



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 living in urban and northern communities. There are 114 preschool centres across Canada operating in eight provinces and three territories. Approximately 3,500 children participate annually.

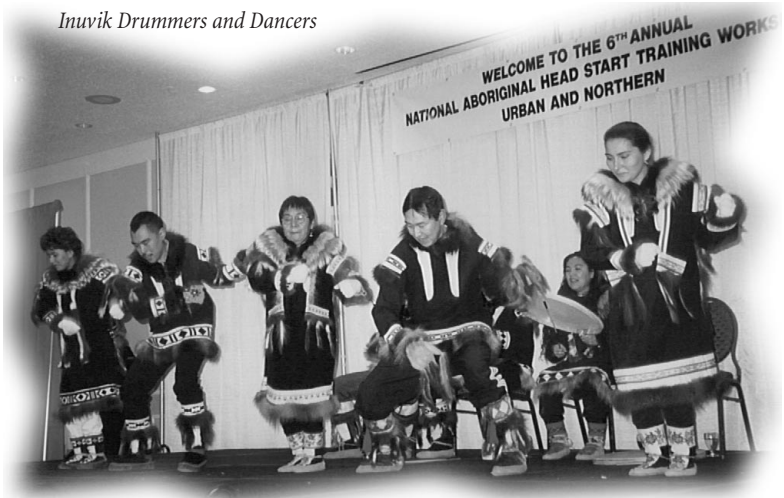
FALL 2001/WINTER 2002

6TH ANNUAL ABORIGINAL HEAD START NATIONAL TRAINING WORKSHOP



The 6th Annual Aboriginal Head Start (AHS) Urban and Northern National Training Workshop was held in Edmonton, Alberta on October 25-27, 2001 at the Westin Hotel. The theme of the 2001 Workshop was "Creating the Best Learning Environments". The three-day workshop brought together approximately 350 delegates from 114 AHS urban and northern sites, representatives of the First Nations (on reserve) Head Start program, and for the first time, representatives of the First Nations and Inuit Child Care Program, for workshops focussing on improving the learning environment for preschool Aboriginal children. The workshop was opened by the Honourable Pearl Calahasen, Alberta Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, with a keynote speech by Cherry Kingsley, Governor General's Award winner for her work with exploited children and youth. Highlights of the

Inuvik Drummers and Dancers



workshop included tours of the Ben Calf Robe site and a performance of Don Burnstick's one-man-show "I Am Alcohol". Participants also made positive comments on the Work Sampling System (WSS) presented by Carol Rowan. The WSS is a classroom based assessment tool for educators. It provides an organized system to document observation and a checklist identifying seven main learning areas for assessment. The WSS is one of the tools that will be used to demonstrate school readiness of participating children as part of the national impact evaluation.



Don Burnstick's "I Am Alcohol"

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Secretary of State Ethel Blondin-Andrew addressed delegates at their banquet on October 26 and launched a new AHS publication, *“Johnny National, Super Hero,”* a short story by well-known Aboriginal author Tomson Highway. The banquet featured performances by Derek Starlight, the Le-la-la Dancers, and the Inuvik Drummers and Dancers. The first-ever AHS Volunteer of the Year Awards were presented at the banquet.

Derek Starlight teaches delegates to dance

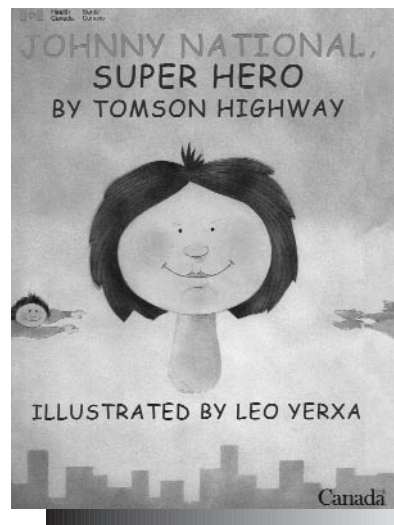


JOHNNY NATIONAL, SUPER HERO BY TOMSON HIGHWAY

The AHS Program was honoured to have the Honourable Ethel Blondin-Andrew launch this new publication. The Secretary of State introduced *Johnny National, Super Hero* to banquet guests and invited them to have their copies of the book signed by Leo Yerxa, the artist who created the illustrations.

Johnny National, Super Hero is a work of fiction and a work of art created by the award winning Cree writer, Tomson Highway. It was created for AHS parents, staff, community members, professionals and the general public. Tomson based the story on what he learned from talking with AHS staff and participants, reading local and regional evaluations and AHS site visits.

A *Reader's Guide* was created to assist people to understand how and why the story was written. The story will stimulate interesting discussion that can be guided by discussion questions offered in the *Reader's Guide*. You can obtain a copy of *Johnny National, Super Hero* by contacting the Aboriginal Childhood and Youth Section, DCA.



Leo Yerxa signs copies of “Johnny National, Super Hero”




THE AHS NATIONAL NEWSLETTER

The AHS Newsletter continues to welcome submissions from community participants, staff and administration.

Please send your submissions, photographs and other materials to:
Aboriginal Head Start National Newsletter
c/o Aboriginal Childhood and Youth Section
1909C2 Jeanne Mance Building
Tunney's Pasture
Ottawa, ON
K1A 1B4
E-mail: ahs-papa@www.hc-sc.gc.ca
Tel: (613) 952-5845
Fax: (613) 941-5492

1ST ANNUAL AHS VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR AWARDS


 The Honourable Ethel Blondin-Andrew reserved her highest praise at the banquet of the National Training Workshop for the winners of the Volunteer of the Year Award. She spoke about the importance of volunteers in AHS projects and thanked each one of them personally for their outstanding commitment and contribution to the AHS Program. Each award winner was presented with a plaque and an AHS watch. Once the recipients were on the stage with the Secretary of State, the three volunteers were given a standing ovation by the crowd of 400 teachers, educators and Health Canada staff who are well aware of their contributions to the program. AHS was pleased to support the three recipients by allowing them to attend the three-day training event. AHS is proud to introduce the three deserving recipients to you:

Julianna Vautour, from Toronto, Ontario, has been volunteering with AHS for the past four and a half years. Julie is an Ojibway woman from Serpent River First Nation. Julie participates in classroom activities, field trips, fundraising events and has been an active member of the local parent council and the Ontario AHS Committee. She sat on the steering committee that developed the terms

of reference, vision statement and policies and procedures for the three AHS sites in Toronto. Julie regularly shares her many skills and knowledge of Aboriginal culture and traditions. Currently, she is studying in the George Brown College, Assaulted Women and Child Counsellor Advocacy Program. She is described as a role model for parents and staff, and has had an enormous positive impact on AHS. She is most proud of her six year old son, Patrick.

