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ROWING TOGETHER

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

BC FIRST NATIONS HEAD START ON RESERVE



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L TO R: CRYSTAL COLLISON, CANDACE DAVIS, JOLENE SAMPARE, NATASHA VENN, SHARLENA WILSON, AND JUANITA TAIT.

"Bucks for Babies"

AS OUR MOMS AND TOTS PROGRAM INCREASED IN PARTICIPATION, WE STARTED TO SEE MORE AND MORE PREGNANT MOMS come through our doors. As we spent more and more time together, conversations about the expense of new babies, new clothes, equipment etc. seemed to weigh heavy on the moms, so

I suggested a "Baby Drive" to help with costs. They loved the idea so we set up a meeting for anyone interested in participating and off we went!

We met weekly up until the first fundraiser, which was a Mother's Day Brunch and Rose Sale. During those meetings we created a name for the group and

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set some guidelines. The day was a success: we had four pregnant moms and a couple of supportive spouses and one set of grandparents help out that day. We raised a total \$322 and each mom was awarded \$75 into their separate accounts. We were all hooked! For June, the moms had a 50/50 Father's Day Draw and again four moms participated in this event. We hosted a Flea Market for July; the money maker was the rental of the tables. The program is in constant development! Participating moms have spread the word to other moms and so membership steadily increases. For each month, any challenges that arise are discussed and new guidelines are put into place.

The overall goal is to complete one fundraiser a month in which any pregnant mom and any new mothers with newborns six months and under can participate. All monies raised are equally divided amongst the moms who participated for that fundraiser.

Moms put together a wish list of acceptable baby items and when their new babies are born they may purchase an item from the list. Examples are: a hospital bag filled with baby essentials (nursing bra, nursing pads, diapers, wipes, take-home outfits, diapers, wipes, one large item like a car seat or crib, and equipment for the lending cupboard (breast pumps, jumpers, stroller, backpack, etc.)

A huge success has been that moms do not have to participate every month; moms can miss one event and still jump into the next month's scheduled fundraiser. So moms/families in transition, moms with health conditions, etc. do not feel the pressure to be constantly involved. It's their choice when they wish to participate.

The program is completely parent-driven and the fundraisers are chosen by

the group. What I have observed in the past three months is the development of a support group amongst our pregnant moms and that they are visible in the community! (All of our pregnant moms talk about how isolating it feels to be pregnant in our small community.

In addition to the fundraising, at the request of our pregnant moms we met with the local Health Center to discuss the current Pre-Natal Program. It was identified that there was no educational component just for our pregnant mothers. As a result were able to partner with the Greenville Health Center and the Infant Development Program to add

a Pre-Natal Outreach Program once a month for the moms. On the last Tuesday of each month our pregnant moms will have an educational information session, some discussion, receive their vouchers and stay for a quick Bucks for Babies meeting. Included in weekly drop-ins where we hold our meetings, the moms have a healthy snack and just talk about their babies!

Some challenges have been finding consistent support for our group. We have had donations from a couple of organizations for start-up costs, but no other funding has been secured. In addition our volunteer base is limited to supportive spouses and family and myself. These are relatively small challenges in comparison to our many successes with this new program. Nonetheless funding and increasing our volunteer base will be our objectives for our upcoming year.

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