



G

# ROWING TOGETHER

NEWS & RESOURCES FOR THE BC FIRST NATIONS HEAD START ON-RESERVE PROGRAM

BC FIRST NATIONS HEAD START

## Healthy Babies Club!



*sharing  
successes*



(FORT RUPERT) EMMA

**A**t Fort Rupert near Port Hardy on the northern tip of Vancouver Island a wonderful gathering is taking place.

The **Healthy Babies Club** is a combination of efforts from a large group of service providers. A group of moms, dads, grandparents and other caregivers meet weekly to share a healthy, well-balanced meal (prepared by the Head Start cook) and share ideas and help one another during this loosely structured time. One week the group shares lunch, and the alternate week they have dinner together.

The community health nurse, community health worker, dietician, Head Start worker, and infant development worker all help to provide information on children's health and development, weigh and

*Continued on back page*



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*Special thanks to those who contributed to this issue:*

Deanna Cook (Enderby)  
Joan Gignac (Chemainus)  
Lillian Sampson (Terrace)  
Sarah Soltau-Heller (Port Rupert)  
Colleen Smith (Alert Bay)  
Staff at several sites who spoke to us about their PAC experiences

#### **We would love to hear from you!**

Please send your photos, story ideas, draft articles, staff profiles, questions you would like answered, resource contacts, great curriculum ideas, and success stories you would like to share.

Send submissions or queries to:  
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## Head Start components in practice



(TERRACE) RENEE BENNETT AT THE CARD READER STATION; LILLIAN SAMPSON SHOWING ELDER LILA MAISON HOW TO MAKE A RECORDING



### Culture

**A**T KITSSELAS HEAD START IN TERRACE, COORDINATOR LILLIAN SAMPSON HAS ELDERLY TO DO VOICE RECORDINGS ON a card master magnetic card reader. Staff go to elders' homes for an afternoon of tea, laughter and fun, and ask the elders to record words (such as numbers or colors) or short phrases for the children.

Back at the Head Start centre, the card master magnetic card reader is set up next to the music station. Children come and work at the card master as they wish. They love repeating the words, and are especially thrilled to recognize the voices of the elders: "That's my Grandmother!"

(TERRACE) BRIEANNA WRIGHT-SEYMOUR LISTENING TO A RECORDING



Wintergreen Learning Materials ([www.wintergreen.ca](http://www.wintergreen.ca)) sell Card Masters—item number JL100 - Language Audio Card Reader—for \$449.95 plus the cost of the blank cards (\$46.99/100 cards). Wintergreen also sells pre-recorded cards with pictures. Call toll-free: 1-800-268-1268 Fax toll-free: 1-800-567-8054 Mail: 14 Connie Cr., Unit #10 Concord, ON L4K 2W8

Other ways to get recordings: bring the card machine to any community function (including Elders gatherings or meetings) and invite impromptu recordings—you may get participation from all ages! It is often a real crowd draw.

## Ooops!

Our apologies to Cape Mudge Band Head Start. We wrongly identified their site as being located at Quathiaski Cove on Quadra Island, but it is in fact located on the Quinsam reserve in Campbell River.



## Nutrition

AT NAMGIS HEAD START IN ALERT BAY, STAFF USE FOOD GIFT CERTIFICATES TO support families in developing or enhancing nutritional eating habits.

“If a parent and their child/ren attend on Monday and again on Tuesday they receive a coupon which can be redeemed at Shop-Rite grocery store (coupons are also distributed on Thursdays). We have a verbal agreement between the store manager and her staff that only foods derived from the Canada Food Guide are to be purchased with this coupon, and so far we’ve had no problems or complaints.

Each coupon is numbered in the upper right hand corner, and for each coupon that is handed out, we record it in our sign-in book and refer back to it once the coupon has been redeemed and returned to us by the store. This assures us and the accounting department that they are definitely being used. The coupons are in \$10 and \$20 denominations.”

“Parents and extended family members who attend on a regular basis have expressed their appreciation for the coupons.”

Colleen Smith, Head Start Coordinator, Alert Bay



(ALERT BAY) MOM ANNIE PUGLAS (STANDING) HOLDING HER DAUGHTER KYLEE. GRANNY AND FOSTER PARENT RHODA PUGLAS (SITTING) HOLDING GRANDSON RIDELL AND FOSTER CHILD, CHANELLE.

“Receiving the food coupons allows me to purchase a wide variety of produce each week, which really helps!”