Burt Porter, from Calgary, Alberta, has volunteered with AHS for the past four years. Every day, Burt drives children home

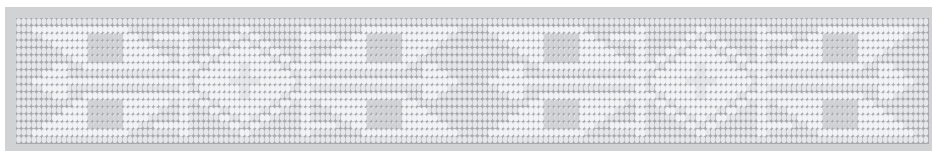
from the Calgary AHS project in his own van. Nine children would not be able to attend AHS without Mr. Porter's willingness to provide transportation. Burt also regularly picks up and delivers groceries for the project and offers his computer "know-how" whenever it is needed. His help contributes to the smooth operation of the centre. Burt is the father of four children: Ken and Tyler (8 years), Anne (7 years) and Miranda (6 years). Three of Burt's children are AHS graduates.

Evelyn McKay, from Winnipeg, Manitoba, has volunteered with AHS for the past two years. She is a classroom helper and assists with crafts, workshops, in the kitchen and on children's outings. Evelyn has eight children, twenty-one



Left to right: Secretary of State Ethel Blondin-Andrew, Burt Porter, Evelyn McKay and Julianna Vautour

grandchildren, and four step-grandchildren. Two of Evelyn's grandchildren attend the AHS Program. Evelyn spends time with all the children who attend her project. She also initiated the Oshki-Majahitowiin Head Start's Home Reading Program. After attending a workshop on Literacy, she brought the idea back to the centre. Now, each time a child reads ten books, they take one home to keep. It is successful in encouraging the children and parents to read. Evelyn volunteers because it makes her feel good knowing that she is helping others and because she enjoys being around children.



KEEPING MÉTIS CHILDREN IN MÉTIS HOMES

By October 2003, all Aboriginal foster care cases in Manitoba will be handled by Aboriginal agencies, or so goes the plan. Manitoba has become the first region in the country where Métis communities handle their own child welfare services as do First Nations.

The province has begun the huge undertaking of training an adequate number of Aboriginal social workers to staff the agencies with a \$1.5 million transitional budget. In the meantime, non-Aboriginal workers will fill any empty positions. Although the new workers will be certified, Manitoba Métis Federation president, David Chartrand, stated that they would not have to have a university degree. "Did our mothers have social work degrees? They were the best social workers out there." He also stated that under the new regulations and systems, Aboriginal families who are not as financially successful will have a better chance of being approved for foster children.

Since about 80 percent of all children in foster care are Aboriginal, the mainstream child welfare system will be downsized as a result of the transfer. However, the newly unemployed workers will be given equivalent jobs throughout the province.

- originally published in the "Métis Voyageur" - The Bi-Monthly Publication of the Métis Nation of Ontario - October 2001 Edition

AHS WEBSITE

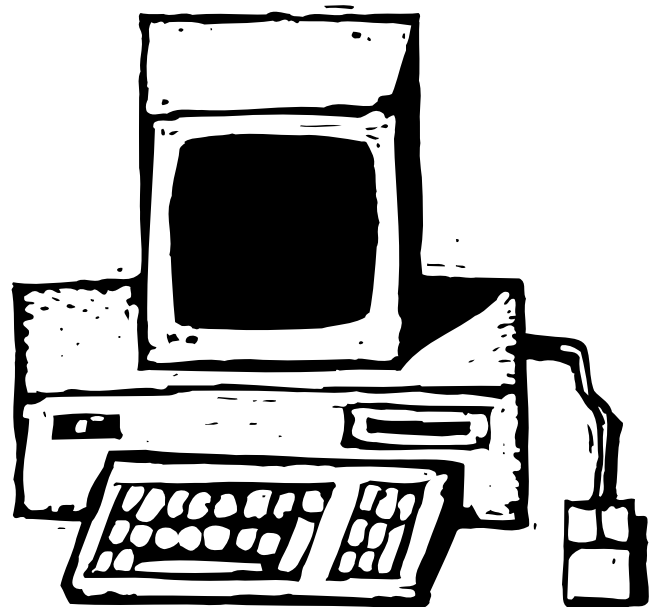
THE ABORIGINAL HEAD START (AHS) URBAN/NORTHERN PROGRAM IS REDESIGNING ITS WEBSITE. The new website will provide a foundation for all AHS related information, and will introduce a web environment that is modern, efficient and capable of assisting the program in its efforts to better address the needs of its staff and stakeholders.

The new AHS website will meet the evolving needs and expectations of the AHS Program and will encompass a number of client-centered design principles. This means information will be grouped according to citizen needs. It will be easy-to-use, relevant, current, and will contain reliable information.


The website will provide information for AHS staff, participants, researchers, and the interested general public. A comprehensive Program Overview section will present the program's: mission and mandate; program components; a fact sheet, frequently asked questions; principles and guidelines for the program; and, AHS beliefs and values about children. There will be contact information for Health Canada Regional Offices, National Office, all projects and their profiles, and National Aboriginal Head Start Council members. A Caregivers Resources section will provide information about: linkages and exchanges; national training

programs and the National AHS Training Workshop; information about the National Aboriginal Head Start Council (i.e. members and Terms of Reference). A News/Events/Publications section will provide: news and announcements relevant to AHS; a calendar of events; and, a list of and description of publications and resources with an electronic order form. A section called National Program Evaluation and Research will provide information to those interested in learning more about evaluation and research in the AHS Program.

