

First Nations Parents Club

Bulletin

Mark Your Calendar for the Parents Conference!

The First Nations Parents Conference is happening May 27-28, 2010 in Vancouver, BC. Watch for a registration kit in March 2010.

Please send us your stories and photos for the newsletter and the Club website. We always appreciate hearing news from the local clubs and we would love to have more funny or inspiring stories about parenthood to share. Send your submissions to info@fnesc.ca or by fax to 604-925-6097. Photo permission forms are online at fnesc.ca/parentsclub/index.html



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Happy New Year!

We hope that you have had a wonderful holiday season with your family and that you are looking forward to some restful days ahead.

Because this is the season for New Year's resolutions, in this issue of the Parents Club newsletter we have some tips on healthy eating, as well as ideas for getting teens ready for a good night's sleep. This is also a season in which older youth are often asked to make plans about their future education and career paths, so Career Planning is another topic in this month's newsletter.

What are your Club's plans for the coming months? As always, we invite you to write to us with your Club news, recipes and funny stories. The Parents Club has plenty of games, Club gear and other prizes that we can send in return for your submissions.

Life's a Stage!

Dim the lights, raise the curtains, and enter the magical world of theatre!

Acting out a story is a fantastic way to build children's language skills and bring a bit of magic into all of our lives during the long winter months. Any kind of puppetry is fun, but there is something about shadow puppets that is especially magical.



What do you need to make shadow puppets? Bristol board or light cardboard works well for the puppet bodies, and you can mount each puppet on a thin stick such as a popsicle stick, chopstick or straw. First draw the puppets and then cut them out. Feathers, fur and pipe-cleaners can be fun additions.

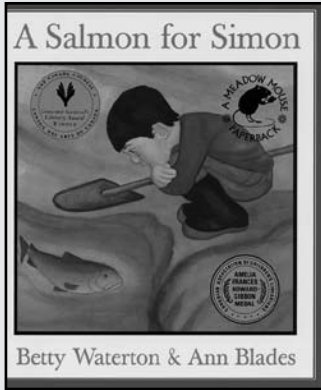
Make the characters you and your children want for your favourite story. Maybe there is a storybook on your bookshelf to work from, like the Three Little Pigs or Little Red Riding Hood, or perhaps there is a story to draw upon from your First Nations tradition. Otherwise, just make up a story - anything goes!

Your stage comes next. It can be as simple or complex as you want it to be. If you are lucky enough to have a puppet stage already, just tape or staple a piece of thin paper or plain fabric across the theatre window. You can also make a stage from a large cardboard box, or hang a cotton sheet on a string and use a sofa or chair to hide behind. Set up a bright light behind the stage, and turn down the lights in the rest of the room.

And then, let the show begin!



Family Reading Corner:



A Salmon for Simon, by Betty Waterton & Ann Blades. Suggested for Ages 3-8. This book was distributed to First Nations Parents Clubs.

Simon is a young First Nations boy who lives on the west coast of British Columbia. All summer long he patiently tries to catch salmon, but when September arrives, Simon still hasn't caught even one. He begins to gather clams on the beach instead. While clamming, he discovers a coho salmon dropped by an eagle, alive, but trapped in an old clam hole he had left in the sand. Moved by the salmon's beauty and its struggle, Simon makes it a path to the ocean so that it can continue its journey.

This is a story that children will enjoy for its simple beauty. It offers some basic information about the salmon life-cycle and food gathering using language that young children understand. Over the past 20 years, this book has won several awards and it would make a great addition to any child's bookshelf. Highly recommended!

Is Your Teenager Getting Enough Zzzz's?

Did you know that as youth move through the teen years, they need more and more sleep? In fact, teens need about 9 hours of sleep each night. Not getting enough sleep can lead to trouble concentrating, slower reaction time, and memory problems – all of which can have an impact on their success in school and in other things they do in life.

Is your teen missing out on sleep? If so, they might not be to blame. Their body and sleep cycles are changing rapidly during the teen years, and teens often lead very busy lives, too. Because of those challenges, it is natural for them to want to stay up later and get up later. Unfortunately, school won't wait for late-risers!

