



Aboriginal Head Start (AHS) is a national early intervention program funded by Health Canada for First Nations, Inuit and Métis preschool children and their families. Approximately 3,500 children participate annually, in 98 preschool centres located across Canada.

**GETTING TOGETHER**



*East meets West: Halifax's community exchange group in Rocky Mountain House, Alberta in November 1998. From left- Linda Youngson, Andrew Arcand (behind the camera), and Kim and Tracy Campbell.*

**W**hat do six diverse Aboriginal Head Start sites from across Canada have in common? A lot, say the participants of AHS's first Indigenous Community Exchange Program.

The first phase of the Community Exchange Program partnered six sites from different regions and was completed in December 1998. The sites were selected by a subcommittee of the National Aboriginal Head Start Committee, and funds were made available for up to three participants from their respective exchange communities.

Sites in Buffalo Narrows, Saskatchewan partnered with Lac La Biche, Alberta; Rocky Mountain House in Alberta exchanged with Halifax, Nova Scotia; and Cumberland House, Saskatchewan with Kugluktuk, in the Northwest Territories.

The site exchanges lasted an average of five days in each other's community. During that time, exchange groups shared ideas, information and resources on many issues like promoting community involvement, developing programs for special needs children, and administrative and decision-making strategies. Participating groups were kept busy after hours sight-seeing, playing bingo and even square dancing.

While the majority of participants said they found their exchange interesting and useful, the most important feature of the AHS Community Exchange Program, based upon the feedback from the participants was the getting together, face to face, with other people who share the same goals. That kind of success is hard to measure!

International exchanges between Aboriginal Head Start sites and similar projects in Latin America and the United States may take place in 1999-2000.

**INSIDE THIS ISSUE**

National Reports .....	4
Letters and Stories .....	4
Regional Update .....	6
Languages .....	10

# EDITORIAL

## SPRING FOREWARD

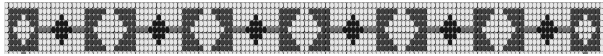
Is it just coincidence that all of the AHS sites have been involved with their Renewal Process, just as spring is upon us? After all, what is "Renewal" but an upscale version of spring cleaning?

My Mom practised spring cleaning like it was a quasi-military operation. She would set her sights on one Saturday, usually the first really warm day of spring, throw open all the windows, and after reveille, assign tasks according to age, rank and serial number or so it seemed. Armed with buckets of steaming hot water, pine cleaner and scrub-brushes, we would scour the entire house, top to bottom: no cobweb was too high, no dust bunny too small.

At the end of the day, we would be exhausted battle-weary soldiers in our Mother's war against grime but we also shared a renewed sense of pride in our work, ourselves and our home.

My point is this: Hard work is its own reward.

The task of renewal set before AHS sites last fall and



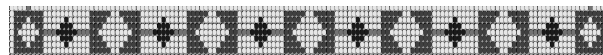
The *Aboriginal Head Start Newsletter* is published quarterly by the Aboriginal Head Start National Office, Ottawa, Ontario. The AHS Newsletter is a medium for Aboriginal Head Start participants to communicate with one another; to increase awareness of AHS; and to promote the goals and objectives of the Aboriginal Head Start Initiative.

The AHS Newsletter welcomes submissions from AHS community participants, staff and administration. The newsletter reserves the right to edit all submissions for grammar, length and clarity.

All editorial content is subject to approval by AHS's editorial staff.

Photos, materials and other submissions can be directed to:

**Aboriginal Head Start Newsletter**  
c/o Aboriginal Child & Youth Division  
1909C2 Jeanne Mance Building  
Tunney's Pasture  
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 1B4  
E-mail: Maurice\_Pelletier@hc-sc.gc.ca  
Tel: (613) 957-6489  
Fax: (613) 941-5492



winter may have seemed immense, but will indeed become its own reward. Every day we see and hear about the positive impact that AHS is making on the lives of Aboriginal children, their families and their communities. And we know that in 98 AHS sites across Canada, there are children laughing, learning and growing stronger and healthier because of Aboriginal Head Start.

AHS (and its upcoming National Evaluation) is hard work, but our children are worth it.

We hope you enjoy this issue of Aboriginal Head Start's national newsletter. Please keep those stories and photos coming.

## BRIDGING THE CULTURAL GAP

*Calgary*

The Medicine Wheel Learning Centre officially opened its doors on February 19, 1999, the first nursery school in Calgary to include Metis culture and language in its preschool curriculum. The Centre's program is funded by Health Canada's Community Action Program for Children (CAPC). What is unique about this head start program for Aboriginal children is that it's hosted by the Mount Royal College alongside its existing childcare facility. The College agreed to host the Aboriginal preschool to "bring kids of all cultures together." The celebration included drumming, Metis jigging and broom dancing and brought together staff, parents, kids and dignitaries. Lori Anne Houle, executive director of the Metis Calgary Family Services, said in an interview with the Calgary Herald, "We need more programs like this it's bringing all cultures together."

