

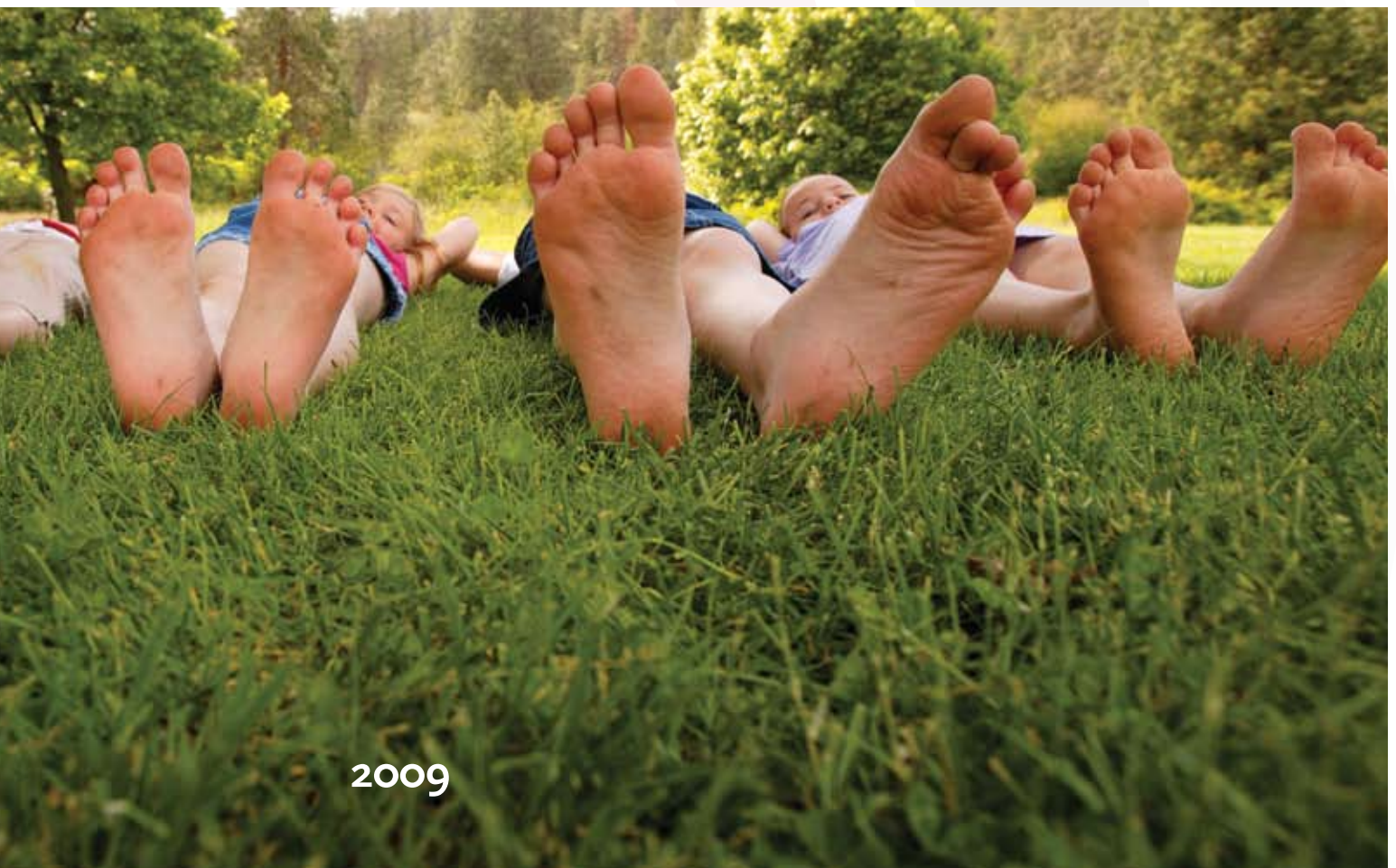


NATIONAL COLLABORATING CENTRE
FOR ABORIGINAL HEALTH

CENTRE DE COLLABORATION NATIONALE
DE LA SANTÉ AUTOCHTONE

MESSAGES FROM THE HEART

A SHOWCASE ON ABORIGINAL CHILD REARING: CARING FOR OUR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES



2009

MESSAGES FROM THE HEART: A SHOWCASE ON ABORIGINAL CHILD REARING

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Sharing knowledge. Making a difference.

NOTES



Sharing knowledge.

MESSAGES FROM THE HEART: A SHOWCASE ON ABORIGINAL CHILD REARING

A MESSAGE OF WELCOME

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you on behalf of the National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health to this showcase on Aboriginal child rearing. This gathering brings together individuals from across the country who are committed to the well-being of our children and families. It is through our children that we realize our future and the futures of our nations.

