



BC Aboriginal  
Child Care Society

# Caring for our Children

## newsletter

## Journeys of the Spirit: Inclusive Aboriginal Child Care

### Highlights from Our Conference 2007, November 22-24, 2007

The Board of Directors and staff at BC Aboriginal Child Care Society send out heartfelt thanks and appreciation to everyone who attended our conference this year, Journeys of the Spirit: Inclusive Aboriginal Child Care and contributed to one of our most successful years to date! This year our conference was particularly special as it was our tenth annual provincial conference – a decade of sharing support and professional development for those who give tirelessly to the well-being and development of Aboriginal children. With ten years of success and one of our largest turn-outs to date, we have many to thank and acknowledge for their contribution to making this year's conference such a success. This month's issue of Caring for Our Children will be dedicated to sharing our success and highlighting some of the memorable moments of our conference this year.

#### **Acknowledgement and Thanks**

First off, thanks to all ACCS staff, in particular Lynn McBride, for the effort and time taken to plan and coordinate this year's conference. A special Hay chxwq'a to Elder Eugene for his guidance and support through the three busy days of workshops and plenary sessions. Cathy Hall, our conference coordinator, did another great job of keeping us organized through every last detail. Also, thank you to Cathy for greeting everyone with such warmth and kindness from registration to closing activities. To our many volunteers, thank you for your attention to detail and giving yourself freely to help make our conference a

success. Thanks to our emcees Al Lawrence and Katherina Patterson for keeping us on track and smooth through each plenary session and to our delegates who shared their funny stories with us.

Thank you to our financial contributors: National Collaborating Centre on Aboriginal Health, First Nations Inuit Health Branch – Pacific Region, BC Council for Families and Carter GM (Burnaby). Your support is much appreciated!

Thank you to the vendors and exhibitors who shared their valuable information and resources with our delegates. We look forward to seeing you next year.

Thank you to Chief Ian Campbell of the Squamish Nation for opening our conference and welcoming us to the traditional territories of the Squamish and Musqueam. Thank you to Elder Audrey Rivers of the Squamish Nation for commencing our conference with a blessing for delegates and participants.

#### **Keynote Address Dr. Lorna Williams of Lil'wat First Nation, Mount Currie, BC**

To open our conference, Dr. Lorna Williams, member of the Lil'wat First Nation of Mount Currie, BC delivered the first keynote address, "Weaving Worlds Together: Indigenous Knowledge in Learning Contexts." She is the Canada Research Chair for Indigenous Knowledge and Learning, an Assistant Professor in Aboriginal Education and Linguistics, and Program Director of Aboriginal Teacher

Education at the University of Victoria. Her achievements include: A Scholar's Award; Outstanding Teacher Award; Dedicated Kids Award; and was invested into the Order of British Columbia in 1992.

#### **Keynote Address**

#### **Tina Ngaroimata Fraser, Maori from Aotearoa, Ph.D. (candidate) UNBC**

During our lunch break on Friday, Tina Ngaroimata Fraser, Maori from Aotearoa and Ph.D. candidate at the University of Northern British Columbia delivered our second keynote address, "Indigenous Perspectives: Special Abilities in a Disabled World." Tina shared her personal experience as an Indigenous mother of a son with "special abilities." Her presentation provided insight to Indigenous and specifically Maori perspectives on special abilities and suggestions for changing the perspectives of the "able" population towards children with "special abilities." The following reveals some highlights of her keynote presentation.

For many Indigenous cultures around the world, talking about special abilities means examining children through an Indigenous worldview. Indigenous world view reflects Indigenous value systems, one which considers "all things are in motion and are holistic; we look at the whole to see the patterns." In keeping within this Indigenous frame, Tina revealed that when talking about special abilities Indigenous people do not isolate the child but rather see every child as part of a whole community. For Indigenous people, it is the responsibility of the



*Dr. Lorna Williams*

community to raise, support and address stereotypes of children with special abilities.

In Maori culture there are four principles for teaching and learning that apply for all children, including children with special abilities. These principles are:

- Empowerment – Whakamana
- Holistic Development – Kotahitanga
- Family and Community – Whanau Tangata
- Relationships – Nga Hononga

There are also five strands to teaching and learning:

- Well-being – Mana atua
- Belonging – Mana whenua
- Contribution – Mana tangata
- Communication – Mana reo
- Exploration – Mana aoturoa

The principles and strands that guide teaching and learning in Maori communities are drawn from Te Whariki, the national curriculum framework adopted by the New Zealand Ministry of Education. By using the principles and strands of Te Whariki as a guide or framework, Tina argued that Indigenous children with special abilities will be supported in ways that respond to their unique worldview.