Senator Thelma Chalifoux, who did the ribbon cutting said, "Our children will now know who they are."

(Source: *Calgary Herald*, Saturday, February 20, 1999)

### Correction

OOPS! In the last issue we inadvertently transposed some material from one page to the next. The last sentence of the article "AHS National Training Workshop" on page 4, should be the beginning of the article on "The Aboriginal Head Start Working Group" on Page 5. Also on page 5, the title under "Letters" should read: "A" is for Excellence. Sorry for the confusion.



---

## AHS LENDS A HELPING HAND TO ON RESERVE PROGRAM

The On Reserve Aboriginal Head Start program in Quebec and Ontario got a head start in the new year, thanks to their AHS affiliates in each of their respective regions. Quebec opened its door and offered up a warm welcome to Quebec's On Reserve AHS program at its provincial conference in February. Likewise, in January, Ontario's 15 On Reserve sites, now in their developmental phase, joined in Ontario's AHS regional conference.

At the national level, many AHS project and Health Canada staff, from the urban and northern program, participated in a national training event for On Reserve Aboriginal Head Start. The session was held in Aylmer, Quebec on February 27-28, 1999.

The On Reserve AHS program was launched in November 1998, and will see the development and delivery of Aboriginal Head Start sites on reserves across Canada within the next five years.

The initial phase of Aboriginal Head Start began in 1995, and targeted Aboriginal communities in urban centres and large Northern communities. Both parts of the program are supported by Health Canada and share the same goal: to help preschool Aboriginal children get a healthy head start in life.

## NUNAVUT: THE BIRTH OF A NEW TERRITORY

On April 1, 1999, the face of Canada changed forever. On that day, Nunavut officially became recognized as Canada's newest territory.

Nunavut means "our land" in Inuktitut, and encompasses about two million square kilometres or roughly one fifth of Canada's landmass. The new territory is made up of central and eastern portions of what was formerly known as the Northwest Territories. Iqaluit now becomes the capital of Nunavut.

About 85% of Nunavut's population is Inuit, and Inuktitut will be the working language of its government, although government services will also be offered in English and French.

The creation of Nunavut is the result of the largest land claim settlement in Canadian history, followed by many years of negotiations between the Tungavik Federation of Nunavut and the Government of Canada.

There are currently 7 AHS sites in Nunavut, located in the communities of Kugluktuk, Arctic Bay, Igloolik, Taloyoak, Gjoa Haven, Coral Harbour and Arviat

Congratulations to our friends in Nunavut on this joyful occasion.

## LIST YOUR CONFERENCE OR SPECIAL EVENT IN THE AHS NEWSLETTER

As always, the AHS newsletter is looking for new ways to serve its readership. One suggestion for the upcoming summer issue is a Conference & Special Events Calendar. If you have an event, that you think may be of interest to other Aboriginal Head Start programs, please send it by mail, fax or E-mail to Maurice at the national office.

## PRE-SCHOOLS MATTER CAMPAIGN

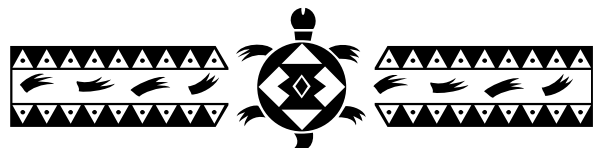
### *United Kingdom*

All Members of Parliament should go back to preschool at least for one day. This is the message that the Pre-School Learning Alliance, a national British advocacy group for preschools, wants every preschool to take seriously.

The "Pre-Schools Matter" campaign is responding to the growing need for more funding for preschool programs. The campaign is targeting the British government but wishes to raise awareness about the work that preschools do, and the benefits to both child and community.

The Alliance is asking preschools all across the United Kingdom to invite an MP to visit at least one preschool in their constituency this spring, so they can see first hand the work we do. And to make their visit fun, the campaign organizers are suggesting that each MP visiting a preschool paint a picture of a childhood memory, which will then be displayed in the British House of Commons during the Pre-School Learning Alliance's celebration day on May 12.

(Source: *Under Five Contact*, Pre-School Learning Alliance, January 1999)



---

## FROM THE NATIONAL OFFICE

### MR. BUDGELL GOES TO WASHINGTON

*Ottawa*

AHS's Program Manager, Richard Budgell, traveled to Washington in February 1999 at the invitation of the US Head Start program, to discuss common issues and areas of possible future collaboration with its Native American program. The Native American Program is administered by the American Indian Program Branch (AIPB) within the Head Start Bureau.