“Coupons are very helpful. I’m on S.A. I get milk every week. Coupons are awesome. Thank you.”  
—Kate Matilpi

“I am very happy and appreciate the food coupons especially for me because I’m a foster parent and a stay-at-home mom. It helps a lot.”  
—Rhoda Puglas

“Ever since I have been on maternity leave my grocery list has gone down, but with the food coupons; it helps a lot.”  
—Annie Puglas

## Head Start components

1 Culture & Language

2 Education

3 Health Promotion

4 Nutrition

5 Parent & Family Involvement

6 Social Support

## Newsletter feedback

Several sites responded to our request for feedback on the newsletter. Thank you! We are pleased to know that you are getting ideas for your own programs from the newsletter. **We rely on your submissions so we can share experiences and ideas.** We welcome complete articles from sites, but if you have an idea or suggestion and no time to write it up, please call and we will be happy to quickly interview you over the phone. And of course, we are always looking for more photos of Head Start staff, children, and families and all your activities.

Please contact us anytime with your ideas and questions—we accept submissions on a continuing basis. Call, e-mail or write to the address on p. 2 (opposite).





*journeying  
through  
challenges*

## Why Have a PAC?

Head Start projects are encouraged to include parents in a meaningful way in the planning, development, operation and evaluation of the program. Ideally, each project would have an empowered parent body—a “parent advisory council”—providing leadership and direction, working together with staff to provide the maximum benefit for the children.

*Parents in Aboriginal Head Start: Building Community. A 77-page booklet with a detailed chapter on PACs which includes decision-making, structure, roles and responsibilities, meetings, conflict resolution and other group facilitation skills.*

Available for loan from BCFNHS Head Office. Contact Kelly Terbasket at (250) 499-8804.

## PACS *and* Involving Parents



(ALERT BAY) DAYSHA MCKINNEY AND DAD, DON MCKINNEY

## WHY IS PARENT INVOLVEMENT IMPORTANT?

Head Start works to support whole family growth and development by involving parents as much as possible in all levels of activities. As parents gain confidence, get new ideas, acquire skills, make friends, and dialogue about their child’s development, they are empowered both to bring forth their own gifts and to gain a deeper understanding of their children.

### **Acknowledging Realities**

It is not always easy or even practical to form a PAC—the relationship between a PAC and staff can be complex and time-consuming, and community history and resources, parent and staff resources, and varying expectations and limitations all have a part to play.

### **Parent limitations**

As we all know, parents with small children are extremely busy! In many communities, parents are working or attending school full-time, and may not have the time or personal resources to

become involved in additional meetings. Some parents, especially if they are very young and lacking experience themselves, may not feel they have anything to contribute.

### **Training needs**

Organizing and facilitating group meetings are learned skills, and not things that come easily or naturally to everyone. Staff may not be experienced in running meetings, guiding group decision-making, etc., and staff and parents alike may be uncertain about PAC roles and responsibilities.



### Workload and budget

With a new project, the workload can be overwhelming. Even for staff at established sites, there are only so many hours in a day and days in a week. Staff must judge their own capacity for starting and supporting a PAC.

### Community realities

Each community has its own reality to work within. In small, tight-knit communities, family conflicts may pose challenges. Some communities may be struggling with crises and have limited resources if community workers and families are already stretched thin with other responsibilities.

## BUILDING TRUST

*Working in a tiny island community, one Head Start coordinator found that as a new person on the block, she had to gain the trust of families and provide opportunities for them to get to know her outside of work: “It takes time to build trust.”*

Although her community has a healthy PAC which has been in place for several years, ongoing challenges include a high number of working parents who do not have time to become involved, (and who may be away during the day on the mainland) or whose primary need is for a safe place for their child, while they are very busy with their own schooling.

The PAC meetings are held once a month during lunch hour, with lunch provided. Many of the Head Start parents are in an adjacent adult education program, so this arrangement makes attendance convenient for them. PAC meetings are open to anyone who is interested, and include the community education coordinator, grandparents and elders. The group has a clear mandate as a place for communication—for parents to raise concerns, ask questions, etc., and for joint program planning (seasons, themes, etc).

Asked what has worked for her, the coordinator says “One-on-one. You can’t just put a poster up. You have to do it the First Nation way. Go and personally invite them. Tell them: I need you; you’ve got something worthwhile to offer.”

## ADAPTING TO COMMUNITY CIRCUMSTANCES

*One small northern Head Start site formed a PAC when its program began, but the group was not representative of all the families and became dominated by just a few individuals. With lack of experience and possibly misunderstood goals for the group, meetings turned largely into complaint sessions—demoralizing for staff and not useful in terms of constructive feedback.*

Community members were already dealing with many serious issues (including significant substance abuse problems), and the handful of healthy families who might have volunteered to sit on a PAC were already overextended.