EXPECT TO SEE THE NEW NATIONAL AHS WEBSITE UP AND ON THE INTERNET IN THE NEW YEAR. WE WILL CERTAINLY MAKE AN ANNOUNCEMENT TO THE AHS PROJECTS AND STAKEHOLDERS TO VISIT THE SITE AS SOON AS IT IS AVAILABLE!



DOES EVERYONE KNOW WHAT SARAH KNOWS?

 There has probably never been an early childhood educator (ECE) who would say "no" to an extra staff person for the classroom. After all, our field often feels overworked, underpaid, and faced with challenges of many kinds, of which children with special needs are only one. Children from difficult circumstances, increasing numbers of children who attend part-time, children with undiagnosed emotional and behavioural problems - this is the real world of child care.

Moreover, ECEs do not feel adequately trained to work with children with special needs. Fewer than 40 percent feel that their pre-service training provided them with a good background for inclusive practice. Many ECEs consider extra staffing for children with special needs the solution to problems of inclusion.

On the other hand, most special needs consultants argue that ECEs already have the basic skills they need to work successfully with children with special needs. They see the extra staff person as only one of a range of supports that can help ECEs include these children. Other supports include: extra staffing; workshops on inclusion; basic sign language courses; books,

videos and handouts; specialized equipment; and modifications to existing equipment.

As we move toward full inclusion in child care, it is critical to remember both the value and the risks of extra support staffing. We must

be alert, for instance, to ways in which that extra support can lead to exclusionary practices that erode the principles of full inclusion. Consider this example:

Tommy is four years old, and he loves going to his child care. He rolls himself around in his wheelchair to his favourite activity centres, and uses his strong left hand for everything. Tommy communicates by pointing to things he wants.

Tommy has a great relationship with Sarah, his special needs worker at child care. Sarah really knows Tommy's behaviour, and his needs. But on Thursday, Sarah is sick. Who else knows what Sarah knows?

In many child care centres Sarah's absence would be a big problem. Why?

Because in many centres, the special needs worker is the only person who knows how to assist the child with special needs. Nobody else knows what is going on in his individual program plan; nobody else knows how to assist with feeding, or positioning. Nobody else can interpret his signals.

Sometimes, this specialization (or isolation) is so intense that when the special needs worker is sick, the parents are actually asked to keep the child home!

A less "bodyguard" model of support doesn't come easy. Because it's more convenient to assign Sarah the responsibility for Tommy, what started out as a support for inclusive child care often turns into an exercise in exclusion. We've all seen it happen. Usually, only Sarah hears the therapists, meets the parents, goes to workshops about Tommy's disability. Other staff are sort of "pushed away" from Tommy. Nobody intends for this to happen, but it does. We hear, "Sarah, your child needs you." "Sarah, Tommy is crying." "You'd better ask Sarah." The couple is segregated in the middle of the group setting - segregated from the other staff, segregated from the children. And nobody knows what to do when Sarah is sick.





On the other hand, if staff members are working as a team, Tommy can have an enjoyable and productive day even when Sarah is away. In a playroom with children of varying levels of ability, a solid team makes sure that all members share information, plan together and work directly with all children. When staff in the playroom work together as a team, Tommy will happily eat his chili with his strong left hand even when Sarah isn't there, just as he does on days when she is, because everyone knows what Sarah knows!

Some children will always need some level of one-on-one support. But as we increasingly gain training, skill and knowledge at including children with special needs, we must also be aware of the risks to inclusion of one of our most cherished practices.

Dr. Sharon Hope is the director of Specialink: The National Centre for Child Care Inclusion (www.specialinkcanada.org). She has 15 years experience as director of a fully inclusive child care centre and is the author of *The Specialink Book, A Matter of Urgency and Challenging the Challenging Behaviours*

- from "Interaction" - Publication of the Canadian Child Care Federation, Vol. 15, No. 3

Danger Signals

-  The child with a special need usually goes to the special needs worker for assistance.
-  The other children usually ask the special needs worker for permission to play with the child with special needs.
-  Children often shout, "Tommy's special needs worker is here." So do staff.
-  Bulletin board items identify staff members as "belonging" to a particular child.

If any of these danger signals are present in your child care setting, your program probably segregates the child with special needs, even though he seems to be integrated.

Integration Strategies

Share information



All staff read Tommy's individual program plan, assessments and recommendations from consultants.



Staff share information about Tommy in specified communication books located in the staff room and in the play rooms.

Plan together



All staff bring to the planning meeting activity ideas which reflect needs and interests of all children in the playroom, that is, ideas that actively include Tommy. In this way, all staff advocate for the participation of every child.



All staff modify activities to ensure participation of children with varying skill levels.

Work directly with all children



All staff members work with all of the children. This takes deliberate effort.



The focus is on having each child be successful. Competence is first assumed and staff assist only as much as is needed.

THE ABORIGINAL CHILD CAREGIVER PROMISE ALWAYS...

To accept yourself for who you are, the unique you

To respect your team members, respect your children, respect yourself

To encourage your learning, encourage their learning

To be honest about questions, and encourage with questions

To teach our culture with love and understanding so that they will learn to love our culture

To walk the Mother Earth as a teacher for others and for themselves

To encourage the Circle of Learning in each child to ask more questions

To love each individual child as if they are your own

To encourage and teach each child to respect themselves, and everyone and everything around them

To retain your language today so our future leaders speak it tomorrow

To be a positive role model within the lives of children who know you, see you and love you every day

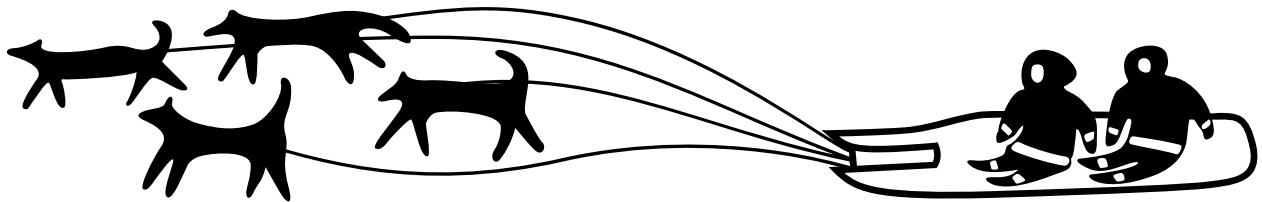
To be honest about your feelings so that they can be honest about theirs

To remember our past, learn from it - and let it go


To uphold the dignity and pride of the Indian Nation as it was, as it is, and for what it will become through the eyes of our children. They will learn from you.