Richard reports that US Head Start officials are very interested in more collaboration in the area of training, and that Canadians continue to be very welcome at their training events. The AIPB holds regional training events, for "clusters" of its Head Start sites, throughout the year. Aboriginal Head Start will return the invitation to the US Head Start program and AIPB officials, to participate in AHS's regional and national training workshops in Canada.

Health Canada and AHS project staff have participated in the National Indian Head Start Directors Association's annual national meeting since AHS began five years ago in Canada.

### '99 BUDGET - A HEALTHY START FOR Y2K

*Dakota Tipi First Nation, Manitoba*

Health Minister Allan Rock, along with Indian Affairs Minister Jane Stewart and Foreign Affairs Minister Lloyd Axworthy, announced the details of key First Nations and Inuit health initiatives contained in the federal government's 1999 budget. Funding for the initiatives total \$190 million over three years.

The Budget introduced two new First Nations and Inuit health initiatives that will be developed with First Nations and Inuit: First Nations and Inuit Home and Community Care and a First Nations Health Information System.

Other national health initiatives in the Budget which include a specific Aboriginal focus are A Healthy Start - Prenatal Nutrition and the Canadian Diabetes Prevention and Control Strategy.

A Healthy Start - Prenatal Nutrition may be of particular interest to Aboriginal Head Start sites as it will increase funding over three years to improve the health outcomes of pregnant women, mothers and infants at risk. Funding will be targeted to both on and off-reserve Prenatal Nutrition Programs to help create "a sustained national focus" on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome/Fetal Alcohol Effects (FAS/FAE).

(Source: Press Release, *Ministers Announce Details of First Nations and Inuit Health Initiatives*, 1999-33, February 24, 1999)

## LETTERS

*The following is a letter from a grateful AHS parent, sent to its sponsor, the Vancouver Metis Association.*

I would like to express my thanks for the tremendous amount of support I received from the Vancouver Metis Association and the Marguerite Riel Preschool. I just recently got involved with the association and I could never have imagined how it would affect my life.

The preschool really is a good place for my daughter at this point in time. I am glad we were guided here. My daughter will graduate from the

preschool this June. I feel that the (Marguerite Riel) preschool is doing a great job and that they are providing exactly what they intended from the beginning. My daughter has learned to be more outgoing, independent and has greater self-esteem.

I will definitely stay involved with the association even when my daughter graduates. I feel that this is her chance to be proud of her culture and that we will both benefit in the future.

Thank You,  
Deanna Emard



## LESSONS FROM THE GEESE

- 1. As each bird flaps its wings, it creates an uplift for the bird behind it. By flying in formation, the birds can fly 71% faster than if they fly alone.**

The lesson: People who share a common sense of purpose can get where they want to go quicker and easier when they are propelled by the thrust of others who share the same goals.

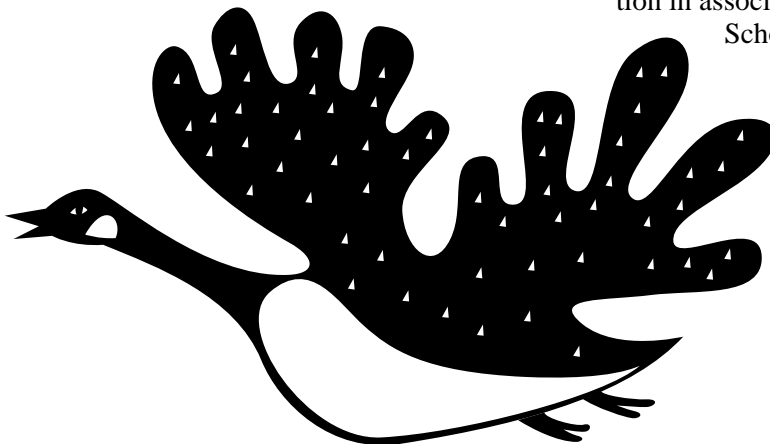
- 2. Whenever a goose falls out of formation, it suddenly feels the difficulty of trying to fly alone and quickly gets back into formation.**

The lesson: We should stay in formation with those who are headed in the direction we want to go. We can accomplish much more than by ourselves.

- 3. When the lead goose gets tired, it rotates back into the formation and another goose flies at the point position.**

The lesson: It is only fair that we take turns doing the hard tasks and share leadership responsibilities. Leaders must have followers and followers must have leaders.

- 4. The geese in formation honk from the rear to encourage those up front to keep on course and maintain speed.**



## WARM WISHES

Best wishes go out to Val Whetung, AHS's Policy Analyst, who is leaving Aboriginal Head Start's national office in April 1999. Val will continue working for Health Canada in a different area.

Val also sends her thanks to all the wonderful friends that made her experience at Aboriginal Head Start fulfilling and enjoyable during the past year. Val says she regrets leaving AHS, but is looking forward to spending more time, closer to home, with her teenage son and daughter. Val has commenced her Master's Degree at Carleton University and serves on several boards in the Ottawa area.