So what can a parent do?

First, if your teen has a busy schedule of school, sports and maybe an after-school job, help them reconsider their commitments. They might need to cut back on some activities if they truly don't have enough hours to fit a good night's sleep into their daily routine.

Next, offer them a few tips to make sure that their sleep is long and restful. Here is a checklist to help them get started...

Sleep Checklist....

- ✓ My bedroom is dark and quiet
- ✓ I have a regular time to go to sleep each day
- ✓ I turn off my cell phone/computer at night
- ✓ I have a wind-down time each evening with quiet activities
- ✓ I prepare for tests ahead of time to avoid all-night cramming
- ✓ I stay away from coffee and pop (which have caffeine) in the late afternoon and evening
- ✓ I get exercise during the day, but at least three hours before bedtime

For more information about teens and sleep, visit www.kidshealth.org

Fruit Smoothie Express!

Winter-time fruit is sometimes not at its best – it can be bumped and bruised and a little past its prime. So how do we get kids to eat it? Smoothies!

If you can get your kids hooked on smoothies, their servings of fruits and all of the good things in them can get a real boost!

You can make smoothies using a blender, hand-blender or juicer. Young kids can help throw in the ingredients (with supervision), and older ones can whip up their own smoothies independently with whatever ingredients they love best.

Here are some ingredients that work well – just mix and match using whatever you have handy!

Liquids:

Milk or soy milk, water, juice, yoghurt, ice-cream

And the fruits of your choice, fresh or frozen...

- Bananas (these work very well)
- Oranges or mandarin oranges
- Pears
- Seedless grapes
- Apples
- Blueberries or strawberries (frozen ones work well)
- Kiwis

For a change, throw in some veggies like tomatoes and cucumbers. The trick is to make sure your smoothie well-blended, well-chilled, and not too thick. Add a straw (a wide one) and/or serve it in a fancy glass to make it more inviting for young kids.

Enjoy!





"No one is perfect – that's why pencils have erasers."

— Author unknown

On the Path to Higher Education and Careers



Charlene Smoke is the Career Planning Workshop Facilitator for the First Nations Education Steering Committee and the First Nations Schools

Association. In that role, she travels across BC meeting with parents and students to talk about goal setting and how students can get the education and training they need to achieve their dreams.

The Parents Club asked Charlene about her work and for tips that might be helpful to parents.

How can parents help their kids plan for the future?

I encourage parents to try to have conversations about what the youth would like to do. Focus on what the youth do well, because this could be the key to their future.

It is also a great idea for parents to get involved with a school or parents club. That sends a strong message to students that they have the support they need to stay in school and go on to higher education.

What if their child is struggling to find their direction?

One of the most important things you can do as a parent is to let your children know that it is never too late to make

changes in their life and never to give up on themselves.

Also, remember that struggling is a common part of life. Many young people (and older ones too!) struggle with being undecided about what they want to do. That is why so many people change careers two or more times in their lives.

Getting an education of any kind is often the best way to find your path, no matter what age you are.

What else do you talk with parents and youth about?

With youth and their support people, I talk about the importance of youth dreaming big and getting to know themselves – what they like to do, what they do well, and what type of jobs they think might interest them.

I also talk with them about the programs and resource people who can help them find their path, such as the Career Cruising website (all First Nations Schools in BC have access to this site) and Aboriginal Education Coordinators at post-secondary institutes. And of course we talk about how to find money for school, too. Most importantly, I encourage youth to communicate with their support people, who can help them find their path in life.

For myself, I realized early on that the decision was up to me as to what choices I made in the world, because in the end I would be the one most affected. That's another key message I try to share with the youth I meet.



Let the Games Begin!

What can a child learn from playing games? Tons! Games are wonderful learning tools – especially those you sit down to play together as a family. Any board games and card games provide great practice for the types of skills that will help kids succeed in school, including social skills, logical thinking, reading and math.