I am reminded of when I was a little girl – a time when my eyes were even with the table – I wasn't very tall and I wasn't very old. My job was to set that old, worn, wooden table in preparation for supper. And I had to know how many spoons I needed, how many forks I needed and how many knives I needed. Not everyone in my family got a knife, especially my brothers. There were times when we would have company and I got to cover our table with a white embroidered table cloth. These were special times because we were preparing for guests and for sure Mom would cook something special to eat. That old wood table was also a place of visiting and discussion, a place where great plans were laid and battles were had. What was important in all of this was that we did it together.

Today we welcome you to the table to discuss, to dream and to learn from each other as we gather to talk about the care of our children and our responsibility in caring for them. We will have the opportunity to hear the wisdom of our Elders and what they believe is important for the care of children. Young mothers and fathers will share their parenting challenges and provide us advice for addressing these challenges. We will also see and learn about programs and services currently supporting children and families in our communities.

It is our sincere hope that during our time together we also look to the future -- toward mapping next steps that will ensure the health and well being of our children, our families, and our communities. We look forward to speaking with each one of you.

Welcome to the table.

Margo Greenwood
Academic Leader
National Collaborating Centre
for Aboriginal Health

Making a difference.

WELCOME FROM THE SHOWCASE PLANNING GROUP

Greetings and welcome to *Messages from the Heart: A Showcase on Aboriginal Child Rearing*. We thank you for coming from coast to coast to coast, for the support from your communities, and for being willing to share your thoughts, perspectives, and advice for the care of our children.

In this gathering we are building on the strengths and resiliencies that we know each of you brings to your work, and that exist in our children, families and communities. We know the inequities experienced by First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples in this country, and we know that interventions and programming too often emphasize what is lacking rather than supporting and building on strengths.

The NCCAH planning group wanted to re-orient this focus to explore our strengths, assets, talents, and creativity in meeting the needs of our children. This Showcase highlights examples of existing programs that have been successful in supporting parents, families and communities. We want to know: What programs are working? How are programs being adapted to meet the needs of unique communities and cultural environments? How might these programs be adapted to other contexts? What might be used as a resource and support to First Nations, Inuit and Métis parents, families and communities across the country?

This Showcase is designed to give each of us the opportunity to learn and share more information by visiting the displays, and by participating in the *Around The World Café* which will allow for more interactive discussion about these programs. We are pleased that there will be a panel of Elders who will discuss the importance of traditional culture and values, as well as a panel of young mothers and fathers who will share the contemporary challenges that they face. We thank them for sharing from the heart.

We recognize that the list of programs across Canada is an exhaustive one, but we are confident that we have been able to provide a representative sample of the diversity and type of resources that are available. For this, we are grateful for the advice, guidance and perspectives of our planning committee, whose names you will see below. We are also grateful for the financial support from First Nations Inuit Health Branch, Health Canada; the Centre of Excellence for Children and Adolescents with Special Needs (Lakehead University) and Aboriginal ActNow BC, that helped make this gathering possible.

We look forward to learning from each other as we explore how best to support our parents and families in the care of our children.

Sharing knowledge.

STEERING COMMITTEE ~ SHOWCASE ON ABORIGINAL CHILD REARING

Al Lawrence

*Le'Lum'uy'l Centre, Duncan,
B.C., member: BC Early
Childhood Development
Table; Aboriginal Childcare
Society*

Shirley Tagalik

*Educational Consultant,
Inukpaujaq Consulting*

Dr. Tom Dignan

*Thunder Bay Zone, Health
Canada*

Karen Baker-Anderson

*Executive Director for Child &
Youth Inuit Center
in Ottawa*

Heidi Langille

*Bridging the Gap
School Aged Program
Coordinator for
the Child & Youth Inuit
Center in Ottawa*

Lynda Brown

*Parent and Community
Development Coordinator
for the Child & Youth Inuit
Center in Ottawa*

Colleen Suave

*Aboriginal Healthy Babies
Program Coordinator for the
Odawa Native Friendship
Centre in Ottawa*

Margo Greenwood

*Academic Lead, National
Collaborating Centre
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Ginette Thomas

*Managing Director, National
Collaborating Centre for
Aboriginal Health*

Arlene Moscovitch

Film Director

Cathy Winters

*Senior Policy Coordinator,
Children and Youth,
Health Canada*

Dan George

*Facilitator, President,
Four Directions
Management Services*

Kelly Terbasket

Blind Creek Consulting

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FINANCIAL SUPPORT

The NCCAH would like to acknowledge financial contributions
from the following organizations to this Showcase:

First Nations and
Inuit Health Branch,
Health Canada

Centre of Excellence
for Children and Adolescents
with Special Needs,
Lakehead University

Aboriginal ActNow BC

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MESSAGES FROM THE HEART

A SHOWCASE ON ABORIGINAL CHILD REARING: CARING FOR OUR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

March 13–14, 2009
Pearson Room
Lord Elgin Hotel
Ottawa, Ontario

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OBJECTIVES

The overall goal is to showcase programs, services, initiatives and practices designed to support Aboriginal parents and guardians and families in their care of children. We expect to:

- provide opportunities for parents, practitioners, policy makers and other stakeholders to exchange ideas and knowledge of successful parenting and support programs, services, initiatives and practices;
- identify current successful parenting and support programs, services, initiatives and practices;
- identify elements of the programs, services and initiatives that are fundamental to their success and relevance for Aboriginal peoples; and
- articulate indicators of successful programs.