The lesson: We need to make sure our honking from behind is helpful and encouraging. Let's remember to say please and thank you to those we serve.

- 5. When a goose gets sick or shot down, two geese drop out of formation and follow him down to help and protect him. They remain with him until he dies or is able to fly again.**

The lesson: It is easy to like those who are like us. However, our true character is revealed in our response to those around us who are hurting or suffering misfortune.

This inspirational message was included with conference material distributed at the "Celebrating Chicago Public Schools" Symposium sponsored by the Chicago Principals and Administrators Association in association with the Chicago Public Schools, Fall 1998.



---

## REGIONAL UPDATES

*Updates is a regular feature of the Aboriginal Head Start National Newsletter. In each issue we devote this space to our regional voices. We hope that by sharing this information with one another, we can celebrate each other's successes, and learn from each other's challenges.*

**Here are some of the highlights from AHS's regional programs across Canada.**

### **Atlantic**

#### **Halifax, Nova Scotia**

After the Mi'kmaq Child Development Centre in Halifax hosted its exchange with Rocky Mountain House, Alberta this past fall, it embarked on a more "longitudinal" exchange. The Halifax AHS sent six delegates north to join their Atlantic region counterparts in Hopedale, Labrador. An experience that Halifax participants say they will not forget, as they learned first-hand the complexities of running AHS project sites in the Far North.

The Mi'kmaq centre reports that they have enjoyed tremendous support from community members. Events like their Christmas party, Halloween party and first anniversary (October 16) were well attended by all ages. One of the reasons, say AHS staffers, may be that the children and their parents were actively involved in the planning and implementation of these celebrations.

The Mi'kmaq Child Development Centre's Outreach worker spear-headed a new healing program this past fall: WORTH - Women's Ongoing Recovery Through Healing - brings much needed support to women in their program who are recovering from violence.

#### **Hopedale, Labrador**

The Hopedale centre has enjoyed continued success after its grand opening in October 1998. With December 1998 designated "family month," the centre encouraged even more community participation with a series of family-oriented events. And while the Hopedale centre has a new van for sum-

mer and early fall, snowmobiles are the current mode of transportation to bring children to and from the centre.

#### **Happy Valley-Goose Bay, Labrador**

In Happy Valley-Goose Bay, the site reports that it learned more about the Renewal Process and what it means for the local and regional sites.

Happy Valley has 43 children registered and has received positive feedback on its School Readiness program. It has also recently implemented a Healthy Baby Club at the site.

#### **Quebec**

The Quebec Aboriginal Head Start Committee (QAHS) held its annual conference in February 1999. Along with regular business, the provincial AHS conference also extended an open invitation to First Nations on reserve representatives. This conference marked the official launching of the Association of Aboriginal Child Care Service of Québec.

The QAHS is undergoing restructuring this spring to determine its future role and composition

Two of Quebec's AHS sites revamped their programs this spring. The Early Learning Centre of Montreal is converting existing space into a Toddler's Room, in response to a growing demand from AHS participants with younger children (ages 18 to 36 months). And in La Tuque, the First Step Learning Centre is buzzing with the addition of new computers for the children and new sewing machines for the Parents' Program.

Quebec also reports that its Project Evaluation and Renewal process was completed in January 1999.

#### **Ontario**

Ontario's Aboriginal Head Start workshop, entitled "Beyond 1999," was held in Sault Ste. Marie on January 28-29, 1999. Ten AHS project sites in Ontario, including parents, board members and staff, were joined by representatives from the newly implemented On Reserve AHS initiative. The On Reserve's regional coordinator and com-

---

munity members from 15 First Nations, who have been approved for developmental phase funding, participated in the workshop.

Workshop topics ranged from Networking Between AHS sites, National Principles and Guidelines, Incorporating Culture and Language into All Aspects of the Program, Parenting Special Children and Identifying Roles in Your AHS Project. The region was also pleased to have Val Whetung from the national office in attendance to provide an update on the national evaluation.

The event concluded with a traditional meal and social with many community members joining in the celebration.

### ***Manitoba***

Manitoba's AHS project sites had the opportunity to ask questions first-hand about the National Evaluation at their AHS Provincial Committee meeting held in Winnipeg, last November. Val Whetung, from the national office, was on hand to provide feedback.

Manitoba also reports that its provincial committee has formed its Renewal Selection Committee consisting of six Aboriginal members (who are not affiliated with AHS sites or sponsors) and three Health Canada staff.

### ***Saskatchewan***

Saskatchewan Head Start has completed its renewal process and held a series of renewal meetings beginning in December 1998, in Saskatoon. Renewal packages were distributed to all AHS sites beforehand, and participants had an opportunity to ask questions about the process.

Health Canada program consultants will be meeting with each site individually to ensure that all packages are completed to specifications.

