



Iris the Dragon illustration by Graham Ross

## Empirical study proves *Iris the Dragon* books improve attitudes towards mental health amongst children

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Gayle Grass, *Iris the Dragon*

(OTTAWA, Canada) — The Mental Health Commission of Canada recently released, as part of their Opening Minds Anti-Stigma Campaign, their first ever empirical study done on an illustrated children's book dealing with children's mental health challenges.

The study was conducted by [Judeline Innocent](#), PhD Candidate, [Cynthia Baker](#), PhD, [Diane Buchanan](#), PhD, [Rosemary Wilson](#), PhD, and [Heather Stuart](#), PhD Queen's University, MHCC head researcher and the Bell Canada Mental Health and Anti-Stigma Research Chair.

*Iris the Dragon* charity is pleased to announce that the results were positive in all categories tested. The MHCC will be posting *Iris the Dragon's* results on a new website to showcase successful programs in Canada.

The Stigma Evaluation Survey contained 22 self-report items – 11 items measured stereotyped attributions and 11 items measured expressions of social tolerance, which included both social distance and social responsibility items.

Under the Section for Stereotyped Attributions there were significant positive changes the greatest improvement were items dealing with violence and unpredictability. In this section results showed an improvement of 28% or more. An outstanding result

was for the items: "people with a mental illness are often more dangerous than the average person" – 45% improvement and the item "you can never know what someone with a mental illness is going to do" – 44% improvement.

Expressions of Social Distance showed generally positive, non-stigmatizing improvement. The highest change following the intervention was 37% on the item "I would not mind if someone with a mental illness lived next door to me."

Social Responsibility showed similar positive change with a 19% improvement on the item "I would volunteer my time to work in a program for people with mental illness."

In addition to the Study, the researcher, Judeline Innocent is doing her nursing PhD Thesis on the material that she collected and it will be available in April of this year. Her material covers a larger area of the effects of the *Iris* books and will help to explain and add extra information to the Study by the Commission.

*Iris the Dragon* Books have consistently applied a unique formula by incorporating a realistic main character – a child with a specific mental – health concern – into a fairy tale setting with a helpful dragon named *Iris*. The fairy-tale medium is effective as it disassociates the topic from the real world and allows the reader to understand mental health concerns – and their related effects on the individual and family – from within a safe place. (see link for [The Iris System](#))

The Empirical Study confirms that the *Iris the Dragon* materials are an effective and trusted resource for children and their caregivers.