Sharing knowledge.

AGENDA

ARRIVAL DAY – MARCH 12, 2009

- 6:00 PM Registration
Exhibit Set-up – Laurier Room

DAY ONE – MARCH 13, 2009

- 7:30 AM Registration
Hot breakfast will be available
- 8:30 AM Welcome to the Territory
Opening Prayer
Welcome to the Showcase
Overview of the Showcase
- Senator Landon Pearson**
Senator Pearson, who retired from the Senate in 2005, has spent a lifetime working with children's groups abroad as well as in Canada, including as a former advisor to the Minister of Foreign Affairs on Children's Rights, and as the Prime Minister's personal representative to the 2002 special session on children of the United Nations General Assembly.
- Senator Wilbert Keon**
A cardiac surgeon by profession, Dr. Wilbert Keon was appointed to the Senate in 1990. He is currently the Deputy Chair of the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology where he is focusing on the challenge of achieving health equity in Canada.

Comments and dialogue

- 9:45 AM Break
- 10:00 AM Elders Fireside Chat
Comments and dialogue
- 11:15 AM Kitchen Table Chat with young mothers and fathers
Comments and dialogue
- 12:30 PM LUNCH
- 1:00 PM Display walkabout
- 1:30 PM Around the World Café
A showcase of programs and services, initiatives and practices
- 2:30 PM BREAK
- 2:45 PM Small Group Discussions
- 3:30 PM Plenary Session: Reporting Back
Free evening

Day Two – March 14, 2009

- 7:30 AM Hot breakfast will be available
- 8:30 AM Opening Prayer and Drum Song
- 8:40 AM Summation of Previous Day and Introduction to Day's Activities:
- 8:50 AM Introduction to the Day's Activities
- 9:05 AM Panel Presentation on Special Needs Supports: Centre of Excellence for Children and Adolescents with Special Needs

Comments and dialogue

- 10:15 AM Plenary Discussion
- 11:00 AM Keynote Address/Summary
- 11:15 AM Closing Remarks
Closing Prayer

MESSAGES FROM THE HEART

A SHOWCASE ON ABORIGINAL CHILD REARING

THE FOLLOWING PARENTING PROGRAMS are featured in the 2009 NCCAH Showcase on Aboriginal Child Rearing and provide an opportunity to learn about a range of early childhood development models in First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities. These models include grassroots and home-based non-profit programs, government programs, and private models; many incorporate traditional cultural approaches to their support of parents and children. Presenters work in a variety of communities across the country, and will explain how these programs are being applied to meet their needs. The NCCAH thanks all presenters and their communities for their participation in and support of this event.

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Nobody's Perfect Parenting Program – Moosonee, Ontario

The Porcupine Health Unit in Moosonee, Ontario, recently adopted the Nobody's Perfect parenting program to support many of the young parents in this northern community of about 2,500 people. This is the first time parenting classes have been offered in Moosonee. A largely Cree community accessible only by train or plane, Moosonee serves a somewhat transient northern population.

The Nobody's Perfect Parenting Program, which is geared to children ages 0–5, was introduced in 2008 in Moosonee with the help of Public Health Nurse Crystal Gauvin to support the development of positive parent-child relationships. Responsibility for the coordination and monitoring of provincial and territorial activities for the Nobody's Perfect Program is divided between Health Canada (First Nations and Inuit Health Branch) for Aboriginal peoples living on reserves, and the Public Health Agency of Canada (Centre for Health Promotion), for Aboriginal peoples living off-reserves.

Facilitated by trained parenting educators, Nobody's Perfect gives parents a safe place to meet others with young children and share experiences,

interests and concerns. It incorporates five colourful, easy-to-read booklets (Mind, Body, Safety, Behaviour, and Parents) and a sixth supplement on Feelings. These promote the non-physical discipline of children; and alternative ways for parents to deal with their children's emotional responses as well as their own.

In Moosonee, the Nobody's Perfect program is delivered in concert with the Moosonee Native Friendship Centre, which supports traditional parenting approaches, and the Moosonee Family Resource Centre, which provides information on family violence, as well as with Aboriginal Health Start programs, for a more comprehensive approach to parent support. Across Canada, over 5,000 community workers, parents and public health professionals have been trained as Nobody's Perfect facilitators. Please visit http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/dca-dea/family_famille/nobody-eng.php for more information.