Saskatchewan reports that its AHS programs are well supported in their communities, as demonstrated by the various community organizations utilizing the Aboriginal Head Start program in the training and development of early childhood educators. This cost-effective approach also promotes greater public awareness about the benefits associated with AHS.

Two sites from Saskatchewan participated in the AHS Community Exchanges program, hosting exchange groups from Kugluktuk, Northwest Territories and Lac La Biche, Alberta.

### ***Alberta***

AHS Renewal was also the order of the day for Alberta AHS sites, which had hired a consultant team to assist Health Canada program consultants with project data collection.

In Calgary, parental support and involvement has continued to flourish, and the group is taking steps to formalize its association so it can assume a greater role in the development and delivery of its AHS programming.

The Alberta Regional training workshop in January 1999 included topics like Traditional Parenting, Story Telling, and Discussions with Elders. Metis and First Nation groups provided music and dance for a social evening following the workshop.

### ***Northwest Territories***

NWT's 13 Aboriginal Head Start sites worked hard last fall and winter to improve programming and ensure that AHS continues to thrive throughout this diverse region.

From February 17 to 23, the Western Arctic and Nunavut programs attended their annual training workshop in Edmonton. The format was divided into two separate workshops one for the west and one for the east. The two workshops were bridged by a special event for all NWT AHS programs and their guests. The workshop was planned by the NWT program consultant and team members with guidance from two sub-committees: one for the western projects and one for the Nunavut projects.

The programs have moved through the Renewal Process. A letter detailing the Renewal Process was sent to all project sponsors and the region made use of conference calls to help sites understand the process.

### ***Yukon***

Pat Martin has recently been hired as Program Consultant for the Yukon Region and says she is excited about working with the Dawson City, Watson Lake and Whitehorse AHS sites. Presently,



---

there are 29 children enrolled from the three communities, but she notes, support for the program has been building, especially with greater involvement from the elders.

Ashea Headstart in Whitehorse hosted a Christmas party and dinner for its families, which was a big success. While at Dawson Head Start, the children were treated to a visit from a woman trapper, who shared her knowledge on trapping, and talked with the children about how things have changed in the North.

### **British Columbia**

British Columbia reports that its region has completed its Renewal Process. AHS sites are busy planning and preparing in anticipation of visits from Health Canada, and a consultant has also been hired to assist in the process.

At Campbell River, AHS staff shared their training on “Understanding Child Development /Temperament” with parents, and are offering additional workshops on Fire and Safety, RCMP Buckle-up and Counterattack. A year-end feast and celebration, featuring local dance groups, helped AHS participants to ring in the New Year.

Other sites around BC are taking advantage of Registered Nurse or Early Childhood Education student placements. They are finding that the extra hands are helping reduce the student-teacher ratio, while providing excellent training opportunities for students.

All sites report that they are enjoying greater participation by parents and elders, making it easier for AHS staff to plan Cultural and Language curriculum for students. Parents and staff attended BC’s AHS Training Conference in February at Harrison Hot Springs.

Two new sites in British Columbia are up and running. Congratulations to both the Marguerite Riel Preschool, hosted by the Vancouver Metis Society, and the Eagle’s Nest Preschool, hosted by the Indian Homemakers Association of BC. Both sites are in Vancouver and enjoyed local TV coverage at their openings. The Maguerite Riel Preschool opened November 14, 1998 and the Eagle’s Nest Preschool opened January 29, 1999.

## **THE SLEEPER EFFECT**

The benefits of early intervention programs like Aboriginal Head Start may not appear until later on in the child’s development. Instead, the effect may be small and cumulative, and may not reach significant levels until as much as five years later.

The “sleeper effect” is difficult to define, but is well documented in research from the Consortium of Longitudinal Studies, in the United States. One longitudinal study tracked the progress of 2200 disadvantaged children from two test groups one group attended preschool, the other did not. The group’s academic performance and test scores were followed for 20 years. No significant differences appeared between the groups until five years after the intervention program. The differences then became significant and continued into early adulthood.

More information on this study can be obtained in the book *As The Twig Is Bent: Lasting Effects of Preschool Programs* by the Consortium for Longitudinal Studies staff (a volume in the Child Psychology Series), Erlbaum Publishers, 1983.

## **TO SPANK OR NOT TO SPANK?**

If you want smarter kids don’t spank them. That is the findings of research conducted at the University of New Hampshire, in the United States.

A team of researchers studied more than 900 children aged 1 to 4, beginning in 1986. They were given tests of cognitive ability which is their ability to learn and to recognize things in 1986 and again in 1990.

The study looked at factors like whether the father lived with the family, how many children there were in the family, how much time the mother spent with the child, ethnic group, birth weight, age and gender. Researchers interviewed the mothers about corporal punishment and watched them with their children.