So rather than worrying about having a formal parent body, staff instead focused on creating a welcoming “Open Door” policy and building relationships and connecting with parents and families one-on-one, within the framework of the program and its normal hours.

Some parents join their children at lunch. They are also encouraged to come in as paid “subs”, which is educational for them, giving them a chance to learn about the principles of child development and the rationales behind program delivery, as well as contributing to trust and familiarity between staff and parents.

Staff continually ask parents for input, informally through check-ins with parents when they are dropping off or picking up children, or through parent questionnaires (the coordinator might ask “Can I have ten minutes?” and assure confidentiality, then go through the questionnaire together with the parent on-site).

*If parents are enjoying new experiences, learning new skills, feeling appreciated and accepted, they will want to continue their involvement.*

Many sites find that their **“Open Door” policy** has been really important in setting a welcoming atmosphere for parents. Making it as convenient as possible for parents to communicate with staff and to take part in activities increases the likelihood parents will participate.

To make it easy for parents to attend, many sites hold meetings during a meal time, and **provide food and childcare.**

One coordinator finds parents appreciate the **short daily newsletter** that she puts out. It is a simple, photocopied one-pager, which she prepares toward the end of the afternoon and quickly copies before pick-up time.

Another site has a **sign-in routine** for parents and children, with a dry erase board posted right beside the sign-in book, where staff post daily notices.

This same site uses **Circle time as a check-in time for parents**—parents are encouraged to stay through circle time and staff take time to acknowledge parents, pass along information, or get feedback.





## PACS and Involving Parents

### Orientation Session

Involve parents by making sure they know all about your program. Hold an orientation session at the beginning of the year (or twice a year). Some sites plan this together with a meal or feast. In a friendly and informal atmosphere, you might include:

- Staff introductions
- HS Guidelines and Principles
- Overview of the curriculum and program
- Rights and responsibilities of parents
- Volunteer opportunities for parents
- Classroom tour
- Presentation of Parent Handbooks



(PORT RUPERT) BABY MADISON AND MOM, MARIE

### Questions for staff

How well are we involving parents in the decision-making process?

Do we involve parents in some parts of decisions, but not others?

Do we involve parents only in easy decisions?

Do we have representation from a broad range of parents?

Do we rely on a few parents to represent all parents?

Are there some parent perspectives (such as working parents, or fathers) who are not represented?

What do we see as our strengths?

Where can we make immediate improvements?

### COMMUNICATION BOOKS

Many of our Head Start parents are working or attending school or short courses and do not always have the time to come into the centre to speak with teachers. Some parents do not have cars and their children ride our bus to the childcare and parents only have contact with the bus driver.

Staff found it a challenge to communicate with parents as they are busy with daily programming and looking after the children, so they don't always have the time to phone parents if they have concerns. Parents are busy with work and they don't always have the time to phone either.

In order to overcome the communication barrier, our staff developed *Communication Books* to let parents know about important things that have happened with their children in the daytime such as: gross motor development, achievements, foods the children liked, behaviors, happy moments, illness, diapering, successes in school, upcoming events.

The communication books work well as a way for teacher and parent to communicate about the child in a positive manner. Approximately 80% of the parents participate in the communication books. The staff still continue to write notes in the other 20% of books to keep parents updated. The staff use the quiet time during naps to write notes in the communication books.

Deanna Cook, Head Start Coordinator, Enderby

### Resources

First Nations Training & Consulting Services is preparing a *Guide for Incorporating Parent and Family Involvement and Social Support*. It will include strategies and some examples of how Head Start sites are incorporating these two components. FNTCS would like to hear from Head Start sites on how they are incorporating parent and family involvement and social support into their programs. Please send your ideas and photographs to (250) 652-7039 or e-mail: [fntcs@telus.net](mailto:fntcs@telus.net).

First Nations Training & Consulting Services offers on-site PAC training in communities, which includes: an overview of Head Start, creating/reviewing vision and philosophy; developing terms of reference; policy development, implementation and evaluation; overview of curriculum development; and meetings (developing an agenda, staff reports, conducting meetings, recording and storing minutes).

For more information, contact Edith Loring-Kuhanga at (250) 652-7039 or by e-mail at: [fntcs@telus.net](mailto:fntcs@telus.net).

The guidebooks will be completed and sent out to all of the projects in the Spring 2004.



# Head Start Staff

## Christine Burgess



**Position:**

Head Start  
Program Manager  
BC Region

**Location:**

Vancouver, B.C.

