



B.C. First Nations Head Start Using The Virtues Guide With Children

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TSAWATAINEUK FIRST NATION'S LITTLE WOLF HEAD START is located at Kingcome Inlet, an isolated community accessible only by boat or plane, nearly 300 km northwest of Vancouver, on a fjord carved into the Coast Mountains.

At Little Wolf, virtues are a long-established and important part of the preschool program. Before they ever heard of the *Virtues Guide*, staff had been teaching the children about kindness, sharing, and other virtues. A parent in the community donated a series of children's books called *Let's Talk About...* (*Kindness, Sharing, Fighting, Carelessness*), and staff found the children really enjoyed reading and discussing these books together.

In the early 1990s Linda Kavelin Popov, the author of the *Virtues Guide*, came to the community and shared about her program. From their copy of her book, elders translated the 52 virtues into Kwakwala, and made them into Kwakwala virtues cards.

Coordinator Helen Willie says that working with virtues is something that children respond to very positively and is naturally integrated into daily routines, like calendar and reading circle. At circle time, for example, virtues of self-discipline, self-determination, respect, listening, and sharing are emphasized. At all times, a "no-tattling" policy is set up to encourage problem-solving. Children go to a time-out chair as a consequence if rules are broken, but staff say the time-out chair is rarely needed now.

Every day at calendar time, staff choose a virtue card and first ask the children what they know about the virtue, which is often a lot! Then staff discuss the virtue with the children, using some of the suggestions from the *Virtues Guide*.

One thing Helen especially values about working with the virtues is the value it places on children's spirituality: "All of our traditional teachings are naturally integrated."

Helen is happy to talk to share her experiences with other sites interested in doing Virtues with their children. Call her at (250) 974-3047 or fax (250) 974-3008.