



First Nations Health Authority
Health through wellness

Aboriginal Head Start On-Reserve (AHSOR)

Exploring Your Program

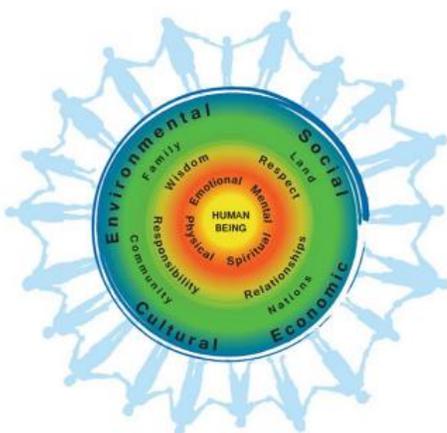
“Connections to Land-based Learning”

This is the first offering on exploring your program. This piece focuses on connections to land-based teachings. We’ve included links to a wide range of resources within the document, and you can discover more articles and ideas at fnha.ca/what-we-do/maternal-child-and-family-health/aboriginal-head-start-on-reserve.

Aboriginal Head Start On-Reserve recognizes and affirms that culture and language are the fundamental part of a child's development and reflect the uniqueness of our First Nations communities. The six key components of Aboriginal Head Start On-Reserve support the healthy emotional, social, spiritual, physical and intellectual development of our children:

(1) culture and language;(2) education;(3) health promotion;(4) nutrition;(5) parent and family involvement; and (6) social support.

Please use your judgement when doing the activities described below, which may not be appropriate for all age groups or all children. *It is intended to provide framework for each community based upon their own stage of development and state of readiness. This information is Community-based and Community-paced to support each community at their own stage of decision-making.*



There are many things to consider when we are continuing to build and develop a strong, healthy and well-balanced program. As children are “our most precious gifts,” it is equally important to take care of our body, mind and spiritual wellbeing.

A journey towards wellness is ever-evolving; it has been said that this journey truly starts with ourselves. We are the role models in how to live a good life for our children.



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Some Aboriginal Head Start “We Believe” Statements for Inspiration:

We believe....

That children have a right to learn their respective First Nations language(s) and histories, and adults have a responsibility to pass on the instructions that the Creator gave in the beginning of time as are reflected in our languages, cultural beliefs and cultural practices.

That children, under the guidance of Elders, will embrace learning throughout their life.

That children acquire knowledge by watching, listening and doing, and adults are responsible for encouraging and guiding them in all those activities.

Download the complete set of “We Believe” posters on [the Aboriginal Head Start On-Reserve webpage](#)



Head Start Delivery Models

As communities consider their families’ needs, they may also be considering the various seasons such as spring, summer, fall and winter. We have witnessed how flexible the Head Start Delivery Models can be. For example: Outreach can allow communities to offer various camps such as cultural camps; language/language nest camps; family camps etc. Some communities have developed new and innovative ways to incorporate land-based learning year round.

Connections and Land-based learning

For many generations, First Nations communities used elements such as life cycles, directions and the seasons of spring, summer, fall and winter to build and sustain their lives. Each territory varies in traditional beauty of its land, water, forests, mountains or terrains.

As communities take a closer look at their seasonal/cultural calendars and overall planning for program development, they may be searching for ways to explore new concepts. We have witnessed many communities weave the relationship of our land-based healing and teachings into their Head Start programs.



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The following are examples of points to consider when developing or implementing concepts of an outdoor land-based program. Administration such as: Budget, materials and resources; Program planning and development; Hours of Operation and Daily Schedule; Teambuilding and Training Needs; Staffing Needs etc.



Building Land-based Curriculum



For many years, we have witnessed communities gather and develop curriculum with Knowledge Keepers, Elders, traditional healers, community members and parents to participate in experiential learning during the planning process, providing the opportunity to offer or speak to other protocols/teachings for consideration. Such as: offerings, prayers or other honourings.

We suggest that you follow your community's protocols while promoting awareness, inclusion and belonging. This is a wonderful opportunity to engage your community, find out their talents and ask for their help. For example, other community programs may assist in designing and/or building picnic tables. Do you have community members that are interested in developing a community garden, or maybe caretaking the garden? Reach out and find your community partners and collaborate.

Head Start and the 6 Key Components:

As the child is the learner, we have observed the importance of meeting them at their current learning level. It's about the process, not the outcome. It's about building the children's confidence as they learn through playing in their natural environments. Outdoor play supports our respect and connection to the land which is important for our mind, body and spiritual wellbeing.





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There are many benefits and life skills to be learned through risky play which include fostering problem-solving, building resiliency and persistence, to name a few. Land-based learning has endless possibilities, including sensory and fine/gross motor play. Introducing a child to the experience of touch, smell, listen and observation further builds upon their sensory learning, while enhancing their social -emotional and spiritual wellbeing. Consider how you will incorporate the six key components into your outdoor program.

Culture and Language: share and explore teachings of our plant foods and medicines or other traditional ways of living. Promote and inform animal awareness and safety. Invite language speakers, Elders, or Knowledge Keepers to share their gifts and talents.

Education: develop and create opportunities for language/literacy skills, physical activity and motor development. Oral storytelling, songs and creation stories have been passed down for many generations. This is a great way to explore the history of our plants, medicines and wildlife while developing our relationship with the various elements of land such as the lakes, rivers and forests.



Health Promotion: going on a walk/hike supports not only physical and mental wellbeing, it also assists in our spiritual wellbeing. There are many benefits to harvesting/gathering plant medicines or wild vegetables. Promote linkages or visits from your local health providers or other specialists. Offer traditional wellness workshops and invite your families to learn through their child's development.



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Social Support and Family Involvement: Invite guest speakers or extend an invitation to weavers, traditional medicine holders, carvers, knitters, drum makers, artists, beaders, hunters, trappers and other traditional Knowledge Keepers, Elders or language speakers. Consider other wellness or healing opportunities or traditional gatherings. Invite families to share their members' gifts and/or knowledge such as favourite traditional foods, crafts, dances, arts, and drumming.



Nutrition: share meals, snacks or recipes together such as harvested plants, deer, moose, elk, fish, clam or other traditional stews. Share teachings on harvesting, fishing, hunting and the cultural value of our traditional foods. Invite Knowledge Keepers such as hunters/gatherers and offer a workshop to promote awareness and exploration.

Resources to Explore:

Traditional Food Fact Sheets

https://www.fnha.ca/WellnessSite/WellnessDocuments/Traditional_Food_Facts_Sheets.pdf#search=traditional%20foods

Canning Foods: Your Guide to Successful Canning

<https://www.fnha.ca/WellnessSite/WellnessDocuments/FNHA-Canning-Foods-Your-Guide-To-Successful-Canning.pdf#search=traditional%20foods>

BC Early Learning Framework

https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/early-learning/teach/earlylearning/early_learning_framework.pdf

Outdoor risky play

<https://www.earlylearningservices.com.au/2016/10/26/challenge-risk-childrens-play/>
<http://www.child-encyclopedia.com/outdoor-play/according-experts/outdoor-risky-play>

Outdoor Learning Schools

<https://www.freshairlearning.org/other-programs>
<http://www.saplingsoutdoorprogram.ca/saplingsnatureschool>
<https://muddybootprints.com/>
<https://langleyforestschool.com/>