The results of their findings: the more a child was spanked or physically punished, the lower his or her test scores. Those children who were not spanked had higher test scores.



---

It is not that children who were spanked had lost their cognitive ability, says the report, but rather that spanking was associated with “falling behind” the average rate of cognitive development.

The research suggests that parents who do not spank their children spend more time talking to them and reasoning with them. The less corporal punishment mothers used, the more cognitive stimulation they provided to their child.

(Source: Reuters, Washington, D.C.)

---

## LEARNING TO PLAY

Playing can be hard work. Learning to play successfully can help children build important social skills that they will use for the rest of their lives.

The first five years are critical in learning to play, especially at age three, when most children first engage in group play. This may be why children who attend preschool thrive in comparison with others.

Research shows that children at pre-school play in groups more often, play on a more complex level, and play for longer periods of time. In other words, children in pre-school learn to play better with children their own age than children with no formal day-care experience.

Those children who attend regularly seem to benefit most, because they come to know their age-mates better and familiar playmates seem to bring out the best in children. It is this familiarity, say researchers, that results in more advanced performance among preschool children.

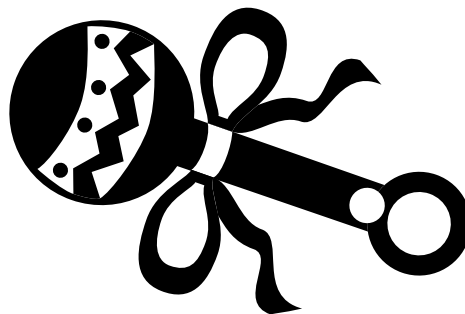
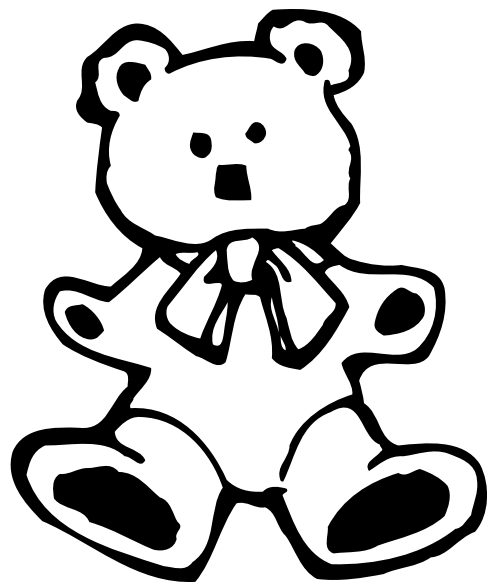
Peer familiarity plays a critical role in improving social competence. Preschool ensures that children will become familiar with at least some of their peers. This has a positive effect on their development.

To get along with peers, and to play successfully with them, children must use a variety of social

skills. They must develop skills to begin play, accept a play role, develop a common script and cooperate in playing it through, resolve conflicts that inevitably arise in a complex group setting, and mutually decide when to end play.

And we thought they were just having fun.

(Reference: *Under Five Contact*, Preschool Learning Alliance, January 1999)





## CANADA'S ABORIGINAL LANGUAGES

### LANGUAGE: *“the working tool of everyday life”*

“The younger the speaker, the healthier the language,” says a report on Canada’s Aboriginal Languages, featured in the December 1998 issue of Canadian Social Trends, a publication of Statistics Canada. The report is based on data collected from 1981 to 1996 Census reports and the 1991 Aboriginal Peoples Survey and indicates which of Canada’s indigenous languages are in danger of becoming extinct and which have a greater chance of survival.

According to the research, how well a language will survive can be determined by the age of those who speak it or have it as a mother tongue. If the age is higher, that would indicate the language has not been transmitted to a younger generation. The reasoning is: when those speakers die so too may the language.

The true measurement for Aboriginal languages’ survival, therefore, is in the ability of their people to pass the language from one generation to the next. The most logical place for this to happen is in the home where language is used as “the working tool of everyday life,” says the report. While many Aboriginal communities have begun to make serious attempts to revitalize their indigenous language in school or through various media, there is no comparison to learning language as a mother tongue.

The report presents some astounding facts about Aboriginal languages.

- At least 10 Aboriginal languages have disappeared completely during the last 100 years in Canada.
- Canada’s Aboriginal languages are among the most endangered in the world.
- There are 50 Aboriginal languages in Canada that belong to 11 “language families,” including 10 First Nation languages and Inuktitut.
- As of 1996, only 3 out of 50 Aboriginal languages Cree, Inuktitut and Ojibway had large enough populations to be considered secure from the threat of extinction.