*Presenters: Crystal Gauvin, RN, B.Sc.N., B.A., Public Health Nurse, Porcupine Health Unit.
Email: crystal.g@porcupinehu.on.ca*

Alice Sackaney. Email: asackaney.mnfc@ontera.net

Sharing knowledge.

HIPPY (Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters) – Heiltsuk Nation

The Heiltsuk Nation reserve in Bella Bella (450 miles north of Vancouver) in British Columbia is in its fourth year of offering the HIPPY (Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters) program and currently has 13 children enrolled. The community is home to 1,500 people. Although Bella Bella has limited accessibility, it provides a wide array of self-sustaining services, including a health centre, community school and daycare centre. Due to the limited number of childcare spaces, however, the HIPPY program was a way for families to provide educational enrichment for their preschool children at home.

As coordinator Jessica Humchitt notes, the program's success has been in providing support for children who would otherwise not receive educational programs until they enter at age 4.

HIPPY is a non-profit organization whose national office in Canada is located at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver, B.C. Supported by easy-to-use activity packets, home visits, and group meetings, HIPPY parents learn how to prepare their children for success in school. Parents receive a progressive series of 60 weekly packets of daily activities aimed at children ages 4 and 5. Every other week parents attend group

meetings with other parents and HIPPY staff. Parents in the HIPPY program are trained by paraprofessionals – themselves parents from the community – and supported by other participants and the local program coordinator. As peers of other HIPPY parents, they have a chance to build trust and communicate with hard-to-reach families; as members of the same local community and parents of small children, they can often empathize with the challenges facing HIPPY families and make the program work within their own communities.

As program coordinator Jessica Humchitt notes, the program in Bella Bella is flexible and accommodating of the needs of families. Material will often be supplied to working parents in their workplace, and alternative support is provided in cases where families may be away for a period of time. One of the key challenges include staff retention for home visits, and geographic isolation making access to supporting materials costly. For more information, please visit: <http://www.hippy.org.il/html/aboutus.html>.

Presenter: Jessica Humchitt, Heiltsuk Head Start Coordinator, Bella Bella. Email: jessh@heiltsukhealth.com



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Emotional Bonding Pilot Project – Eabametoong First Nation, Fort Hope

The Eabametoong First Nation, at Fort Hope in northern Ontario, is one of ten member communities of Matawa First Nations, five of which are accessible only by air, water and winter roads.

Flora Waswa, acting manager of the Healthy Babies program, notes demand for child rearing support in Fort Hope is high. There are 1200 people in the community, most (60 per cent) are children. There are 190 clients in the Health Babies Healthy Children program, not including children.

Through a pilot project implemented recently with the support of the Eabametoong First Nation chief and council, four staff members received one week of training from Dr. Jean Wittenberg, head of the Infant Psychiatry Program at the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto, in a program supporting emotional bonding between infants and parents. Attachment parenting is based on the idea that babies learn to trust and thrive when their needs are consistently met by a caregiver early in life.

Over a 12-week period, workers supported parents in home activities that helped them learn to “read” their babies and better understand what

they were feeling and communicating. The use of “telehealth” allowed for regular long distance meetings with Dr. Wittenberg, while videotaped sessions conducted with the informed consent of parents provided opportunities for feedback on parent/child interactions.

“It was a really good program,” Waswa noted. Program leaders ran the parent groups successfully and “parents felt much better in knowing how to play with their babies.” Called the ‘Supporting Security’ program, it was designed by the Infant Psychiatry Program as a preventive intervention for parents of infants and young children. Its success led to plans for a ‘Supporting Security’ group for fathers, and for teaching elders about the program. Other staff from half a dozen northern communities were also trained.

Presenter: Bertha Quisses, Fort Hope.

Contact: Flora Waswa: florajwaswa@live.ca



Sharing knowledge.

Aboriginal Infant Development Program – Nuuchahnulth Tribal Council

The Nuuchahnulth Tribal Council provides programs and services to approx. 8,000 registered members who live on the West Coast of Vancouver Island. Three Infant Development Workers deliver the Aboriginal Infant Development Program through home visits to 14 Nations, many of which are only accessible by boat, logging road or plane.

In BC, there are more than 40 Aboriginal-specific infant and early child development programs. The provincial Aboriginal Infant Development Program (see <http://www.aidp.bc.ca/>) differs from mainstream versions in several ways, particularly by supporting parents whose children are showing both typical and atypical development. Where children are at risk for developmental delays, for instance in speech and language, or in physical development, Infant Development Workers in Nuuchahnulth will make referrals and support families in the often long and costly journeys to receive appropriate support.