To conclude her presentation, Tina provided specific ideas and tools that we can use to enhance the able. Tina revealed how we can all connect the spiritual, emotional, physical and mental development of each member of our “able” communities in order to enhance the development of children with special abilities.

To enhance the “able” spiritually:

- Be informed about historical events
- Take part in family planning
- Plan personal responsibility
- Have cultural information ready

To enhance the “able” emotionally

- Know and draw from family leadership
- Provide family support

- Know and draw from community supports
- Involve all family

To enhance the “able” physically

- Create space for family support
- Draw from Elder support through effective communication
- Create community dialogues
- Support family planning

To enhance the “able” mentally

- Develop awareness campaign
- Identify specialized support
- Promote family responsibilities

## **Child Care Award Recipients 2007**

### **Penny Nickal, Heather Nugent and Jessie Nyberg**

Each year at our annual conference, BC ACCS distributes our Child Care Award to recognize individuals who demonstrate outstanding care and commitment to young children and their families. This year, the Child Care Awards committee received many deserving nominations and awarded three winners during our lunch time on Friday. Congratulations Penny Nickal, Heather Nugent, and Jessie Nyberg!

#### **Penny Nickal**

Penny Nickal is the Infant/Toddler Supervisor and programmer at the Witsuwit’en Child and Family Centre in Smithers, BC. Penny has worked tirelessly with the Witsuwit’en Child and Family Centre since its opening in early 1999. Penny was the back bone behind the facility’s successful application for a BC Child Centre license and to be recognized as a Head Start facility.

After many years of hard work, this year Penny finished her post-basic Infant/Toddler and Special Needs training from Northern Lights College, and is now one of the few certified Infant-Toddler workers in the northwest.

Penny is well connected with the community and the community school. She completed training to be a Roots of Empathy Facilitator in 2006 and now presents the training to kindergarten and grade ones. Also she is a key liaison between the health station, band office, and community parents to ensure that everyone understands the importance of early childhood education and gathering

## **BC ACCS Announces Elder Mary Thomas Memorial ECE Scholarship**

This year the Board of Directors and staff of BC ACCS announced our Elder Mary Thomas Memorial ECE Scholarship. In honour of Elder Mary Thomas, a dear friend of the Society who inspired us with her dedication to Aboriginal children and reminded us of the value and importance of early childhood for our communities, BC ACCS will distribute two ECE student scholarships every year.

Each year the Society will award one scholarship of \$1500 to a post-basic ECE student enrolled in an approved post-basic ECE program within British Columbia. The Society will also award a second scholarship of \$1000 each year to an ECE student enrolled in an approved basic ECE program within British Columbia. Each scholarship will be awarded to the eligible applicant with the highest academic standing of all the eligible applicants.

Applications for both scholarships will be made available from the Society March 1, 2008. Applications must be submitted to the Society on or before July 31, 2008 for announcement on September 15, 2008. In the future, the application deadline will be July 31 and winners announced September 15.

their support for the children. Her ability to respond to community need was further demonstrated when she coordinated a three day early childhood education professional development conference.

Recognizing her achievements in professional development and her continued commitment to caring and nurturing the children in her community, Penny was nominated for this year’s Aboriginal Child Care Award. BC Aboriginal Child Care Society is pleased to congratulate and recognize Penny Nickal for the 2007 Child Care Award!

#### **Heather Nugent**

Heather works for Cape Mudge Preschool and has ten years of experience working in early childhood education after graduating with her ECE from North Island College.

Her dedication to getting children and families involved in language and literacy development is one of her particular strengths. Taking suggestions from the Resource Teacher in the elementary school,



*From Left: Mabel Louie - BC ACCS Director, Treasurer, Board of Directors; Elder Eugene Harry – BC ACCS Elder in residence; Jessie Nyberg – Child Care Award recipient; Penny Nickal – Child Care Award recipient; Heather Nugent – Child Care Award recipient*

Heather began using a system of alphabet teaching with the kids. As a result of her initiative and dedication, the speech-language pathologist from the community screened all of the new kindergarten students for oral language skills and found the children from Heather's preschool were well ahead from the other students.