For more information on Canada’s Aboriginal languages from Statistics Canada, contact Mary Jane Norris, (613-951-2316), Demography Division



---

## LIVING LANGUAGES



**“Without  
the  
language,  
we are  
warm  
bodies  
without a  
spirit”**  
-----

While the report by Statistics Canada sheds new light on patterns and trends affecting Aboriginal language use in Canada, the findings are no surprise to most Aboriginal people, especially educators. The report does, however, validate a growing fear in Aboriginal communities: that Aboriginal children are in danger of losing their mother tongue and part of their unique cultural identity as Inuit, First Nation or Metis.

The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) also documented this reality in *Gathering Strength*. Aboriginal peoples across Canada told the Royal Commission that language and culture are closely linked. Language, says the report, “is the main instrument for transmitting culture from one generation to another and for communicating and making sense of collective experience.”

One elder told the Commission that “without the language, we are warm bodies without a spirit.”

Today, Aboriginal languages in Canada are facing the same threat of extinction, due to mass media and popular culture, as other minority languages throughout the world. Aboriginal languages have also suffered historically because of policies aimed at replacing indigenous languages with English or French.

The onus, concludes the RCAP report, is on each Aboriginal nation to decide how far it will go to preserve its language and set policies in place “to help arrest and reverse the loss of language that has already occurred.”

RCAP’s recommendation for protecting Aboriginal languages requires: 1) maintaining or increasing the number of fluent speakers, and 2) using the language as a medium of communication in everyday life especially in the family.

And while school immersion programs can help language retention in communities where Aboriginal languages are threatened, says the report, a living language must be used every day especially in the home.

(Reference: Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996, *Gathering Strength*, Vol. 3, Minister of Supply and Services Canada) Minister of Supply and Services Canada.)



---

# STAR LIGHT, STAR BRIGHT



*"Shiny Happy People!" Karen Shwartz-Heimdal, (left) AFN National Chief Phil Fontaine, Rena Morrison and Karen Garant-Radke.*

*"Don't Worry - Be Happy!" Richard Budgell, Program Manager (right) with Lynne Robertson, Program Consultant and Valerie Galley. Valerie will join the staff at the national office this spring.*



***Aboriginal Head Start shines at the National Aboriginal Achievement Awards Gala Night in Regina, March 12, 1999***



## NATIONAL ABORIGINAL ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

*Regina, Saskatchewan*

Hollywood has the Oscars. Canada has the Junos. And Aboriginal Canada has the National Aboriginal Achievement Awards.

This year's National Aboriginal Achievement Awards Gala Night proved once again that the Stars of Aboriginal Country shine as bright as the best of them.

March 12, 1999 marked the sixth year that the Gemini award-winning National Aboriginal Achievement Awards Gala Night honoured Aboriginal people from across Canada, for "initiative, achievement and selflessness." The colourful program states that the Awards are a modern manifestation of the rich tradition of "honouring" celebrated Aboriginal people, from primeval to present day.

The event was hosted by an all-star cast that included Jennifer Podemski, from "The Rez" TV

series and Michael Greyeyes, from the CBC mini-series "Big Bear," and showcased the musical talent of Murray Porter, Aboriginal Country's favourite blues man and the show-stopping Fara, who has performed at the past four National Aboriginal Achievement Award's Gala events.

This year's Awards Gala was held at the Saskatchewan Centre of the Arts, in Regina, Saskatchewan, and Aboriginal Canada's major players arrived en masse, and in style, to join in the celebration of 1999's 14 award recipients.

Health Canada is proud to be among the many sponsors of the National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation. Starting in 1999 and continuing for two years, the Foundation will deliver the Aboriginal Health Scholarship Program, on behalf of Health Canada. The program will help support Aboriginal youth who wish to pursue careers in any of the health science fields.



---

# RESOURCE GUIDE

*The AHS National Office receives information about various resources that may be of use or interest to AHS projects. Inclusion here does not imply a recommendation on the part of the National Office.*

## **Federal Guidebook**

*The Guide to Federal Programs and Services for Children and Youth*, is a unique reference intended for parents, caregivers, organizations, educational institutions and agencies working with young people.

The Guide, produced by Health Canada every two years, regroups federal programs and services related to children and youth and is organized thematically (health, families, research, etc.)

*The Guide to Federal Programs and Services for Children and Youth* is available free of charge in print format and on the Internet on Health Canada's Childhood and Youth Web site at: <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/childhood-youth>.

To obtain a copy, please write, e-mail or fax your request to the:

Childhood and Youth Division  
Health Promotion and Programs Branch  
Health Canada

Address Locator: 1909C2  
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 1B4  
E-mail: [children@www.hc-sc.gc.ca](mailto:children@www.hc-sc.gc.ca)  
Fax: (613) 952-1556

## **Duval House Publishing**

A program for First Nations by First Nations Language Programs: Cree (Plains, Woodland, Swampy), Blackfoot, Saulteaux, Ojibway, Dakota, Dene, OJI-Cree

Healing Series

"I am Alcohol" by Don Burnstick

"Rage" by Native Counselling Services and Cuningham Communications

"I Will Not Cry Alone" by Ken Ward

Calendars, Daytimers & School Agendas  
Beautiful culturally appropriate calendars and daytimers custom made for your school or company.