This creed was written by Justina Keewatin, ECE II, Wijiijac Kkwe (Crane Woman), Pine Creek First Nation, Manitoba. She wrote it to inspire caregivers who believe in teaching the Aboriginal culture on a daily basis.

- from "Interaction" - Publication of the Canadian Child Care Federation, Vol. 15, No. 3



BALD EAGLE WELCOMES LAC LA BICHE AHS TO CHURCHILL PARK


 **IN SEPTEMBER 2001**, children from the Lac La Biche Head Start in Alberta went on their first field trip of the year to Churchill Park. Churchill Park is a man-made island ten kilometres from the Lac La Biche site. The whole time the children and staff were at the lake a bald eagle watched over them, following them on their walk through the bush. The children stood at the base of a tree talking with the eagle who responded by shaking its head and ruffling its feathers. Staff members video taped the trip and will add it to a video of annual events which will be made available to parents at the end of the year.

- submitted by Brad Martin, Alberta Region



Children from Lac La Biche Head
Start enjoy Churchill Park

ABORIGINAL HEAD START DELEGATION VISITS CHILE

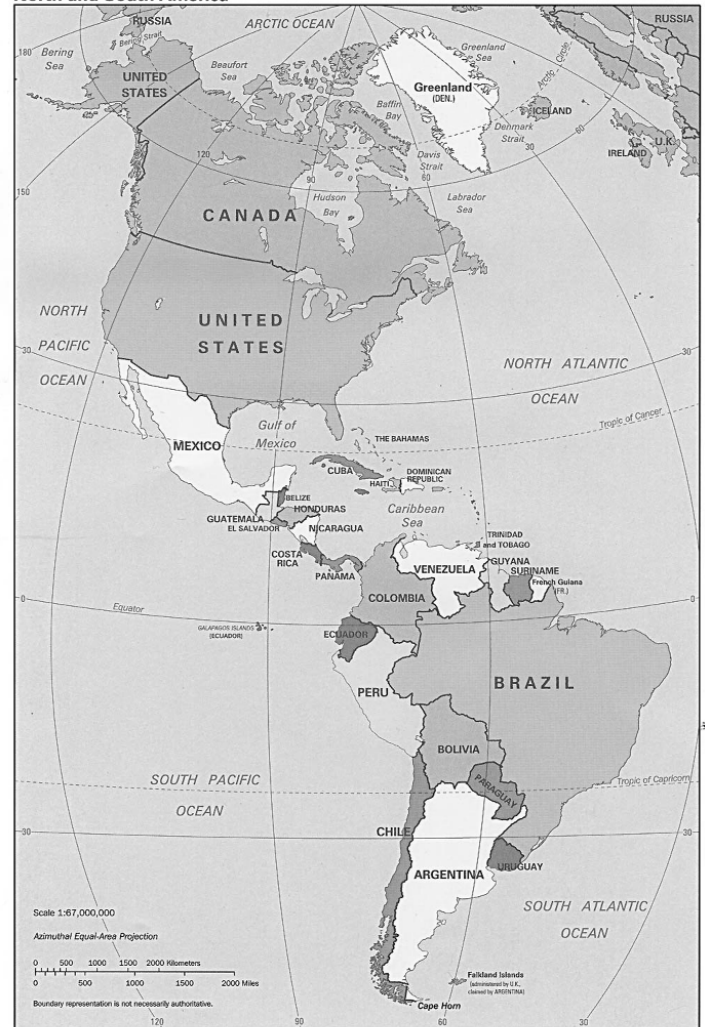
 A small delegation representing Aboriginal Head Start (Urban and Northern Communities) travelled to Chile in August 2001 to develop an understanding of Early Childhood Education practices there and investigate the possibility of exchanges with that country. The delegation consisted of Richard Budgell, National Manager of Aboriginal Head Start (Urban and Northern Communities); Audrey Waite, British Columbia representative on the National Aboriginal Head Start Committee; and Judith Bernhard, Professor of Early Childhood Education at Ryerson Polytechnic University, and a Canadian of Chilean origin. Following research that was done in 2000 and 2001, the National Office concluded that Chile could be a good partner for potential exchanges with AHS, because of the highly-developed system of Early Childhood Education in indigenous communities in Chile.

The delegation did site visits of eight preschools in indigenous communities or neighbourhoods in Santiago, a city of three million and the capital of Chile, and in Temuco, a regional centre in southern Chile with a large indigenous population. The AHS delegation made some observations about preschool programs in Chile, such as:

- preschool programs in Chile have highly-developed curriculum and methodology while operating on much lower funding than is common in Canada;
- sites visited were doing a good job of integrating indigenous cultural practices – e.g. dancing – into the preschool setting;
- preschool sites receive intensive support from the Chilean government or central agencies to run their programs;
- there are high standards for the education of Early Childhood Educators – teachers must have five years of university training. At the same time, the level of parental involvement in the management of preschools in indigenous communities was not immediately obvious; nor was the nature of partnership between indigenous communities or organizations and the government or central agencies.

The delegation concluded that it would be worthwhile to continue to investigate developing full exchanges with people involved in preschool education in indigenous communities in Chile. In its October 2001 meeting, the National Aboriginal Head Start Council supported proceeding with more research, including research into additional sources of funding that could be available for exchanges.

North and South America



Indigenous (Aboriginal) children at a preschool in Santiago, Chile performing a traditional Mapuche dance. The Mapuche are the most populous Indigenous group in Chile.

AHS LETTERS



LETTERS OF SUPPORT FROM THE BORDER CITY AHS SITE

In June of 2001, parents and staff of the Border City Aboriginal Head Start Program in Lloydminster, Saskatchewan/Alberta wrote to Prime Minister Jean Chretien to voice support for the Aboriginal Head Start Program. Here are two letters from parents of children whose lives have been enriched by the Border City AHS Program.

