

Early Childhood Education, Parenting & Families

Relevant Details

Almost 60% of the Aboriginal population is under the age of 25, and is the fastest growing population in Canada. Increasing number of children, young parents, and children living in poverty lead to an increased need for ECE, parenting and family support programs that can help to increase the graduation rates for Aboriginal students in Vancouver (14%), to decrease the number of Aboriginal children who end up in the care of the Ministry of Children & Family Development (61% in Vancouver).

- *Facing The Facts! Childcare Needs In Vancouver's Inner City, 2000*, highlights the importance of providing a continuum of childcare support to children in Vancouver's inner-city neighbourhoods, where many live in sub-standard housing, in poverty, in single parent households, and are marginalized (where most Aboriginal people live).
- "...risks for pre-school children must be minimized through more early childhood development supports and services. Other external supports that may reduce risk are accessible child-care coupled with training in positive parenting" (Healing Ways, 1999. Vancouver/Richmond Health Board, p. 50).
- Key strategies include ...building capacity within Aboriginal communities to deliver culturally appropriate services, and supporting Aboriginal communities to develop and implement early childhood development strategies to meet their needs. (Ministry of Children and Family Development 2006/07-2008/09 Service Plan).
- "the City will continue to play a key role in creating opportunities for children birth to 12 years of age and their families to access quality child development services" p. 3, "Positive early childhood experiences increase school readiness and later school success. Lack of readiness puts children at risk of academic, social and behavioural difficulties in school. There is an increased likelihood of children dropping out of school, becoming pregnant as a teen and becoming addicted to alcohol, tobacco or other drugs. School failure affects future success and well being in the workplace." p. 4 (COV "Moving Forward", Childcare: A Cornerstone of Child Development Service 2002).
- The transfer of services to Aboriginal communities usually comes with significantly less funds attached than when the funders themselves offered the programs. This leaves Aboriginal organizations struggling to afford suitable facilities and staff, and those things that will help to make an Aboriginal program successful, including food, cultural activities, Elders involvement, protocols / gifting, and celebrations.
- "Flexibility in how child care funding is allocated is a critical priority for First Nations. First Nations are diverse - geographically, linguistically and culturally. They are at different stages of development, some are self-governing, some urban and others remote. (First Nations Early Learning and Child Care Action Plan Assembly of First Nations, 2005).

Who's Involved?

Aboriginal Child & Family Support Services - Vancouver Native Health (877 East Hastings St)

- Run by a committee of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organizations that provides various programs for Aboriginal children and youth 0 to 19 years old primarily in East Vancouver.
- Offers a Family Support Program, Early Childhood Support Program, and Home Instruction Program for Pre-school Youngsters (HIPPY) through its partner sites.
- Hosts an annual conference for Aboriginal Families & Service Providers.
- In April 2007 will begin operation of the Supportive Child Development Program which will provide services to Aboriginal children with special needs. There will be five staff.

Sundance Daycare - Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre (1607 East Hastings Street)

- An eighteen space daycare for 3 - 5 year old Aboriginal children.
- Two spaces are reserved for children with special needs.

Sheway (533 East Hastings Street)

- A government and community partnership which is led by Vancouver Native Health.
- Health and social services for women who are either pregnant or parenting children less than 18 months old and who are experiencing current or previous issues with substance use.
- Operates in a client-centered, woman-focused environment where staff work in partnership with a woman as she makes decisions regarding her health and the health of her child.

Aboriginal Mothers Centre (2019 Dundas Street)

- Offers drop-in space, free meals, advocacy, early childhood development activities, parent and family support, and an Aboriginal Parenting Program.
- Working towards opening a daycare centre.

Eagles Nest Head Start program - BC Aboriginal Child Care Society (618 East Hastings Street)

- Focuses on 3 - 5 year olds with the intent of bringing them to the school readiness stage to help ensure an easy transition into kindergarten.
- Parental involvement is a major factor contributing to the success of the program.
- The program includes cultural teachings, transportation, snacks, and meals.

Singing Frog Aboriginal Head Start - BC Aboriginal Child Care Society (2150 McLean Drive)

- Shares space with the Grandview Terrace Childcare Centre.
- Many parents volunteer in the program almost every day, and they look forward to having more Elders take part in the program.

BC Aboriginal Child Care Society (100 Park Royal S., West Vancouver)

- Helps Aboriginal communities develop high quality, integrated, community child care services that are based in the children's culture, language and history.

- Helps build an Aboriginal child care network by undertaking research, development, advocacy and supporting communities to develop their own resources.
- Includes training workshops, a lending library, rotating curriculum boxes, a traveling child care advisor, annual conferences, newsletters and more.

Urban Native Youth Association (1640 East Hastings Street)

- Building Blocks Worker offers one-to-one support, activities, and advocacy to first time parents.
- Sports and recreation program encourages young parents to become involved with their children, and when possible, provides free child minding for youth participants.
- Young Wolves Lodge works with young parents who are not parenting their children, but would like to work towards reunification.

