



First Nations Health Authority
Health through wellness

Early Learning and Child Development “Guiding our Most Precious Gifts, our Children”

This is the second offering in a three-part series on early learning and childhood development. This piece focuses on activities we can do to support our children’s healthy development – from working through challenging behaviour to bird watching, rock painting and more. We’ve included links to a wide range of resources. You can discover more articles and ideas at [fnha.ca/what-we-do/maternal-child-and-family-health/aboriginal-head-start-on-reserve](https://www.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 fundamental to a child's development. The program’s six key components support the healthy emotional, social, spiritual, physical and intellectual development of our children:

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

Please use your judgement when pursuing the activities described, which may not be appropriate for all age groups or all children. Make sure the materials you choose are safe and

Aboriginal Head Start “We Believe” Value Statements

That adults are community role models who are to teach children how to live a good life.

That children deserve opportunities to gain knowledge and experience of how to live a good life.

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

That children, through being loved, valued and encouraged, will gain the courage, the strength and the wisdom to use the power of a good mind and spirit in all that they do.

That children have a right to enjoy the opportunities that education offers.

That children have a right to live in healthy, self-determining communities that are free of violence.

Download the complete set on the [AHSOR webpage \(https://www.fnha.ca/what-we-do/maternal-child-and-family-health/aboriginal-head-start-on-reserve\)](https://www.fnha.ca/what-we-do/maternal-child-and-family-health/aboriginal-head-start-on-reserve)



free from hazards – for example, you’ll want to avoid small materials that could cause choking or items that are sharp, unclean and/or unsanitary.

Problem-Solving Strategies and Guiding Children

It can be hard to stay calm when supporting your child through a challenging behaviour. After all, you may be physically and emotionally tired yourself, particularly as a result of changes to your daily life and routines resulting from COVID-19. This can further enhance our feelings of exhaustion, stress, fatigue and trauma. The best way to support your child’s emotional well-being is to remain calm and patient yourself. When you as a parent are calm and grounded, you are better equipped to support your child.



Try Box Breathing

Sometimes it may take a few minutes or even longer to calm your mind, body and spirit. Consider the use of “box breathing” —also known as square breathing. Breathe in on the count of four, hold your breath for the count of four, exhale on the count of four, and hold for the count of four. This technique of taking slow, deep breaths can relieve stress – and it’s also been shown to heighten performance and concentration.

Connect with your child

- Take deep breaths and take a moment to calm your mind, body and spirit
- Make eye contact with your child, while positioning yourself at the child’s eye level
- Maintain a calm tone of voice
- Help your child identify their feelings and build self-awareness:
 - Let them know that you see or hear that they are feeling angry, hurt, frustrated, etc.
 - “I feel sad when I see you are sad”
 - Acknowledge how that might feel
 - “Sounds like that made you angry” or “It looks like that must have really hurt”
 - Emphasize the importance of using a calm voice
 - “When we are inside we use a quiet voice, outside when we are playing we can use a loud voice”
 - Affirm that the child must respect others
 - “We keep our hands to ourselves” or “Our hands are not for hitting,” etc.
- Encourage problem-solving, consistency or natural consequences
- Offer the child strategies for turn-taking, for example, by setting a timer

Making transitions easier

Some children struggle with transitions. Letting them know what’s coming up can make



transitions easier – for example, you can say “In five more minutes it will be time to clean up” so they know what to expect and when. Sometimes you may need to “change up” the activity or offer a transition to a new activity

Helpful Links

https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/health/about-bc-s-health-care-system/child-day-care/guiding_childrens_behaviour_april_2017.pdf

<https://www.fnha.ca/WellnessSite/WellnessDocuments/parentteacher.pdf>

Modelling, Supporting and Guiding Children Through a Daily Routine

The structure of a daily routine can be very important for children. It allows them to know their responsibilities – such as brushing their teeth or helping out around the home – and it emphasizes the importance of a balanced life of activities that support our physical, mental, emotional and spiritual well-being.