*inside  
Head Start*

CHRISTINE AND A FEW FRIENDS!

*“I love working with Head Start.”*

When I was working in the region two years ago, I became familiar with the First Nations and Inuit Health Branch. I was impressed with close ties that the branch has with the communities and with the dedication of the people who work here. I returned to Ottawa to spend a year in Aboriginal policy in the hope that it would allow me to come back and work in the region. So I was thrilled to have the opportunity to join the BC First Nations Head Start team.

It's been quite a year! I am excited about the 15 new Head Start sites and have been deeply impressed with the existing sites. I have had the opportunity to visit about half of the existing sites and hope to visit every one over the coming months. I am grateful for the

warm welcome I have received across the province and for the commitment to Head Start that I've seen at the community level.

Outside of work I spend most of my time on the water, either in a kayak or more recently on a sail boat. I am happiest outside and spend a lot of my time hiking, camping or practicing my karate. But when the weather gets too cold and wet, I retreat to my studio and my paintings. I also enjoy traveling which is good as lately I've been spending most of my time on the road. Frequent trips to Victoria to see my brother and sister, as well as the orientations and site visits have meant that I usually have a suit case packed and ready to go.

I am looking forward to another wonderful year of working with all of you.



*Healthy Babies Club, continued from cover*

monitor babies and give workshops on topics ranging from health issues to early literacy.

The group receives support from various agencies including the Kwigwis Daycare, which provides a beautiful, clean, appropriate setting for the gatherings. Head Start, the Canadian Prenatal Nutrition Program and the local band all contribute money, personnel and other supports.

Parents enjoy coming to the group with their children. "I enjoy talking with other moms and knowing that I am not the only one having trouble being a parent." "It is a friendly, comfortable environment where everyone is really nice." Some of the

(PORT RUPERT) EMMA WITH MOM, CRYSTAL



favorite activities are the "hands-on crafts and activities, especially the keepsakes that we make about baby." Other caregivers appreciate the nurse and health worker being there to "answer all my questions." There is a toy/book lending library that can be accessed, as well as literacy bags that are

exchanged for at-home use at this time.

Staff find this an excellent time to connect with caregivers and colleagues. New moms or moms new to the community are introduced to programs that are available, and caregivers of older children are reminded what types of programs are provided by the various workers.

I love being given the opportunity to work as a team with other like-minded professionals to address the needs of parents and their children. It is because of the enthusiasm of the parents and caregivers that this program is so successful. It truly takes a whole community to raise a child and we have made great strides towards that vision.

Sarah Soltau-Heller  
Head Start Coordinator, Fort Rupert

# CALENDAR

February 4 - 7, 2004

## **The 4th Early Years Conference (Vancouver).**

How relationships influence a child's emotional experiences and lifelong well-being. Designed for educators, families, and professionals working with children in a variety of fields, the conference will look at how services can contribute to a family's growth and happiness, and how service providers can promote the physical, emotional and spiritual well-being of a child. A multi-disciplinary group of presenters and participants will address topics including children, families, communities, support programs and professional services. Over 40 workshops with discussions of specific strategies for supporting children and families with varied abilities.

Tel: (604) 822-0554

Fax: (604) 822-4835

Web: [www.interprofessional.ubc.ca](http://www.interprofessional.ubc.ca)

March 24 - 26, 2004

## **Adults with FASD. Swimming Upstream: A Reality Check (Vancouver).**

For those living or working with adults with FASD. A UBC Continuing Education conference looking at issues such as parenting with FAS, FAS and the law, mental health, ethics, homelessness, relationships, finances, addictions, health and chronic grief.

Tel: (604) 822-0054

Fax: (604) 822-4835

Web: [www.interprofessional.ubc.ca](http://www.interprofessional.ubc.ca)

May 9 - 12, 2004

## **"Circles of Influence: Building Capacity Through Partnership and Collaboration" (Prince George).**

Bi-annual conference presented by the Children, Families, Communities Conference Society. Panels & workshops focussed on **children** (including ECD, education), **families** (family dynamics, general parenting resources, etc.), and **communities** (systemic health issues, multicultural issues, the justice system and other institutional responses to child and family well-being)—all from the perspectives of academics and professionals, community-based service providers and the voices and experiences of children themselves.

For info, call Stacy Leblanc at:

1-866-704-2990 extension #2 (toll free)

E-mail: [stacy@casper.ca](mailto:stacy@casper.ca)

Web: <http://www.cfcc-pg.ca/>

Applications for registration scholarships are available.

