



B.C. First Nations Head Start A Blessing Ceremony

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PARENTS WANT THEIR CHILDREN TO BE IN A GOOD PLACE, A SAFE PLACE, A PROTECTED PLACE.

Native traditional lifestyle was built around the idea that life was sacred and much of what was learned was done and carried out in a ceremonial way.

You might have a ceremony at some special time each year to bless your program. Spring might be a good time, because it is the time of new birth, or at the start of the new school year in September.

Ask the Elders to come and bless your program in a traditional way. Invite other religious leaders to come and bless your program at the same time. This will do two things. It will show unity and assure people that your program respects all religions in the community. At the same time, invite Chief and Council, parents and other important people to come and witness the ceremony. You could call it "Beginning in a Good Way Ceremony".

The community can witness the day care staff promise the Creator that they will do things in a good way during the coming year. This is a simple ceremony where all of you say together, "Great Spirit, we will all try and do our best for the community and for each other during this new year." This can be a good time to have your "Open House" and allow the children to take people around to show off your program.

Another option is a "Lighting the Way" ceremony. This is an evening ceremony where a traditional dinner is prepared to celebrate all the new things the children are learning, and to acknowledge the responsibility of the staff to teach the children and of the children to learn from their teachers.

At the end of the dinner, the lights are put out and the Chief lights a single candle. Then staff members come forward with unlit candles. The Chief lights all of their candles and blows his out. All of the children come forward with their parents to have their candles lit. Speak about the importance of the children, of education, of caring. Then, turn on the lights, and serve dessert!