May 17/2001

My name is Carla Fabian and I have one daughter in the Head Start program, her name is Vanessa Toheed. She attended this program last year and I know because of this program, she is more than ready to start kindergarten. This program has taught her reading skills, writing skills and socialization skills. The teachers are dedicated to the fundamental purpose of this program. This program teaches the children to be proud of who they are and where they came from. I feel that this program needs to continue so other children benefit from this program also. Not only do the children benefit, the community benefits also. It shows how we are focussed on our children's education.

Sincerely
Carla Fabian.

To Whom it May Concern,

My name is Christine Calder, I am the mother of Kaela Drower she is currently in the afternoon class at the Aboriginal Head Start program. She is considered new, this is her second year here. Kaela really enjoys coming to the program. I hope in the future that more kids will get the same opportunity that she has had. I also have two younger kids that I hope will be able to attend. Kaela hates to miss a day of school she loves to learn, play with other kids & see her teachers. Kaela knows her ABC's, counts to 50, and is beginning to write her name. The building they are currently in is awfully small, hopefully they will be able to get more funding for more staff, a new bus, and a bigger building. Thank you for listening to my comments and Thank You for having such a program.

Christine Calder.



MINISTER ROCK'S RESPONSE TO THE CHILDREN OF AHS IN NDILO

AHS LETTERS

In the Spring/Summer 2001 newsletter we profiled letters and photos sent to the Honourable Allan Rock, Minister of Health by the Done Necha-lia Gha Enitl'e Ko Aboriginal Head Start in Ndilo. Community members told Minister Rock how much they value the AHS Program in their community and invited him to visit their site. We wanted to share his response to the children with you.



Minister of Health



Ministre de la Santé

Allan Rock

Ottawa, Canada K1A 0K9

JUL 25 2001

The Children
Done Necha-lia Gha Enitl'e Ko
Yellowknives Dene First Nation
Box 2514
Yellowknife, Northwest Territories
X1A 2P8

Dear Children:

I would like to thank you for your wonderful letter of May 12, 2001, in which you tell me all about your school, Done Necha-lia Gha Enitl'e Ko.

I certainly enjoyed the pictures of you and your teachers. Your school looks like a great place to learn.

I thank you for the kind invitation to visit you. I wish you every success as you continue to grow and learn. Keep up the same enthusiasm that your happy faces show in the pictures that you sent to me. If I have the opportunity to be in your area in the near future, I will try to drop in.

Yours very truly,

Allan Rock

Canada

AHS LETTERS

LETTER FROM TED WHITE, MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR NORTH VANCOUVER

The publication "Children Making a Community Whole" was distributed to all Members of Parliament and Senators. AHS received this letter from one Member of Parliament and responded as indicated.



TED WHITE, M.P.

302-1200 Lynn Valley Road
North Vancouver, BC
Canada V7J 2A2

Tel: (604) 666-0585
Fax: (604) 666-0509
e-mail: whitet@canadianalliance.ca



TED WHITE, M.P.
NORTH VANCOUVER

TED WHITE, M.P.

137 West Block
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON
Canada K1A 0A6

Tel: (613) 995-1225
Fax: (613) 992-7319

May 7, 2001

Ms. Lynne Robertson, Evaluation Analyst
Aboriginal Head Start Program
Tunney's Pasture
Jeanne Mance Building
Postal Locator 1909C2
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 1B4

Dear Ms. Robertson,


I have just finished reading the Aboriginal Head Start Initiative Report "Children Making a Community Whole". To my dismay, the report contained only statistics and incidental program information, and nothing which would tell me whether the program has been a success. In fact, the ONLY reference I could find anywhere in the Report which would indicate success or failure appeared on page 25 where it is stated that even after twenty five years of operating a similar program in the United States the same lack of parental involvement is still a problem. Surely if the program was actually working in the United States there would be a whole new generation of parents who, having experienced the Head Start Program as children, would now be directly involving themselves to improve the situation faced by their own children.

In order to increase my understanding of the value of the Aboriginal Head Start Initiative to Aboriginal communities, and the taxpayers of Canada, could you please provide me with more specific data related to the success or failure of the Program. For example, have any of the following occurred as a direct result of the Program, either here or in the United States, and how was the data gathered for the communities affected:

- * A reduction in crime
- * An increase in literacy
- * Improved performance at school
- * Improved attendance at school
- * Better economic outcomes
- * Improved living conditions
- * Lower substance abuse

In the absence of any empirical data proving success, I would respectfully submit that I will have to assume that the Program may be little more than a make-work, feel-good program which has failed to improve things for Aboriginal peoples. Please prove this assumption to be wrong.

Yours truly,


Ted White, MP

AHS LETTERS



Health
Canada

Population and Public Health Branch

OTTAWA ON K1A 1B4

Santé
Canada

Direction générale de la santé de la population et de la santé publique

OTTAWA ON K1A 1B4

Your file Votre référence

Your file Votre référence

Childhood and Youth Division
Postal Locator 1909C2
Tunney's Pasture
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 1B4

Ted White, M.P.
137 West Block
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON
K1A 0A6

Dear Mr. White:

Thank you for your letter of May 7, 2001 inquiring about the results of the Aboriginal Head Start (AHS) program in urban and northern communities.

We are pleased that you took the time to read our publication "Children Making a Community Whole" that reports on the data collected in 1999 from AHS sites. We see the evaluation of the program as an ongoing exercise, and therefore we have continued to collect and analyse data from sites about their performance: we collected data in 2000 that will appear in another report to be published this year, and are in the process of collecting data now to look at where our sites are in 2001.

The questions that you ask relating to the value of the program to Aboriginal communities, and to the Canadian taxpayer, are central to the evaluation exercise. The specific indicators that you mention are being considered as part of our impact evaluation activities (the publication "Children Making a Community Whole" focuses only on the national survey part of our overall evaluation plan). The impact evaluation, currently being designed, will look specifically at some of the indicators that you mention, such as improved performance in school of AHS graduates and improved attendance at school. As I'm sure you can appreciate, as a relatively new program it is difficult for AHS to demonstrate long-term impacts on the lives of the children involved; the program first enrolled children in 1996, and those graduates would still be only eight or nine years old. The impact evaluation will be pilot-tested in the fall of 2001, with a full launch to take place in the fall of 2002. That evaluation will follow a sample group of children and their families during their participation in the program, and afterwards when those children begin in the school system, it will track exactly what kinds of changes can be noticed in Head Start children. In fact it may be desirable to follow those children over the long term, and we hope this may be the subject of a separate research study.