Senior program worker Jackie Watts describes the AIDP in Nuuchahnulth as a self-government initiative incorporating cultural understandings of children as gifts from the creator. The program is family-centred and strengths-based. Infant Development Workers, often carrying caseloads of 25–35 families each, focus on home visits of families and caregivers with children from infancy

to 6 years. Caregivers receive information on child development within a cultural context; do “ages and stages” questionnaires on their children; and are helped to plan learning activities in the home and community to encourage the growth and development of their child.

The goals of the Nuuchahnulth Infant Development Program are to work with the parents and caregivers and other family members with respect, and in a co-operative and sharing manner. By supporting early identification of needs and early intervention for children and families at risk, Aboriginal Infant Development Programs are an integral piece of the early childhood development puzzle.

The need for Infant Development services is growing as more and more Aboriginal communities in British Columbia develop comprehensive early childhood services. Consultants’ needs are also growing: To best serve Aboriginal families, consultants require ongoing, culturally relevant expert support and training.

Presenters: Jackie Watts, Sr. Infant & Early Development Program Worker & Family Ties Program Supervisor & Aboriginal Infant Development Programs of BC Regional Advisor for Vancouver Island.

Email: Jackie.watts@nuuchahnulth.org

Jackie Corfield, Northern Region Office.

Email: jackie.corfield@nuuchahnulth.org

Positive Indian Parenting – Skookum Jim Friendship Centre, Whitehorse, Yukon

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Offered through the Skookum Jim Friendship Centre in Whitehorse, the Yukon Traditional Parenting Program is a combination of two pilot projects, Traditional Motherhood and Traditional Fatherhood. Since 1995 the program has been focused on Yukon communities that are interested in delivering and implementing the Traditional Parenting Program. As a tool in this process, staff developed a Traditional Parenting Facilitator's Manual to assist in delivering the design of the program. The information in the manual was collected and approved by the Yukon First Nation Elders. These same Elders have supported and worked in the program from the pilot project stage.

The Traditional Parenting Program holds three-day workshops throughout the year. In these workshops, participants receive information on relationships & conception, pregnancy & birth, and relationships between mother & child, and father and children. During the Elders' teachings, a traditional activity is also practiced like sewing, setting fishnets, setting snares, berrypicking and tanning hides.

Positive Indian Parenting (PIP) was created by the U.S.-based non-profit organization, NICWA, the National Indian Child Welfare Association (see <http://www.aidp.bc.ca/>). The Positive Indian

Parenting curriculum is designed to provide a brief, practical culturally-specific training program for parents. Parents explore the values and attitudes expressed in traditional child-rearing practices and apply those values to modern skills in parenting. Universal values, attitudes, or customs, expressed differently in local communities, include the oral tradition, story telling, the spiritual nature of child rearing and the role of extended family. These provide a basis to support parents in finding strength in cultural traditions.

A second goal of the Positive Indian Parenting curriculum is to help parents develop positive attitudes, values, and skills that have their roots in their cultural heritage. This curriculum is intended for parent trainers. It provides information on how to train, as well as on content and structure for parent sessions. The curriculum is designed so that those with little previous experience are able to implement the program.

Skookum Jim Friendship Centre, Whitehorse, Yukon, Traditional Parenting Programs.

*Presenters: Program Coordinator: Joe Migwans.
Email: jfctpp@northwestel.net*

*Assistant Coordinator: Joy O'Brien.
Email: tpp@northwestel.net*



Sharing knowledge.

The Virtues Project™ – Sto:lo Nation

Among its many parent support programs, the Sto:lo Nation (known as ‘People of the River,’ living along the Fraser River in B.C.) has been delivering a project that focuses on the moral and spiritual development of children. Called the ‘The Virtues Project™’ (visit <http://www.virtuesproject.com/entry2.html>), the program is geared to people of all cultures. It provides strategies to encourage the practice of virtues in everyday life that help develop character.

The Sto:lo run a parents’ program weekly from October–May. Coordinator Mary Stewart notes that the Sto:lo have modified this program to strengthen First Nation cultural relevancy, and that the majority of the staff are certified facilitators. Examples of how the program has been adapted include:

- One staff member has used the clip art from the ‘Native Reflections CD’ as the background on the virtue affirmation cards.
- The facilitator incorporates First Nation art in learning activities; eg., working with cedar, pine needles, dream catchers, etc.
- The facilitator incorporates a Sto:lo/First Nation practice or teaching within the virtue word activity.
- Parents are asked how would they use a virtue word with their family, extended family and themselves.
- At the end of the program year, families that participated in the ‘Virtues Parenting’ receive a certificate of participation.
- The Sto:lo are in the process of having the 51 virtue words translated to the Halq’emeylem language.

