



Promoting Mental Health in Young Children

NEWSLETTER ISSUE 4 - JANUARY 9, 2017

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CIRCLE OF HOPE

About a year ago, Alice Taylor and Eileen Conway-Martin (HWC-PEI) began dialogues with the First Nations Education Initiative Inc. (FNEII), under the leadership of their Executive Director, Bob Atwin. The aim was a collaboration which could support the development of emotionally healthy children, youth, and families across New Brunswick's First Nations Communities. With the assistance of our new HWC partners, Jolyne Knockwood and Mike Hennessey (FNEII), the process would come to focus on honouring the stories of FN children, youth, and families while strengthening the spirit of hope and growth in all communities. Through working with and learning from First Nations Champions several First

Nations facilitators have now been trained and will deliver HWC groups in their community. With Samantha Gallant from Kingsclear First Nations- joining the FNEII leadership team, our Circle of Hope continues to grow.



Kingsclear FN HWC Facilitators

Both Mike and Samantha are also in the process of becoming HWC Master Trainers.

A big thank you to our partners and the First Nations community Champions for the honor of joining them on this journey.



FN HWC facilitators from across New Brunswick

Wela'lin/Woliwon

“ ... now [after HWC] every night before bed I am telling him the things that I'm thankful for about him and it's usually different every night Like I always say that I'm thankful for his eyes so that he can see me and his ears so that he can hear me say 'I love you' ... ”

EXPERIENCING HWC IN THE YUKON

Erin Pauls, Manager of Dusk'a Head Start Family Learning Centre (Whitehorse, Yukon), and her staff have been offering and facilitating the HWC Program for several years. To fit the needs of her community, Erin adapted the Wishing Well activity (pg33 of the HWC Manual). The activity unfolded as follows:

The activity was used on the group's final night, as a way to end the sessions. Erin sang the song *Sua Nigha Shadli* which means 'little bird, what you say is good'. The song set the tone for the Wishing Well activity.



Nikki Lee Williams-Patchett (left) and Erin Pauls (right)

She got permission from Lorraine Allen to sing the song at Dusk'a. As she sang and drummed, participants thought of wishes or dreams for their child and their relationship with their child. Participants picked a tobacco offering and silently placed their wishes for their children. The offerings were set on a table with hide, sweet grass, candles, and cedar bows to make a sacred space. The tobacco offerings were burned in the Dusk'a weekly sacred fire so the dreams could enter the universe and air to dance among them.

HANDLE WITH CARE IN NEW BRUNSWICK FIRST NATIONS

The First Nations Education Initiative Inc (FNEII) is excited to be a part of piloting the delivery of Handle with Care in nine First Nations in the province of New Brunswick over the next three months. FNEII is a Regional Managing organization that represents a partnership of twelve New Brunswick First Nations. FNEII provides member First Nations with the opportunity to further strengthen the overall quality, accessibility and relevance of education programs for First Nation people in New Brunswick. The goal is to close the achievement gap between First Nation students and their non-First Nation peers.

School achievement and later life success is rooted in early life experiences and early childhood development, which is why FNEII has partnered with the Hincks-Dellcrest Centre to support the mental health of the children in the member communities. Community information sessions are currently being held across the province in order to build interest. The program will begin later this month.

For more information, please contact Mike Hennessey, Community Education Coordinator at mike.hennessey@nb.aibn.com

