## HISTORY

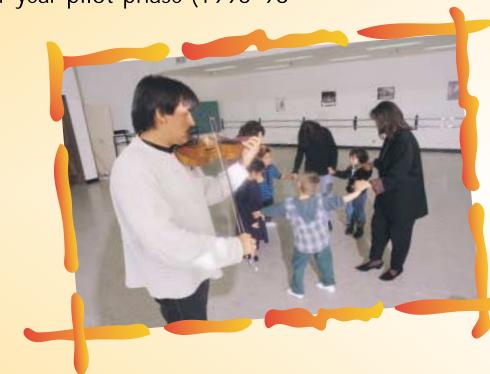
boriginal Head Start (AHS), funded by Health Canada, is an early intervention program for First Nations, Inuit and Métis children and their families living in urban centres and large northern communities. The primary goal of the initiative is to demonstrate that locally controlled and designed early intervention strategies can provide Aboriginal children with a positive sense of themselves, a desire for life long learning, and opportunities to develop fully as successful young people.

Aboriginal Head Start projects typically provide half-day preschool experiences that prepare young Aboriginal children for their school years by meeting

their spiritual, emotional, intellectual and physical needs. 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 embraced. Typical AHS projects operate four days per week with 30 - 40 children aged 3-5 years old participating in morning and afternoon sessions in a structured preschool environment.

AHS was announced in 1995 as a four year pilot phase (1995-96)

to 1998-99), and since 1999 has had ongoing funding of \$22.5 million annually. Since its inception, the program has grown to include 112 AHS projects, operating in eight provinces and all three northern territories. Approximately 3, 500 children are enrolled in AHS sites each year. Generating enthusiasm and passionate commitment among community participants, AHS has provided Aboriginal communities and organizations with opportunities to collaborate, has focussed community energies on working together for the lives of children, and has improved the lives of thousands of Aboriginal children and families. In 1998, a major expansion of AHS to First Nations communities on reserve began.



AHS was designed to be flexible and diverse enough to meet the wide range of needs of First Nations, Inuit and Métis cultures living in markedly different circumstances and geographical locations. Each project reflects the uniqueness of the local culture and language, while focussing on the same six program components. They are: culture and language, parental involvement, education,

health promotion, nutrition and social support. In 1999, there were 30 Aboriginal languages being used in the presence of AHS Vancouver to Taloyoak, Nunavut and Thicket Portage, Manitoba. Operating at nearly full capacity, the AHS program reached about 12% of the Aboriginal 3 and 4 year olds living off reserve in 1999.

A tremendous amount of time is donated by volunteers in the community, and partnerships with existing services and agencies are vital to the success of projects. Health Canada regional offices work directly with projects to ensure program quality. The national office in Ottawa provides national coordination, leadership, training, evaluation and resources to the program. A National

Aboriginal Head Start Committee provides guidance and expertise to Health Canada, and ensures project-level input on planning, implementation and evaluation issues.

# HEALTH CANADA STAFF

### Atlantic Region

Program Consultant 1505 Barrington Street, Suite 1802

Halifax, NS, B3J 3Y6 Tel: (902) 426-7148 Fax: (902) 426-9689

#### Quebec Region

Program Consultant 212 - 200 Boul. René-Lévesque Ouest

Montreal PQ H2Z 1X4 Tel: (514) 283-3065 Fax: (514) 283-3309

#### Ontario/Nunavut Region

Program Consultant 55 St Clair Avenue East 4th Floor Toronto ON M4T 1M2

Tel: (416) 973-5778 Fax: (416) 973-0009

#### Manitoba/Saskatchewan Region Manitoba

Program Consultant 391 York Avenue Suite 420 Winnipeg MB R3C 0P4 Tel: (204) 984-2573 Fax: (204) 983-8674

#### Saskatchewan

Program Consultant 1920 Broad Street 18th Floor Regina SK S4P 3V2

Tel: (306) 780-3474 Fax: (306) 780-6207

### Alberta/Northwest

Territories Region Alberta

Program Consultant

#620, 220 - 4th Avenue S.E. Box 1236

Calgary AB T2G 4X3 Tel: (403) 292-6695 Fax: (403) 292-6696

#### NWT

Program Consultant 815, 9700 Jasper Avenue Edmonton AB T5J 4C3 Tel: (780) 495-5122 Fax: (780) 495-5537

British Columbia/Yukon Region British Columbia

Program Consultant 440, 757 West Hastings Street Vancouver BC V6C 1A1 Tel: (604) 666-9917

#### Yukon

Program Consultant 100 - 300 Main Street Whitehorse YK Y1A 2B5 Tel: (867) 393-6780

Fax: (867) 393-6774

#### National Office

Aboriginal Childhood and Youth Section Childhood and Youth Division 9th Floor, Jeanne Mance Building Tunney's Pasture -Postal Locator: 1909C2 Ottawa ON K1A 1B4

Fax: (613) 941-5492 Email: ahs-papa@www.hc-sc.ca

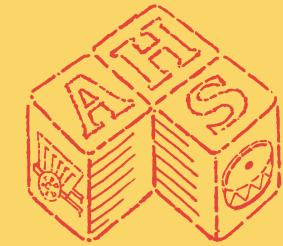
National Program Manager Tel: (613) 957-2917 Senior Program Officer Tel: (613) 954-8615 Program Officer Tel: (613) 957-6488 Program Officer Tel: (613) 946-2056 **Evaluation Analyst** Tel: (613) 952-9769 Assistant

Tel: (613) 952-5845

Health Santé
Canada Canada

Fax: (604) 666-8986





participants across the country in locations as diverse as Toronto and

Visit our website to view all recent AHS publications at:

http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hppb/childhood-youth/acy/ahs.htm