A strong focus in the community’s parenting and child development programs has been on language, which, has been implemented within the Sto:lo Head Start program. Teachers incorporate language and culture within each lesson or activity designed to promote and enhance child-and-parent interaction.

Mary Stewart has developed a series of audio cassettes; these include tapes with two months of words and phrases, as well as songs taught in the preschool and family program. These are used in art activities and circle time. In addition, each family receives these tapes to encourage Halq’emeylem language reinforcement within the home. Programs also incorporate traditional ceremonies, for instance, a ‘Naming Ceremony’ in which child and parent has their name translated in the Halq’emeylem language.

Some of the programs available in The Virtues Project™ include parenting life-skills courses, character education initiatives, positive cultural change, and community building.

Presenters: Sto:lo Head Start Programs (Central & West)
Coordinator Mary Stewart, M.Ed & Bibliana Norris.
Contact: 604-824-6505 Sto:lo Nation (A:lmelhawtxw).

Aboriginal Head Start – Ottawa Inuit Centre

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Aboriginal Head Start (AHS) in Urban and Northern Communities is a Health Canada-funded early childhood development program for First Nations, Inuit and Métis children and their families. The primary goal of the initiative is to demonstrate that locally controlled and designed early intervention strategies can provide Aboriginal children with a positive sense of themselves, a desire for learning, and opportunities to develop fully as successful young people. There are 126 AHS sites in urban and northern communities across Canada. (See: http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/dca-dea/programmes/ahs_main-eng.php)

For this event, the Ottawa Inuit Centre is showcasing Aboriginal Head Start as an Inuit-specific program supporting parents and children in the urban setting of Ottawa. As executive director Karen Baker-Anderson notes, the unique challenges include meeting the needs of Inuit from across the north who come from different regions and are often new to an urban setting. The Sivummut Head Start Program, Tumiralaat Child Care Centre, the Family Literacy Program, and youth programs like Bridging the Gap and Youth Central aim to provide each child and family with a supportive learning environment that promotes Inuit culture and language.

Activities include parenting circles to discuss topics of interest, hear guest speakers, and share a meal; while a Cultural Coordinator supports the

integration of cultural teachings in all the centre's programs. A loan systems supports parent access to cultural materials. Parents are also helped in advocating for their child at school, for instance, during parent/teacher interviews, and classroom presentations on Inuit language and culture are also offered.

More generally, AHS projects provide programming in six core areas: education and school readiness; Aboriginal culture and language; parental involvement, health promotion; nutrition; and social support. Projects are locally designed and controlled, and administered by non-profit Aboriginal organizations. AHS directly involves parents and the community in the management and operation of projects. Parents are supported in their role as the child's first and most influential teacher, and the wisdom of elders is valued.

Presenters: Heidi Langille, co-ordinator, Bridging the Gap School Age Program.

Email: hlangille@ottawainuitchildrens.com

Linda Brown, co-ordinator, Sivummut Head Start.

Email: lbrown@ottawainuitchildrens.com

Note: Karen Baker-Anderson and Heidi Langille were recognized recently by the Children's Aid Society for their dedication to improving the lives of children and youth in the Ottawa community. Both are recipients of the Individual Service Providers Award.

Sharing knowledge.

Attachment Focused Play Therapy – Okanagan Métis Children and Family Services

‘Come Play With Me’ is an attachment focused play therapy program practiced through the Okanagan Métis Children and Family Services in Kelowna, B.C. The centre’s regional executive director, Kelly Kubik, notes there are about 8,000 Métis in the Okanagan Valley, with nearly 3,000 in Kelowna. He said just over half of the children in care in B.C. are Aboriginal-identified; 35 to 40 per cent of these children are Métis identified.

Parents and youth become involved in programs at the Okanagan Métis Children and Family Services centre through referral and word of mouth. The unique culture of Métis people is a major component of programs, and helps play a role supporting those who were negatively affected by the residential school system. “There is a real need for parents to learn to become parents,” Kubik said.

Sandra Martinson, who holds an MA in counseling, uses programs that support children’s sense of belonging and security; and that

provide early intervention with children showing developmental concerns. The services are funded by the provincial Interior Health Authority, and are available to all Aboriginal (Métis, First Nations, Inuit) children and youth.

Based on ‘Theraplay’ principles, the Attachment Focused Play Therapy program uses a “hands-on” approach and builds on interactive play that convinces a child they are lovable and that the world is a good place to be. Much of the program has been locally developed and enhanced with Métis cultural practices to support parent connections with their children, and positive interactions that develop a child’s sense of belonging and security.

Presenters: Kelly Kubik, regional executive director, Okanagan Métis Children and Family Services, 250-868-0351.

Sandra Martinson, MA, RCC, Attachment Focused Play therapist. 250-868-0351 (Ext. 110).