Heather makes sure that the connection between the child care centre and the community is strong. She gets the children involved in the Elders' lunches at the band office and brings the children's art work for display in the office. Because of this, everyone gets a chance to see the children's work and it brings pride into the children's hearts to see their work on display. Further, Heather makes sure the children are connected to the community by encouraging them to make gifts to thank the people who contributed to the centre. Heather also knows the community value and importance of learning culture and language, and is learning the language herself. She is a dancer, storytelling and true advocate for the children.

Heather's community, friends and co-workers had nothing but praise for her commitment and dedication to the children and families in Cape Mudge when they nominated her for the 2007 Child Care Award. BC Aboriginal Child Care Society is pleased to recognize her. Congratulations Heather!

### **Jessie Nyberg**

Jessie is the coordinator of the Aboriginal Infant and Early Childhood Development Program at the First Nations Friendship Centre in Vernon. She is a member of the Shuswap Nation and is registered to the Canoe Creek Band.

Jessie began her career as a registered nurse and was one of the only First Nations women in nursing at that time. Moving into early childhood capacities since joining the Friendship Centre in 2002, Jessie has been involved in planning and implementing an Aboriginal Infant Development Program, a Supported Child Development Program, a six day per week drop in centre, Mother Goose, Tiny Tot's Drum Group, Aboriginal language instruction, as well as helping to write proposals and lobby for a larger centre to create an Aboriginal Family Hub.

In her role as coordinator, Jessie has responded to the diverse needs of Aboriginal children and families in urban communities. She has coordinated the "Elders, Sharing Our Knowledge" program, which helps to decrease Elder isolation in the community; she facilitated the publishing of three age appropriate books in the Okanagan and Shuswap languages; she participated in a three year research project with UBC (O) identifying barriers to access of health care for urban Aboriginal people; and has been working to secure funding for an Urban Aboriginal Day Care to respond to the some 20-40 Aboriginal children waiting for child care spaces in Vernon.

This year is a particularly special year for Jessie as she will be retiring in December. Although Jessie is formally leaving her role as coordinator of the program, her commitment to the children and families of her community will remain as active in the program as she is today. Given her years of outstanding support and care for Aboriginal children and families, it is clear why Jessie's friends, colleagues, and community nominated her for this year's Child Care Award. BC Aboriginal Child Care Society is happy to present Jessie Nyberg with this year's Child Care Award. Congratulations Jessie!

### **Perry Shawana Award Cindy Blackstock, Gitksan Nation, Ph.D. (candidate)**

Each year as a tribute to Perry Shawana's significant contributions to Aboriginal child care, the BC ACCS honours an individual or group not directly involved in the ECE field but who through volunteerism, advocacy, research and policy has contributed to and advanced the notion of safe, nurturing communities and quality child care and early learning services for First Nations children and their families.

### **Cindy Blackstock**

Cindy has worked in the field of Child and Family Services for over 20 years on the front line, in professional development and research. Cindy is currently the Executive Director of the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada ([www.fnccaringssociety.com](http://www.fnccaringssociety.com)), a national organization supporting First Nations Child and Family Service agencies and regional organizations in Canada. Cindy has published numerous articles and curricula related to Aboriginal child welfare in Canada. Current professional interests include serving as the Co-convenor of the Indigenous Sub Group for the NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Co-director of the Centre of Excellence for Child Welfare, and a member of the Board of Directors for Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada and the Canadian Education Association.



*Mabel Louie presents Cindy Blackstock with Perry Shawana Award*

Recipients of the award become lifetime friends of the Society. This year, the Board of Directors presented Cindy Blackstock, member of the Gitksan Nation and Ph.D. (candidate) with the Perry Shawana Award (see box for bio on Cindy).

After warmly receiving the Perry Shawana Award from the Board of Directors, Cindy presented a strong and inspiring presentation encouraging us all to support the adoption of Jordan's Principle. Jordan's Principle is a child first principle to resolve inter-governmental jurisdictional disputes that arise between two government parties (provincial/territorial or federal) or between two departments or ministries of the same government, regarding payment for services for a Status Indian child which are otherwise available to other Canadian children. Under this principle, the government or ministry/department of first contact must pay for services without delay or disruption. You may learn more about Jordan's Principle and its presentation to the

House of Commons on December 12, 2007 at the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society Website [www.fncaringociety.com](http://www.fncaringociety.com).