We are conscious of the desire of the members of the Aboriginal community to

tell the story of the program, and we have received many testimonials from parents talking about the progress their children have made in the program and how their family lives and parenting skills have improved. On the point that you raise about parental involvement in the program, you'll note on page 17 of the report that you read, that 85 percent of AHS sites have parent councils, 83 percent give parents a wide variety of decision-making authority, but 70 percent report that getting parents involved is still a struggle; this is not surprising in a program that focuses on vulnerable parents who in many instances are trying to do their best in difficult circumstances.

The American Head Start program, in existence since 1965, is supported by both parties in Congress and has a budget of \$6 billion (U.S.), serving 857,000 children annually. The program in the United States is extensively researched. I would invite you to consult the U.S. federal government's Head Start web site at www2.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/hsb, or I can recommend publications resulting from the biennial Head Start research conferences sponsored by the U.S. federal government. The most recent of these was in June 2000, and the publication is called "Summary of Conference Proceedings, Developmental and Contextual Transitions of Children and Families: Implications for Research Policy and Practice."

In order to see the program in action, I would encourage you to visit an Aboriginal Head Start urban/northern site. In the lower mainland of British Columbia, there are three sites operating, one in the city of Vancouver, one in Surrey, and one in Mission; I have attached a sheet providing short profiles of these sites and their addresses, and if you wish, we would be pleased to coordinate a visit for you to any or all of these sites.

Thank you again for taking the time to write to us about our program; we appreciate the attention of parliamentarians and members of the general public. As you may be aware, one of your caucus colleagues, Dr. Keith Martin, sponsored a motion in October 1998 calling for the federal government to develop a national Head Start program, and we were very interested to see that motion subsequently passed in the House of Commons.

Yours sincerely,

Richard Budgett
National Manager
Aboriginal Head Start (Urban and Northern Communities)

attachments

*To help the people of Canada maintain and improve their health.
Aider les Canadiens et les Canadiennes à maintenir et à améliorer leur état de santé.*

Canada

CHICKENPOX: WHEN SHOULD CHILDREN STAY AT HOME?

Many child care centres and family day homes have policies that keep children at home for five days after their rash appears. The goal of exclusion policies is to protect other children from the disease. Unfortunately, five-day exclusion policies will not stop chickenpox from spreading.

Why five-day exclusion policies do not work

Chickenpox is contagious from two days before the rash appears. The illness is most infectious from 12 to 24 hours before the rash is recognized. It is spread through the air, not just by direct contact with the rash. A study of schools with five-day exclusion policies (which did not allow children with chickenpox back to school until five days after the rash had appeared) showed that the policies did not stop the spread of chickenpox.

Many children with mild chickenpox are "well", that is, they can participate fully in all activities by the second or third day of the illness. Mild chickenpox is defined as having a low fever for a short period of time and only a little rash (fewer than 30 spots).

The Canadian Paediatric Society recommends that children with mild chickenpox be allowed to return to their child care setting as soon as they feel well enough to participate normally in all activities, regardless of the state of their rash.

Facts about chickenpox

Chickenpox typically develops roughly two weeks after contact. It is most infectious 12 to 24 hours before the rash is recognized. The rash usually starts on the trunk or the neck.

Children with chickenpox should not be given acetylsalicylic acid (ASA or Aspirin) or any products containing ASA.

Children with chickenpox who have fever and/or ongoing development of many new rash spots are not well and should not be in child care. It is safe to use acetaminophen to control fever.

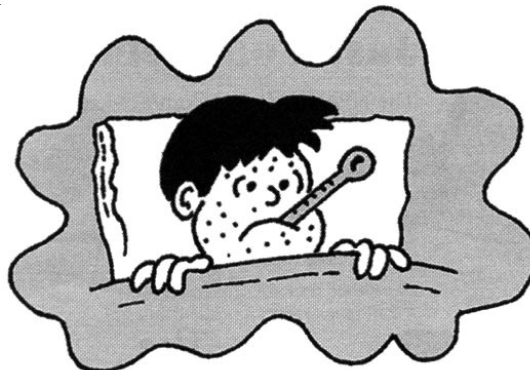
The child needs medical attention if any one of the following occurs:

- The fever is prolonged and high (lasts more than two days and is over 38.5 ° C)
- A new fever develops after the first couple of days. That is, the fever goes away for a day or so and returns.
- A chickenpox spot becomes enlarged, red or very sore.
- The child seems very ill.
- You are concerned that the child does not have mild chickenpox.

As the caregiver...

Chickenpox is very contagious. If a child in your care comes down with chickenpox, other children in your care who are not vaccinated against chickenpox and who have never been exposed to the illness will likely get it in about two to three weeks. Report all cases of chickenpox to your local public health agency.

Warn parents about their child's exposure and what to expect if their child becomes ill. Work with parents of ill children to come to mutually acceptable solutions to the child's attendance in your program. Encourage good personal hygiene in a child with chickenpox so rash spots do not become infected.



Children with chickenpox can probably return to the child care setting as soon as they feel well enough to participate normally in all activities.

A pregnant woman can contract very severe chickenpox that may cause damage to her unborn child. If you are pregnant and are exposed to chickenpox, but have never had or been exposed to this disease before, call your physician immediately.

There is now a chickenpox vaccine. Consider establishing a policy for your child care setting that all children be vaccinated against chickenpox before enrollment.

This information should not be used as a substitute for the medical care and advice of a physician. There may be variations in treatment that a physician may recommend based on individual facts and circumstances.

- from "Interaction" - Publication of the Canadian Child Care Federation, Vol. 15, No. 3

EARLY YEARS ARE LEARNING YEARS - BUILDING PARENT-TEACHER PARTNERSHIPS



The day-to-day reality of many families is different today than a generation ago. Family members spend far less time together and adults often face an on-going struggle to balance the demands of their families and their jobs. While these pressures can cause parents to participate less in their children's lives, there remains a great need for them to be involved in their children's education.

