but incorporate different art activities appropriate for the age group. The table below is the example of themes and art tasks

Sample Sessions & Themes	Baby Eagles Group's Art Activities	Young Eagles Group's Art Activities
Day 2: To be present & self-expression through creativity	Mindfulness & Body Scan Sign in and begin What is the Story	Mindfulness & Body Scan Sign in and begin Creative forms journaling
Day 9: Powerful identity & self-concept	This Little Light of Mine	Creating own Soul Sunshine
Day 10: Belonging and closing circle	Creating "container" for own art Finishing their sign-in and begin to form The Village of Hope.	

Project Rationale

In my childhood, spirituality enhanced my resilience for lifelong thriving. Professionally, working with children at risk leads me to recognize the importance of nurturing children's resilience and the healing power of art therapy. My passion is to enhance children's resilience and LBC is the population most in need.

The Edmonton Chinese Baptist Church (ECBC) in Canada has run a Summer Day Camp in China since 2014 to support LBC, and we share the same mission to support LBC: psychological and spiritual support to nurture these children's resilience. ECBC welcomed me to design this Soaring Eagles Project as a part of the 10-day Summer Day Camp at Unity (*tuan jie* 团结) Village in Sichuan Province in China. ECBC is responsible for the project financially and executively.

Reflections

There are academic and service gaps in supporting LBC, which lead to the limitations of data and studies for the literature review in LBC. Moreover, after 2011, there is little quality research about LBC due to lack of political will in China. This project found two ethical considerations: only caregivers' consents are available, not the legal guardians' as the parents are absent; China does not have a legal body for therapy services. Thus, the practice of this project needs to be creative and culturally sensitive to meet the ethics code in Canada.

Next Steps

ECBC will recruit volunteers for the Summer Camp in the church from February to April 2020. This author will provide five sessions of free training for the volunteers in May and design an evaluation form for the project in July. The author will volunteer as a facilitator in the project. The Summer Camp runs from August 21 to August 30, 2020. This project will be improved based on the evaluations of the program in August.