Native Education Centre - Basic Early Childhood Education Program (285 East 5th Avenue)

- Trains early childhood educators and care providers with an Aboriginal cultural perspective.
- Students learn the basic skills for working with young children, developing day care activities which build age-appropriate skills, and includes a childcare centre practicum.

Amlatsi Family Place - Synala Housing Co-op (3090 Kingsway)

- Family oriented program for parents with children 0 - 6 years old that includes fun, educational, and culturally focused activities.
- Synala Housing Co-op is mandated to maintain a majority of Aboriginal members
- Partnership with Collingwood Neighbourhood House.

Nobody's Perfect Parenting Program - Kiwassa Neighbourhood House (2425 Oxford Street)

- Aboriginal specific parenting program for parents of children 0-5 years. Provides an opportunity to improve parenting skills and share experiences.
- Childcare and transportation are provided (if needed).

Crabtree Corner (533 East Hastings Street)

- Non-Aboriginal organization. Many Aboriginal women utilize this 24 space childcare service and other programs.
- An emergency child care and women's community centre.
- Co-housed with Sheway, operated by the YWCA and located on the Downtown Eastside.

Emma's Childcare Centre - Tupper Young Parent Services (598 East 22nd Avenue)

- An on-site daycare at Tupper Secondary School for young mothers continuing with their education. Parents also learn life skills.
- Many young Aboriginal mothers access this 24 space program.

Musqueam Co-Operative Pre-School (6735 Salish Dr)

- Provides schooling and developmental play to prepare pre-school children to enter kindergarten. Teachers have incorporated Musqueam's traditional language and the use of native designs for the children's artwork into the curriculum.

Musqueam Childcare Centre (6735 Salish Dr)

- Early child education for infant/toddler and infant/toddler with special needs, a program for three to five year olds that focuses on each child's needs and development.
- Opportunities to develop language skills and learn about establishing respectful social relationships. Outdoor exploration and play is incorporated.

Elementary Schools

- The elementary schools with the highest population of Aboriginal students are in the Eastside of Vancouver, including MacDonald, Britannia, Seymour, Strathcona, Sunrise, Grandview, Hastings, and Queen Alexandra.
- Many Aboriginal children, and sometimes parents, access any programs and services offered by these schools. In particular, community schools such as MacDonald have more programs available and partner with community groups to offer services when possible.

Family Places, Neighbourhood Houses, Community Centres

- There are a number of family places, neighbourhood houses, and community centres throughout Vancouver that offer programs that Aboriginal children and families can access, and some are Aboriginal-specific programs.
- Aboriginal people live mainly in the Eastside of Vancouver, so it is important that these sites reach out to, and ensure a welcoming environment for Aboriginal families.

Partnerships

- Sheway, Crabtree Corner, Vancouver Native Health Society, the YWCA, and government partner to fund and host the Sheway and Crabtree Corner programs and site in the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver.
- Synala Housing Co-op and Collingwood Neighbourhood House partner to offer the Amlatsi Family Place at Synala.

Committees

- Aboriginal Child & Family Support Services - is governed by an Aboriginal community board which includes Aboriginal Mother's Centre, Helping Spirit Lodge Society, Urban Native Youth Association, Vancouver Aboriginal Child and Family Services Society, and the Vancouver Aboriginal Council as well as other undetermined partners. Other planning partners include non-Aboriginal organizations who are working in the ECE area.
- Aboriginal Child & Family Support Services is developing an Elder's Advisory Council for its programs. The Elders will provide advice and assume an advocacy role with funders.

Trends

- More Native youth are accessing Aboriginal specific parenting programs, but there are not enough to meet the need, especially given their growing numbers.
- Aboriginal Child & Family Support Services report receiving more referrals from social workers as they gain more trust and develop better communication with each other.
- Aboriginal Child & Family Support Services reports more self referrals from Native youth. They think it is the result of a combination of increased need, better outreach and awareness of the program, and more services being offered throughout Vancouver.

Gaps

- There is not enough child minding and childcare available for parents who want to access resources that may help them to further their education/training or find employment.
- Children aged 6 - 12 continue to be caught in the middle between age groups that funding agencies are focusing attention on (0 - 6 and 13 - 24). This gap may have a large impact on Aboriginal youth graduation rates as, especially during the few years before high school, they need support to ensure they have a successful transition into high school.
- There is a fragmented approach to providing services within Aboriginal communities. This is due to fragmented funding to various organizations, not enough funding to focus time on community development / partnership development, a lack of coordination efforts by funders, and a perceived competition between agencies for scarce funding.

Contact Information

Addresses, phone, fax, email, and website information for any of the organizations above can be found in the Contact Information section of this manual.