Recent studies show that when families are involved in their children's education in positive ways, the children achieve higher grades and test scores, have better attendance at school, complete more homework, and demonstrate more positive attitudes and behaviour. Reports also indicate that families who receive frequent and positive messages from teachers tend to become more involved in their children's education than do parents who do not receive this kind of communication.

One way to foster children's learning is through joint efforts involving both families and schools, where parents and teachers share responsibility for creating a working relationship that will help children succeed academically. Following are some suggestions on how to build positive parent-teacher relationships.

As their children's first teachers, parents and families can:

- Read together. Read with your children and let them see you and older children read. When adult family members read to their children or listen to them read on a regular basis, achievement improves. Take your children to the library to get a library card and help them find books to suit their interests and hobbies.
- Establish a family routine. Routines generally include time for completing homework, doing chores, eating meals together, and going to bed at an established time. These daily events are important to make life predictable for children and satisfying for all family members. Encourage your child's efforts and be available for questions while she is engaged in academic work and spend time discussing what she has learned.
- Use television wisely. Limit the amount of time children spend watching television and help them choose appropriate programs for viewing. When chosen carefully, some TV programs can help increase interest in learning.
- Keep in touch with the school. Stay aware of what your children are learning, what their assignments are, and how they are doing. Make a point of visiting the school and talking with the teachers through parent/teacher conferences or family nights. If you can't visit, schedule a telephone call to discuss your child's progress.

- Offer praise and encouragement. Parents and families play an important role in influencing a child's confidence and motivation to become a successful learner. Encourage them to complete assignments and introduce them to outside experiences that will enhance their self-confidence and broaden their interests.

In the effort to connect schools with parents, educators can:

- Involve parents in classroom activities. Teachers can let families know how they can be helpful and can ask for their assistance with specific activities. Parents can participate by preparing classroom materials, serving on a committee to select classroom equipment and materials, or sharing information about their careers or hobbies. The more involved parents are in what goes on in the classroom, the more likely they are to understand the teacher's goals and practices.
- Give parents a voice in decisions. Parents' viewpoints should be considered in making decisions about their children's schooling. Programs can open options for families to become involved individually and collectively in making decisions about goals and standards for their children.
- Plan ahead for parent/teacher conferences. Communicate to parents at the beginning of the school year or semester about school policies and services. Inform them about classroom goals and give a few examples of what the children will be learning.
- Foster good communication during parent/teacher conferences. When meeting with family members, create a comfortable environment in which parents feel free to share information, ask questions, and make recommendations. Point out the projects that involved their child and share information in a way that encourages respectful two-way communication. Be careful not to make assumptions about a family member's level of knowledge, understanding, or interest. Schedule an adequate amount of time for the conference so that parents do not feel rushed.

Family and school represent the primary environments in which young children grow and develop, and good schools value parental involvement. The foundation for good parent-teacher relationships is frequent and open communication, mutual respect and a clear understanding of what is best for each individual child.

This is a reproduction of "The Early Years Are Learning Years" which are short information pieces designed by the National Association for the Education of Young Children in the United States.

PEAVINE MÉTIS SETTLEMENT “LITTLE OWLS” LESSON IN FAIRNESS

One of the lessons we teach in Head Start is about fairness and allowing people a chance to succeed. At Peavine Métis Settlement Aboriginal Head Start in Alberta, the children like to race from the monkey bars to the school fence and back. Once they reach the fence they turn and encourage the others to get there.

One morning as the children were lining up to race to the fence, a teacher overheard one of the students say, "You guys, teacher never gets to win. Let her win today, she's old, you know." The race started and the students made sure to stay behind the teacher to ensure she would win. The slower the teacher went, the slower the students went taking great care to make sure the teacher stayed in the lead. When the teacher reached the fence, she turned to encourage the children and found that they were all jumping up and down cheering as loud as they could. "Teacher!!! You did it, you won!"

Submitted by David Turner, Alberta Region



RESOURCES:

THE INVEST IN KIDS FOUNDATION

The Invest In Kids Foundation is a national non-governmental organization with a mission to enhance the capacity of all Canadians to positively influence the emotional, social, and cognitive development of our youngest children. The Foundation is engaged in a great number of activities that are of interest to the AHS Program.

Invest in Kids is engaged in research, public education and awareness, and training. Visit the Invest in Kids Foundation's website to learn more about all the important activities underway, to access reports and publications, and to find links to other resources at www.investinkids.ca or contact the Foundation at 1-877-583-KIDS (5437).

BOOKS, BOOKS, BOOKS

Below is a list of web sites which provide a catalogue of children's books by and about Aboriginal people:

Bibliography of Children's Books by and about Aboriginal people for ages 4-14 www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ks/bib/index_e.html

Fiction www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ks/bib/fcn_e.html

Non-Fiction www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ks/bib/nofcn_e.html

Picture Books www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ks/bib/pcbks_e.html

Aboriginal Language Material
www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ks/bib/lng_e.html

Aboriginal Peoples Represented in Bibliography
www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ks/bib/grp_e.html

- originally published in the "Métis Voyageur" - The Bi-Monthly Publication of the Métis Nation of Ontario - October 2001 Edition

National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)

Whether you work with young children or on behalf of early childhood education, NAEYC has resources to help you grow professionally. You'll improve your own skills and the overall quality of early childhood education as you learn, share, and build with NAEYC. The Association publishes a journal highlighting the latest developments in early childhood education, hosts the largest educational conference in the United States, and offers books, brochures and videos for early childhood professionals. For more information on membership, contact NAEYC at (202) 232-8777 or 1-800-424-2460 or by email membership@naeyc.org

CBC KIDS DISCUSSION FORUM

The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) has developed a website for kids of various ages to raise questions, concerns and opinions about terrorism. <http://www.cbc4kids.ca/general/whats-new/feedback/article28.html>

WORLD ORGANIZATION FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

(Organisation Mondiale pour l'Éducation Préscolaire) (OMEP CANADA)

OMEP Canada provides an opportunity to contribute to the well-being of children (0 to 8 years old) by promoting optimum life conditions (education, health, well-being, growth and happiness) and supporting individuals, families, associations and organizations with similar mandates. OMEP Canada is a member of the World Organization for Early Childhood Education and acts as an advisory body on children's issues. For more information, write to OMEP Canada at 569 du Fleuve, Pointe-au-Père, Québec, G5M 1L1.