Ages and Stages Assessment tools – Iglulik, Nunavut

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Iglulik is located north of Hudson Bay in the Nunavut and refers to the Iglulingmiut, Aivilingmiut, and Tununirmiut, Inuit-Inupiaq-speaking peoples. Jeela Alurut, co-ordinator of the Aboriginal Head Start program in Iglulik, notes that while the community is isolated, the population is growing fairly fast, and now includes more than 2,000 people. She noted there is an increasing number of younger children, many of whom have been adopted by much older parents who are helping younger relatives.

A key program supporting parents is home visiting by workers who help parents understand the development stages of their children, from birth to 5 years. The 'Ages & Stages Questionnaire' allows parents to check their child's progress and learn more about what to expect their child to be able to do at each stage of development. Early diagnosis and treatment of developmental delays can help give a child the best opportunity to reach his or her full potential. The questionnaire helps provide information on how a child is developing in seven behavioral areas including

self-regulation, communication, autonomy and interaction with others. The assessment can be used for two purposes: to identify infants and children that may require further social/emotional behavioral assessment; and as a monitoring tool to gauge the development of children who are at-risk for social/emotional developmental problems. Questionnaires are returned to professionals who provide feedback.

Workers are typically bilingual, but materials they use still need to be made more fully culturally appropriate, noted Alurut, who is now a high school vice principal working with young parents in the school system. She said one of the key challenges for parents is nutrition, given the high price of food and the lack of access to healthy options. As well, young parents need to be encouraged in understanding their self-worth and well-being. The Ages and Stages Assessment program is a component of the Aboriginal Head Start program.

Presenter: Jeela Alurut, jalurut@quikiqtani.edu.nu.ca



Sharing knowledge.

Roots of Empathy – Waycobah First Nation, Nova Scotia

Programs like Roots of Empathy may be popular in countries from Canada to Japan, but Norma Gould, of the Waycobah First Nation in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, found a way not only to introduce it into her own community, but also to incorporate her Mi'kmaq culture into the program framework. Gould met with the program founder, Canadian Mary Gordon, in 2002–03, and subsequently worked to introduce the Roots of Empathy program into local schools.

This evidenced-based classroom program raises social and emotional competence and increases empathy among schoolchildren, resulting in reduced levels of aggression. As part of the program, a local parent and infant visit a classroom regularly and students are coached to observe the baby's development and to label the baby's feelings. In this experiential learning, the baby is the "teacher" while instructors help children identify and reflect on their own feelings and the feelings of others. Empathy is a key ingredient to responsive parenting. Information on infant safety and development helps school children to be more aware of issues of infant vulnerability such as Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS), Shaken Baby Syndrome, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder

(FASD) and second-hand smoke. Observations of a loving parent-child relationship give children a model of responsible parenting.

The program reaches elementary school-children from Kindergarten to Grade 8. Visit www.rootsofempathy.org to find out more.

Gould also runs a First Nations Parenting program, Wjit Knijanaq ('For Our Children') that was piloted through the Eskasoni First Nation through the Tui'kn Initiative with Health Canada in support of more holistic health care. The initiative is a partnership in Cape Breton among the surrounding five First Nation communities. The parenting program consists of core components that are tailored to fit each group based on its educational needs. Sharing is the major focus of the program, rather than dependence on the expertise in parenting of the instructor. "We always say that we learn from each other, and that's the best way . . . to help each other," Gould says.

*Presenter: Norma Gould, coordinator of the Brighter Futures and Family Resource Centre at Waycobah First Nation, Whycocomagh, Nova Scotia.
Email: NormaGould@waycobah.ca*

Collaboration at Step By Step Child and Family Centre – Kahnawake Mohawk Territory

At the Step by Step Child and Family Centre in Kahnawake, the approach to parenting support is not so much an emphasis on programs as on a philosophy and set of principles which guide work with families. A focus on parent coaching and collaboration, for instance, is a unique, strengths-based approach that helps build capacity.

Step by Step Child and Family Centre is an inclusive early intervention program open to children ages 12 months to 6 years. Family-centered assessment and intervention practices support family functioning by looking at both needs and strengths. The centre's staff takes the time to develop an authentic picture of the child and family and to build on a foundation of their talents, interests and strengths rather than focusing on pathology and deficit.

The expertise of families concerning their own children is respected, and families are engaged in the centre's curriculum as equals and with full trust.

Step by Step centre creates a welcoming space and opportunities for family participation, collaboration and shared learning. As well as using tools such as the Ages and States

Questionnaire, Asset Portfolio and other programs, the centre provides a morning coffee drop-in, workshops, discussion groups for parents, and one-on-one coaching. Services and supports are culturally guided and evidence-based, and range from speech and language support to health and nutrition. Interventions are implemented in the context of children's everyday activity to enhance success, bridging the therapeutic, home and school environments. Specialist practitioners coach personnel, family members and caregivers in techniques for teaching, parenting, understanding and managing difficult behaviour.

