



B.C. First Nations Head Start **Healthy Babies Club**

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AT FORT RUPERT, NEAR 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 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 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 toward that vision.”

Sarah Soltau-Heller
Head Start Coordinator, Fort Rupert