A daily routine for a child might include:

- Wake up, get dressed, brush teeth, wash hands, face, brush hair
- Wash hands, prepare/clean up a space for cooking, set the table. Share the meal and clean up after breakfast, lunch, snacks and dinner
- Quiet time: reading, colouring, puzzles, arts/crafting etc.
- Free time: Limit screen time
- Physical activity: Go for a walk, do yoga, kick a ball
- Culture and language: Encourage songs, drumming, rattles, prayers, etc.
- Help children by sharing transition tips to let them know what’s coming up, such as “in five more minutes we are going to cleanup, as this afternoon we are going to go for a bike ride.” Support your child with language such as: “**First we** are going to brush our teeth, **and then we** are going to brush our hair”
- Develop individual routines for specific times, such as bath and bedtime, which can include brushing teeth, putting on pajamas, and quiet time for reading a book

Day	Brush our teeth, wash hands	Breakfast clean up	Quiet time Activity	Free time	Daily Prayer/ Gratitude
Monday					
Tuesday					
Wednesday					
Thursday					
Friday					
Saturday					
Sunday					



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This chart should not be used as a reward system. The goal is to provide positive reinforcement, structure and routine for your child's day.

Sample Chart: <https://www.pinterest.ca/pin/387591111652444377/?autologin=true&lp=true>

Fun and Interactive Activities

Create a Rock Story

	
Mountain	River
	
People	Bear
	
Berries	Trees

Fun Activity Tips

Take a walk and collect various shapes and sizes of rocks. Use paint to design and create a story of your own. For example: people; plants; trees; mountains; animals; homes; water, etc. Use your language to translate words.

First Voices:
<https://www.firstvoices.com/>

You can start with: A long time ago there was a **mountain** and on that mountain there was a **bear** in search of some dinner. The **bear** knew he needed to find a berry patch or head down to the **river**, and so on.....







Witnessing the Birds

Bird-watching can be quite an adventure. Consider taking a walk to identify various types of birds in your community. Bring along some paper and crayons or a camera to document/draw pictures of the birds you spotted in your community.



Bird Watch Tally

Description	Tallies	Total
 Sitting		
 Walking		
 Flying		
 Swimming		

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Clip Art from Ninja Woman Clip Art Studio

Fun Activity Tips

Make a birdfeeder for the birds.

<https://www.pre-kpages.com/make-a-bird-feeder-and-observe-birds/>

<https://www.parents.com/fun/games/educational/get-smart-bird-feeder/>

<https://www.fantasticfunandlearning.com/free-printable-bird-watch-tally-sheet.html>

Use your language to translate words. First Voices:

<https://www.firstvoices.com/>

Activity Credits to: Little Badgers Early Learning Program, Akisqnuk First Nations



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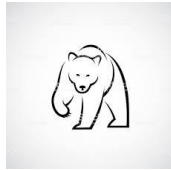
Mountain



River



People



Bear

“Going on a Bear Hunt”

This is a fun game to play with children. You can call out the following and children will follow your lead. “Let’s go on a bear hunt, are you ready, here we go,” and you can slap your hands on your lap as you add to the story. For example “Oh Look! I see a forest. We can’t go around it, we can’t go under it, let’s go through it!” Use your feet to show how you walk through the forest.

You can then add items such as going over a mountain, through a stream, a swamp or over/under the bridge.

The highlight is “Going into the cave...the dark, cold cave....” This is when children get really excited. “Better use my flashlight, oh no it’s not working!” Oh what’s that, it’s big, its furry.....it’s a bear!!!” Then repeat all the things you did as you go all the way back home.

You can add feeling to the walk such as going through the forest. “Brrrr.....it’s cold” as you use your hands on your arms to show the cold air. Some children may say we forgot our coat or boots—show how you will put on your coat or boots, zip zippers etc. Add soft footsteps to show how we walk softly amongst the forest ground.

Children enjoy drawing pictures after their experience on a bear hunt.

Fun Activity Tips:

Consider taking the bear hunt outdoors. Use your imagination or perhaps set up an obstacle course to enhance the activity. You could use simple props in your home to imagine the forest, stream, etc.

We're Going on a Bear Hunt

A Cosmic Kids Yoga Adventure!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KAT5NiWHFIU>