



B.C. First Nations Head Start **Singing and Dancing in Kitwanga**

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CHILDREN AT KITWANGA HEAD START ENJOY PARTICIPATING IN A WONDERFUL SONG AND DANCE PROGRAM which passes on culture and language, and builds community. The song and dance program has been part of the community's school and daycare program since 1994.

Initially three Elders, David Milton, Ernest Hyzims and Ray Morgan, would come to the daycare once a week and teach children songs, how to dance to some of the songs and to come into the feast. These Elders have since passed away, and now Calvin and Alvin Hyzims have taken over where their father left off.

An adult Song and Dance group also meets once a week. According to Head Start teacher Joyce Williams, the group is "part of the Head Start program, but the doors are open to the whole community. We have 15 involved so far. Usually two or three Elders participate."

Head Start staff have developed their own childrens' CD of 25 Gitsken songs, making audio recordings and also filming some of the performing. A summer student created the CD as a special project. The songs include (English titles): Slippery Fish, I Love You, Good Morning, Feast Song, and others.

Kitwanga Head Start's newest song is about recent local history. It was created during the time the Gitskens objecting to getting provincial licenses on their territory and they had a marshmallow war with the fisheries. It is called the "Anki Iss Song." Head Start staff and children recently performed "Anki Kiss" for the Chiefs' gathering in the Kitwanga community hall.

"How we present the actions to the new songs we learn at a feast hall gives the children a sense of pride of who they are."

Head Start staff member Milli Hyzims