2011 President’s Distinguished Service Awards

2011 Recipients for the Team Award for Innovation

WITS – Department of Psychology
(Shelley Booth, Dorian Brown, Tracy Desjardins, Emilie Gladstone, Russ Gothard, David Guilbault, Bonnie Leadbeater, Alison Lynch Richard, Kathreen Riel, Paweena Sukhawathanakul and Rachel Yeung Thompson)

An inter-professional and interdisciplinary team is nurturing positive social interactions and social responsibility to reduce bullying and peer victimization in elementary schools.

Started in 1998, in response to the death of Reena Virk, this collaboration with the Rocksolid Foundation of Victoria now includes national partnerships and collaborations for integrated support programs for children and adults in their homes, schools and communities.

Lead by UVic’s Dr. Bonnie Leadbeater, Co-Director of the BC Child and Youth Health Research Network, the WITS Program team is comprised not only of UVic students and researchers, but also of community leaders from the Rocksolid Foundation, a graphic artist, and an Aboriginal teacher and instructional technologist. Their recent innovation, a state-of-the-art interactive website, makes the evidence-based WITS programs accessible beyond urban centres to rural and remote areas of Canada.

The new WITS website (www.witsprogram.ca) extends the reach of the program, helping more children and their families and teachers to use their WITS: to walk away, ignore, talk it out and seek help to deal with peer conflicts. And the new online training ensures the continued growth of the WITS program across Canada, with over 600 people participating in the WITS Online Teacher Accreditation Training program since September 2010.

According to Dr. Elizabeth Brimacomb, “Every team member demonstrates a broad and flexible perspective of what it means to make a difference in the lives of children by providing practical strategies and resources to deal with peer victimization when it happens,” she says.