CONFERENCE • EVENTS

If you have an event you would like published in the AHS National Newsletter please send your submission to the AHS National Office.

Aboriginal Health Conference

This conference is designed to raise awareness of aboriginal health issues, barriers to access, race and cultural sensitivities, program availability and geographic challenges.

January 14-15, 2002
Empress Hotel, Victoria, B.C.
For more information:
Sharon Baskett (604) 806-5332

The Early Years: Building Family Capacity/Building Supportive Communities

The 3rd Early Years Conference will explore ways to build communities which are truly welcoming and supportive of all families with young children.

January 31-February 2, 2002
Vancouver, B.C.
For more information:
Tel: (604) 822-6156

Build Better Tomorrows - Work Together on the Determinants of Health

February 12-14, 2002
Saskatoon, SK
For more information:
Colleen Zubkow, 1-800-667-7913 or (306) 466-2074

Child Care Conference

An opportunity to share and explore current topics and issues.

May 4, 2002
Grant MacEwan College -
Edmonton, Alberta
For more info:
Tel: (780) 497-5188

Fetal Alcohol Syndrome - Review of Screening Tools

March 16, 2002
Yellowknife, NWT
For more information:
Tel: Lona Hegeman, (867) 873-7051 or 1-800-661-0782
lona_hegeman@gov.nt.ca

6th National Health Promotion Conference - Partnership Research for Health and Social Change

The conference program will bring together researchers, policy makers, practitioners, administrators, and consumers to discuss and develop how interdisciplinary and intersectoral partnerships can facilitate and sustain change.

April 7-10, 2002
University of Victoria
Victoria, B.C.
For more information contact
Marcia Hills:
Tel: (250) 472-4102
Email: hp2002@uvic.ca
Conference Website:
www.hp2002.uvic.ca

National Head Start Association 29th Annual Training Conference

April 24-27, 2002
Phoenix, AZ
For more information:
(703) 739-0875
<http://www.nhsa.org>

2002 High/Scope International Conference

April 30-May 3, 2002
Ypsilanti, MI
For more information:
Tel: (734) 485-2000, ext. 218

Yukon 200 Conference - A Lifetime of Solutions

A conference on how to best integrate services to persons with fetal alcohol syndrome throughout their life building on supports for the individuals and their families.

May 8-10, 2002
Yukon, College, Whitehorse
For more information:
Tel: (867)667-3110
jennifer.schneider@gov.yk.ca
or patricia_living@gov.yk.ca

6th World Conference on Injury Prevention and Control

Injuries, Suicide and Violence: Building Knowledge, Policies and Practices to Promote a Safer World.
May 12-15, 2002
Montreal Convention Centre,
Montreal, PQ

Head Start - The First Eight Years: Pathways to the Future Conference

The Administration on Children, Youth and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, in collaboration with Columbia University - Mailman School of Public Health and the Society for Research in Child Development, announces Head Start's Sixth National Research Conference, "The First Eight Years: Pathways to the Future," to be held June 26-29, 2002 in Washington, DC. For registration and other conference details, visit our website at <http://www.headstartresearchconf.net>. Registrations will be accepted beginning January 11, 2002. For questions regarding registration, please contact Bethany Chirico at bchirico@xtria.com or (703) 821-3090, ext. 233. For information regarding conference programming, please contact Dr. Faith Lamb-Parker at flp1@columbia.edu or (212) 305-4154.

Announcements

The staff of the AHS National Office would like to thank our "Take Your Kid to Work" Grade 9 student, Chris Gus for his contributions to the Fall/Winter newsletter.



ABORIGINAL HEAD START - HEALTH CANADA STAFF

For more information regarding the AHS program in your area,
contact a Program Consultant in one of the following regions:

Atlantic Region

Teresa Palliser, Program Consultant
1505 Barrington Street, Suite 1802
Halifax, NS
B3J 3Y6
Tel: (902) 426-7148
Fax: (902) 426-9689

Quebec Region

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

Ontario Region

Ronda Evans, Program Consultant
55 St Clair Avenue East, 3rd Floor
Toronto ON
M4T 1M2
Tel: (416) 973-5778
Fax: (416) 954-8211

Manitoba/Saskatchewan Region:

Manitoba

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

Saskatchewan

Elizabeth Dorion, Program Consultant
1920 Broad Street, 18th Floor
Regina SK
S4P 3V2
Tel: (306) 780-7650
Fax: (306) 780-6207

Alberta Region

David Turner, Team Leader
#620, 220 - 4th Avenue S.E.
Box 1236
Calgary AB
T2G 4X3
Tel: (403) 292-5656
Fax: (403) 292-6696

British Columbia Region

Rose Sones, Program Consultant
440, 757 West Hastings Street
Vancouver BC
V6C 1A1
Tel: (604) 666-9917
Fax: (604) 666-8986

Northern Secretariat (YK, NT, NU)

Yukon

Program Consultant
100 - 300 Main Street
Whitehorse YK
Y1A 2B5
Tel: (867) 393-6780
Fax: (867) 393-6774

Northwest Territories

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

Nunavut

Program Consultant
60 Queen Street, 14th Floor (PL#: 3914A)
Ottawa, Ontario
K1Y 5Y7
Tel: (613) 946-8102
Fax: 1-800-949-2718

National Office - Ottawa

Aboriginal Childhood and Youth Section
Childhood and Youth Division
9th Floor, Jeanne Mance Building
Tunney's Pasture - PL: 1909C2
Ottawa ON
K1A 0K9
Fax: (613) 941-5492
Email: ahs-papa@www.hc-sc.gc.ca
Richard Budgell, Program Manager
Tel: (613) 957-2917
Rena Morrison, Senior Program Officer
Tel: (613) 954-8615
Kari Nisbet, Program Officer
Tel: (613) 946-2056
Karen Roach, Program Officer
Tel: (613) 957-6488
Lynne Robertson, Evaluation Analyst
Tel: (613) 952-9769
April Jacko, Administrative Assistant
Tel: (613) 952-5845