

## Arts-based program for children creates resiliency

**THE BASIC BUILDING** blocks of healthy human development include self-awareness, self-esteem, and resilience. But how do you help children after someone has kicked over that tower of blocks?

That's where Diana Coholic, a professor in the school of social work, and her team, step in. For the past three years, Coholic has conducted weekly art classes for children in Laurentian's multidisciplinary qualitative research lab. The intervention through art has enabled disadvantaged children to improve their self concept and resilience. Coholic's research has resulted in the development of a holistic arts-based group program (HAP) for high-need children.

As one young child involved in the program says: "The group helped me get to know myself a little bit better, and it's helped me make some decisions ... based on my behaviour and stuff. My foster parents have said they've seen enormous positive changes."

Thanks to a recent grant of \$221,340 from the Sick Kids Foundation, Coholic will further investigate the effectiveness of holistic arts-based group methods. Studying how holistic interventions occur, and how they can improve children's health, will contribute to program development, she expects. Holistic, arts-based group programs can be delivered by a variety of helping/health practitioners and can act as a bridge for further treatments.

Coholic has been hiring additional staff to help with the research. Over the next three years, she and her team expect to work with 108 children. In the meantime, Hoi Cheu, director of Laurentian's Centre for Humanities Research and Creativity, has made a HAP training DVD. There is an accompanying manual for the DVD. Both are available through the humanities research centre.

– By Laura E. Young



*"The group helped me **get to know myself a little bit better**, and it's helped me make a couple of decisions...based on my behaviour and stuff...I'm sure if you look at the first group and then the last one, **I've probably changed quite a bit**. My foster parents have said they've seen **enormous positive changes**."*

– Program participant