## **BC ACCS New Resource**

### **Music and Movement**

#### **Curriculum Box**

The Society launched our latest, updated curriculum resource box 'Music and Movement.' The resource box is available on-loan to members of the Society from the resource librarian. Many thanks go out to Dr. Jan Hare for her support in developing the contents and materials for the box. If you are interested in borrowing the 'Music and Movement' box, please contact our resource

librarian by email at [library@acc-society.bc.ca](mailto:library@acc-society.bc.ca) or by phone at (604) 913-9128 ex. 229.

To everyone who participated in this year's conference and made it a success, we thank you! We look forward to seeing you next November!

We strive to make our annual provincial training conference meaningful and relevant to the communities we serve. If you have any suggestions and/or recommendations of topics or sessions you would like to see next year or if you have any feedback from your experience this year we'd love to hear from you. Please contact our administrative assistant by email to [reception@acc-society.bc.ca](mailto:reception@acc-society.bc.ca) or by telephone (604) 913-9128.

## **Announcements and Events**

### **The Early Years Conference 2008: Valuing All Children**

**January 31, 2008 - February 02, 2008  
Vancouver, B.C.**

All children have the right to opportunities for realizing their full potential. Some children by nature of individual, family, or community circumstances are more vulnerable and will need extra support in achieving this. In order for these supports to be most effective, we must look through the eyes of the child. We must integrate our knowledge of the principles of child and family development with research and innovative practice. Special attention will be given to children in care and children with disabilities. For further information visit [www.interprofessional.ubc.ca/Early\\_Years.htm](http://www.interprofessional.ubc.ca/Early_Years.htm).

### **Effective Early Learning Programs: Research, Policy and Practice**

**March 16, 2008 - March 19, 2008  
Banff, Alberta**

40th annual Banff International Conference on Behavioural Science. This 3-day conference co-sponsored by the Centre of Excellence for Early Childhood Development, the Early Childhood Learning Knowledge Centre and the Canadian Language and Literacy Research Network will gather key international researchers to review effective early learning programs on language and literacy, numeracy and social learning. To register, or for more information, visit: [www.banffbehavsci.ubc.ca](http://www.banffbehavsci.ubc.ca).

### **Entre deux mers/Between Two Seas: Bridging Children and Communities**

**May 29, 2008 - May 31, 2008  
Richmond, British Columbia**

National child care conference co-hosted by the Early Childhood Educators of British Columbia and the Canadian Child Care Federation. For information on the Call for Presenters, or for information on conference please visit [http://www.cccf-fcsge.ca/home\\_en.html](http://www.cccf-fcsge.ca/home_en.html)

### **Aboriginal ECE Input Wanted for BC Government Draft Early Learning Framework**

The invitation comes from ECE Researchers from the University of Victoria, Selkirk College, and Northern Lights College who are inviting experienced early childhood educators working in British Columbia to be actively involved in the shaping of new perspectives, policies and practices emerging through the BC Government's Early Learning Framework. This is a unique and exciting opportunity and we encourage you to consider participation particularly if you recognize the contribution ECE leaders can make to this kind of dialogue and if you are looking for the opportunity to share and explore new possibilities with colleagues from all over BC.

Participants will receive substitution support and recognition, in the form of a certificate outlining participation hours, for their involvement in this professional learning initiative. If you are interested in participating and would like further information please contact Julie Holder at: [jholder@uvic.ca](mailto:jholder@uvic.ca) or (250) 721-6299.

### **Aboriginal Children's Circle of Early Learning New Website**

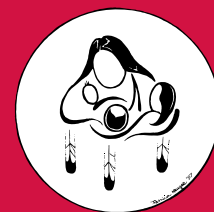
The Aboriginal Children's Circle of Early Learning has revised their own website and launched their new one. Please visit [www.accel-capea.ca](http://www.accel-capea.ca) to view the new site!

### **BC First Call 2007 Child Poverty Report Card**

First Call released this year's BC Campaign 2000 Child Poverty Report Card. Using Statistics Canada data, the report card shows that British Columbia has had the worst child poverty rate of any province for four years in a row. The report card is available on the web site at [www.firstcallbc.org](http://www.firstcallbc.org).

Caring for our Children is published by the BC Aboriginal Child Care Society. It is distributed to ACCS members, on and off reserve child care centres, Head Start programs, Bands and Tribal Councils in BC and individuals interested in early childhood education and care from a First Nations perspective.

Readers are invited to reprint articles provided proper credit is given. We welcome the submission of articles, book reviews, artwork, photos, letters and poetry.



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