If there is just one game that should be in every toy cupboard, it's Scrabble. This game has it all! By making words and counting up the scores, kids build their vocabulary, improve their spelling and "sounding out" skills, and practice counting, addition and multiplication.

One of the best things about Scrabble is that it's a game that will grow up with your kids. Just start simply – the real rules of the game can come later!

If your kids are not quite readers or are new readers, then be their partner in the game. As you play the game together, talk to your child about the words you are making – what they sound like, how they are spelled, where they could be placed, and so on.

Give young kids tasks that they are ready for, like finding letters and placing them on the board, sounding out letters in the words, and counting up the word score by using their fingers to do the counting. As their skills improve, have them make words on their own and encourage them to think about where to place the words to get a high score.

Don't have a Scrabble game? Maybe you have a deck of cards, or another tried and true family game such as Memory, Monopoly, Candy Land or Checkers. Even with just a paper and pencil you can play Hangman or Pictionary.

Whatever game you have handy, just do it! You might even have a regular family games night or a Parents Club games night!

"We cannot always build the future for our youth, but we can build our youth for the future."

— Franklin D. Roosevelt (1882 - 1945), American president



Parents Report

Our Parent Gathering Meeting was well attended, with eleven parents and grandparents and three students in attendance. Also in attendance was Sarah Graham, College Advisor for our local college, College of New Caledonia.

Sarah's presentation included the programs our college offers in Quesnel, the application process, counselling services, aptitude tests and other services.

Many questions were asked and answered. Sarah also encouraged parents/students/teachers to submit their courses of interest that they would like to have the Quesnel campus offer.

The night ended with door prizes, refreshments and lots of networking. Thanks Parents Club!

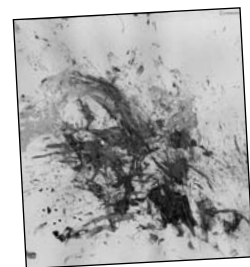
Carol Shaughnessy and Karen Green, Correlieu Parents Club, Quesnel BC

'Naturally' Artistic!

McLeod Lake Childcare is a busy, educational daycare that is one and a half hours from Prince George and 45 minutes from the small community of Mackenzie. Children of diverse backgrounds and abilities are cared for, and the teachers use First Nations teachings in their daily programs.

Two of the teachers at McLeod Lake Childcare, Brenda Schley and Jodi Sharp, sent the Parents Club a beautiful scrapbook showing the art and activities that their children have been doing. It has ideas that we thought Parents Club members might like to see.

They wrote, "McLeod Lake Childcare is surrounded by nature and the kids learn a lot about the outdoors through art and play. With the children, we gathered wood, pinecones, feathers, rocks and pine branches. We gave the children paint colours representing fire, water, sky, earth and its purity. These are some of the children's nature paintings and we hope you enjoy them."



Need more information?

Is this the first time you've heard about the First Nations Parents Club? If you would like more information about the initiative, please contact our office toll-free at 1-877-422-3672. The First Nations Parents Club is sponsored by the First Nations Schools Association to recognize the tremendous dedication of parents who support their children's learning. All Club materials and activities are available for free. To start a Club in your community, just contact us and request a Parents Club start-up package. We'd love to hear from you!

Healthy Eating Ideas

- ✓ Sit down and eat with children. Provide a pleasant setting. Leave the television off during meal times.
- ✓ Let children help with simple food-related tasks. Ask them to set the table or help to wash the vegetables.
- ✓ Keep in mind that while parents and caregivers are responsible for **what** children eat, children are responsible for **how much** they eat. Offer suitable portions with options for seconds.



Credit: Canada's Food Guide Tips

Jumpstart First Nations Language Learning at Home

- After you say a First Nations word for the first time, practice, practice, practice.
- Don't worry about whether you say something perfectly, and don't worry what other people might think about your efforts.
- Learning together is fun! Practicing words is fun!
- Encouraging and supporting Elders who are working on language projects is important. Help Elders to stay focused on the good work that needs to be done by being positive and helpful.
- No way is the wrong way!

Thanks to participants in the Regional Sessions education meetings in Prince Rupert for sharing these great tips.