



First Nations Health Authority  
Health through wellness

## Aboriginal Head Start On-Reserve (AHSOR)

### Exploring your Program

#### “Fostering Education”

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, as we take into account the emotional, social, spiritual, physical and intellectual needs of our children. Our six key components include: (1) culture and language; (2) education; (3) health promotion; (4) nutrition; (5) parent and family involvement; and (6) social support.

*The following is the third series to [Exploring Your Program](#). It is intended to provide framework for each community based upon their own stage of development and state of readiness. This supportive information is Community-based and Community-paced and at their own stage of decision making. For further support please connect with your Regional Head Start Advisor*

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#### A few of the Aboriginal Head Start “We Believe” Statements:

*That our children have a right to live proudly as Aboriginal people in the lands of their ancestors.*

*That children have a right to learn their respective First Nation 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 it is essential for children to develop meaningful relationships with Elders, the carriers of knowledge and history.*

*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.*





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## Connections to Land-based Learning

In our previous series we learned that each season sustained and prepared First Nations communities for many generations, for example, elements such as life cycles, directions and seasons of spring, summer, fall and winter. As caretakers of this land, we have witnessed many of our communities weave the relationship of this responsibility with our traditional ways of healing while exploring these teachings.

**What is Knowledge?** Knowledge is the combination of information and understanding about ourselves, our communities, and our land that guides the way we conduct ourselves and the decisions we make.



There are a variety of pathways to facilitate the transfer of knowledge within your program. For example: sharing resources; connecting families to other service providers; distributing newsletters; providing family nights; holding workshops and inviting guest speakers. This can be done in person, virtually or through platforms such as your community's social media linkages.

## Parental and Family Wellness



One of the Head Start components is **parental and family involvement**. It recognizes and supports the role of parents and family as the primary teachers and caregivers of their children. The following samples and concepts are a few creative ways for developing and/or implementing early learning and child development and parenting concepts into your program. Here are a few of the most recent Head Start resources for your reference.

In [Staying Connected with Children and Families](#), we covered areas such as: Connecting through Outreach; Helping Families to Establish Routines; and Getting Creative with Technology.

In [Guiding our Most Precious Gifts, our Children](#), we covered areas such as: Problem-Solving Strategies and Guiding Children; and Modelling, Supporting and Guiding Children through a Daily Routine.

In [Healthy Family Connections](#), we covered areas such as: Promoting Children's Social-Emotional Wellbeing; Connecting the Mind, Body and Spirit; Recognize Teachable Moments; Mindful Family Time; Honor Your Spirit and Parenting Resources Grounded in Indigenous Knowledge.



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## The Process of Exchanging Knowledge

Education is a key social determinant of health and, especially in the early years, can have a major influence on the health and quality of an individual's life. The history of education for First Nations people in BC (and Canada) is marked significantly by fear and pain, which has affected children, families and communities. These feelings present obvious difficulties for encouraging learning.



The **education** component promotes life-long learning with activities that encourage a child's readiness to learn. Activities also focus on the physical, spiritual, emotional, intellectual and social development needs of children. Community members, including Elders, are involved in helping with early literacy activities, such as printing and recognizing sounds and words.

Holding family nights or parenting workshops (held in person or virtually) is one of the many ways to engage, empower, and provide **social support** when exchanging and transferring knowledge. You may want to consider the overall steps to create the space for this important journey together. It is suggested that you start with your budget, timeline, the venue and frequency of the activity such as: is this a one- time only activity or will it be ongoing?

Planning and developing will allow time for the creative process to flow, along with the opportunity to include staff in discussions as well. Here are a few thoughts to consider:

- Will you offer child-minding with activities for children?
- Will you offer transportation?
- Will you provide a meal?
- Will you have Knowledge Keeper/Elder?
- How will you invite families?
- How will you invite guest speakers?
- What topics or themes will you cover?
- How will you weave in other components such as Health Promotion or Nutrition?
- How will you provide a Safe Virtual platform?



## Topics or Themes

Over the years we have witnessed a wide range of topics or themes within our communities. You may want to also consider whether you will offer certificates for completing the workshop. Offer a parent survey to collect feedback, such as determining the current needs and asks for families.



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Some communities have offered their staff the ability to attend regional or provincial educational training in order for their program to offer their own workshops. Some of the topics have included: traditional parenting; guiding children's behaviour; problem-solving; crafting; and cooking classes.

In the first series of Exploring Your Program we shared the various benefits of land-based learning while incorporating the six key components. Consider the time of year, the early childhood curriculum you are offering during that timeframe and/or future outcomes. Invite parents to collaborate within your team, leadership, community and with external partners to discuss opportunities or strategies to support your goals. For example: cultural planning and/or seasonal calendars. Guest speakers, either subject matter experts or Knowledge Keepers/Elders can be invited to cover topics, themes or skill building. The following are a few examples:

- Being Active
- First Aid or Food Safety
- Dental Care and/or Hygiene
- Healthy Eating or Cooking Classes
- Respecting Tobacco

### What is Facilitation?

The definition of facilitate is "to make easy" or "ease a process." What a facilitator does is design, plan, guide and manage a group event to ensure that the group's objectives are met effectively, with clear thinking, good participation and full buy-in from everyone who is involved. As you get started, it will be quite helpful for you to consider the "why," the "how," and the "what" of design, planning, guiding and managing of the overall process. You may want to consider holding several preliminary meetings with your team before you proceed. It is suggested that you document the process by utilizing meeting minutes or other planning tools.

For further support such as [Regional Training, Workshops, Adminbstartion & FAQ's](#) such as sample Activity Planning Tools.

For further information please visit us at: <https://www.fnha.ca/what-we-do/maternal-child-and-family-health/aboriginal-head-start-on-reserve>