18120-102 Avenue, Edmonton, Alberta T5S 1S7

Phone: (780) 488-1390

Fax: (780) 482- 7213

Toll free: 1-800-267-6187 (Canada only)

## CONFERENCES

### **Head Start's Fifth National Research Conference "Developmental and Contextual Transitions on Children and Families: Implications for Research, Policy and Practice"**

June 28 - July 1, 2000  
Washington D.C.

**Hosted by:** Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Department of Health and Human Services in collaboration with Columbia University and the Society for Research in Child Development

*Call for Papers available on Website  
as of March 1, 1999  
Proposals due on July 15, 1999*

#### **All inquiries:**

Dr. Faith Lamb-Parker, Project Director  
Columbia School of Public Health/CPFH  
60 Haven Avenue B3  
New York, NY 10032  
Tel: (212) 304-5251  
Fax: (212) 544-1911  
Website: <http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/hsb>

### **The Ninth National Indian Head Start Training Conference**

"Soaring to new heights ... honoring the human elements of early childhood management."

June 26 - July 1, 1999.  
Arlington, Va. (Washington, D.C.)

**Hosted by:** National Indian Head Start Directors Association and the American Indian Programs Branch (AIPB), Administration for Children and Families, Department of Health and Human Services (Washington, D.C.)

#### **All inquiries:**

Ms. Antonia Dobrec  
Three Feathers Association  
P.O. Box 5508  
Norman, Oklahoma 73070  
Telephone: (405) 360-2919  
Fax: (405) 360-3069  
E-mail: [info@threefeathersassoc.com](mailto:info@threefeathersassoc.com)

# STAFF - HEALTH CANADA ABORIGINAL HEAD START

## **Regional Offices**

### **Atlantic Region**

Teresa Jeffrey, Program Consultant  
Tel:(902) 426-5747  
Fax:(902) 426-9689  
709-1557 Hollis Street  
Halifax NS B3J 3V4

### **Quebec Region**

Pauline Tardif, Program Consultant  
Tel: (514) 283-3065  
Fax: (514) 283-3309  
Robert Young, Program Consultant  
Tel: (514) 283-2205  
212-200 Boul. René-Lévesque Ouest  
Montreal PQ H2Z 1X4

### **Ontario Region**

Ronda Evans, Program Consultant  
3rd Floor-55 St. Clair Avenue East  
Toronto ON M4T 1M2  
Tel: (416) 973-5778  
Christine Bushey, Program Consultant  
Tel: (705) 669-2232  
Fax: ((705) 670-6441  
314-19 Lisgar Street  
Sudbury ON P3E 3L4

### **Manitoba/Saskatchewan**

Betty-Ann Lavallee, Program Consultant  
Tel: (204) 983-2573  
Kimberly Resch, Program Consultant  
Tel: (204) 984-0677  
420-391 York Street  
Winnipeg, MB R3C 0P4  
Lynne Robertson, Program Consultant  
Tel: (306) 780-7650  
Fax: (306) 780-6207  
Elayne Smokyday, Program Consultant  
Tel: (306) 780-6196  
320-1975 Scarth Street  
Regina SK S4P 2H1

### **Alberta/Northwest Territories Region**

Karen Garant-Radke, Program Manager  
Tel: (403) 292-6691  
Fax: (403) 292-6696  
Alvin Manitopyes, Program Consultant  
Tel: (403) 292-6695  
Harry Hays Bldg. Suite 620  
220 4th Avenue S.E.  
Calgary AB T2G 4X3  
Eva Stang, Program Consultant  
Tel: (403) 495-7356  
Kathleen Hunter, Program Consultant  
Tel: (403) 495-5122  
815-9700 Jasper Avenue  
Edmonton AB T5J 4C3

### **British Columbia/Yukon Region**

Karen Schwartz-Heimdal, Program Consultant  
Tel: (604) 666-7111  
Fax: (604) 666-8986  
Bernice Hammersmith, Program Consultant  
Tel: (604) 666-9917  
440-757 West Hastings Street  
Vancouver BC V6C 1A1

### **NATIONAL OFFICE**

Richard Budgell, Program Manager  
Tel: (613) 957-2917  
Guy Freedman, Senior Program Officer  
Tel: (613)952-9769  
Rena Morrison, Program Officer  
Tel: (613) 954-8615  
Lyne Chartrand, Administrative Assistant  
Tel: (613) 952-5845  
Maurice Pelletier, Junior Program Officer  
Tel: (613) 957-6489

### **Aboriginal Childhood and Youth Section**

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