SBS is a learning organization that makes ongoing shifts in its practices even as it seeks to develop new practices specifically for indigenous people. In collaboration with the Université of Québec in Trois Rivières and other partners, for instance, the centre is researching a new process of screening and assessment that will prevent the mislabeling of cultural difference as individual or group pathology.

*Presenter: Nancy Rother, M. Ed., coordinator of Inclusive Programming at Step by Step Child and Family Center.
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Sharing knowledge.

Triple P Parenting and Nurturing Programs – Elsipogtog First Nation, New Brunswick

The Elsipogtog First Nation in New Brunswick is home to about 2,800 people and is the second largest Migmag community in Atlantic Canada. Elsipogtog First Nation provides numerous services, including schools, a health centre, wellness centre and a Heads Start and Day Care program, as well as crisis intervention programs.

Peggy Clement, director of Aboriginal Head Start, noted that high unemployment, young parents, single parents, and repercussions of the residential school system have led to a need to support parents with positive approaches in raising their children.

She learned in 2000 about the Triple P Parenting Program, which was developed in Australia at the University of Queensland, and uses research evidence to support strategies that can help prevent severe behavioural, emotional and developmental problems in children. The program focuses on enhancing the knowledge, skills and confidence of parents, and is offered at varying levels to suit the specific needs of different organizations and clients. See: <http://www9.triplep.net/> for more information.

Clement said the program was piloted on the reserve, and expanded to allow for more time to discuss issues that were raised. “We found we were rushing through it,” she said. She found issues such as discipline and behavior would lead to discussion about parents’ own experiences

of punishment and encouragement to think about what approaches they were using. “Parents were still not parenting positively and we found we could help them with other approaches.” Although the Triple P Parenting program is popular internationally, Clement said it can easily be made culturally relevant, starting with using such basics as using the more traditional circle format to conduct discussions. The program is offered from September through April.

Clement said the Elsipogtog First Nation has also used the Nurturing Parenting Program, which is based on the philosophy of nurturing parenting to help prevent child abuse & neglect. Its long term goals are to prevent recidivism in families receiving social services, lower the rate of multiparent teenage pregnancies, reduce the rate of juvenile delinquency and alcohol abuse, and stop the intergenerational cycle of child abuse by teaching positive parenting behaviors. The programs have been adapted for special populations, including teen parents, foster and adoptive families, families in alcohol treatment and recovery, parents with special learning needs, and families with children with health challenges. See http://www.nurturingparenting.com/what_are_np.php.

Presenter: Peggy Clement, Director of Aboriginal Head Start: Elsipogtog First Nation, contact: 506-523-8477

Growing Great Kids, Inc. – Westbank First Nation, B.C.

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Westbank First Nation is predominantly an urban reserve located on the west side of Okanagan Lake in B.C., with a population of 1500 Aboriginal and 8,000 non-Aboriginal people. A key challenge of urbanization is a dwindling sense of community, notes community services director Margaret Eli. While traditional language is incorporated in the band school and to a degree in the Head Start program, the number of fluent speakers is very few. Another challenge is the strain on staff and resources to support programs.

However, the Growing Great Kids™ (Great Kids, Inc.) program, developed in the United States, has recently been adopted in the community, and although designed for one-on-one exchanges, it is instead being used to support parenting groups. Early observations indicate the program to date is somewhat successful; it is now being offered on a family by family basis.

Eli said there was a need in the community for a “curriculum-based, hands-on program” that could address learning styles. While Eli has incorporated “bits and pieces” of available programs into her work over the years, she was looking for something that provided a consistent and comprehensive package that was longer than a 6 to 8 week program.

The internationally popular Growing Great Kids, Inc. program is geared for infants to age 5 or six, and supports attachments between parent

and child. For Aboriginal parents, can help break the negative impact of residential schooling on subsequent generations. Each module provides interactive questions to actively engage parents with materials so that they do not feel they are being “advised” or talked down to. The program promotes an understanding of child development, helps build strong family foundations, is culturally competent, and provides a two-year staff development program, the cost of which Eli said could be prohibitive to some communities, but which also ensures increased capacity. She noted that the Westbank First Nation obtained a provincial grant to support staff training.

One of the highlights of the program for Eli is the use of hands-on materials. “You make your toys. You don’t need Mr. Einstein stuff – you can use boxes and cans and you can really teach a child using homemade materials.” The Growing Great Kids™ (Great Kids, Inc.) program can be adapted to incorporate cultural components, and recognizes challenges faced by parents in lower socio-economic conditions. See <http://www.greatkidsinc.org/growinggreatkids.htm> for more information.

Presenter: Margaret Eli, Community Services, Westbank First Nation. Email: meli@wfn.ca

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