



# A FACILITATOR'S GUIDE: PLANNING A FIRST NATIONS WORKSHOP FOR PARENTS

*best start  
meilleur départ*

by/par health **nexus** santé



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## **Advisory Committee:**

- Candi Edwards - Aboriginal Healthy Babies Healthy Children, Sioux Lookout
- Rebecca Doreen - Family Programs Manager, Niwasa Head Start, Hamilton
- Cathy Punnett - Aboriginal Early Childhood Development Program, Native Child and Family Services of Toronto
- Tricia Atlookan - Early Childhood Coordinator, Nishnawbe Aski Nation, Thunder Bay
- Stephanie Sandy - Family Services Worker, Social Services, Chippewa's of Rama First Nation
- Jenny McGraw - Family/Community Support Worker, Manitoulin Island
- Kerry Bebee - Aboriginal Midwife (Co-chair of the National Aboriginal Council of Midwives), Lindsay
- Karen Lawford - Aboriginal Midwife (National Aboriginal Council of Midwives) Lac Seul First Nation
- Serena Essex - Aboriginal Family Support Worker, Thunder Bay Indian Friendship Centre

**Best Start Lead:** Jennifer Menominee

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Best Start Resource Centre  
Health Nexus  
180 Dundas Street West, Suite 301  
Toronto, Ontario, M5G 1Z8  
1-800-397-9567  
[beststart@healthnexus.ca](mailto:beststart@healthnexus.ca)

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## Introduction

### **Hello, Aanii, She:kon, Boozhoo, Kwey Kwey, Tansi and Greetings**

This facilitator guide is meant to assist facilitators in planning and presenting a First Nations workshop for parents and caregivers of young children. This facilitator guide is divided into several sections that take you through the planning stages up to the day of the workshop. There are culturally specific customs and protocols that can assist in developing your workshop such as approaching Elders. You can use this resource as a guide to planning your workshop or you can use it to find answers to your own specific questions.

Please also see [www.beststart.org](http://www.beststart.org) for guides to providing parent workshops on specific topics.



## Roles and Responsibilities for the Workshop

### **The Role of the Facilitator**

A workshop facilitator does not necessarily have to be an expert on a specific subject, but needs to be able to deliver the relevant information to others in a clear and direct manner. The job of a facilitator is also to bring out the contributions and understanding of participants through delivery and workshop activities. These activities can include group discussion, group or individual activities, personal journaling, reflection and so on. The end goal is for workshop participants to come away with enhanced knowledge or skills that will be used in their daily work or personal life.

The workshop facilitator helps everyone to have a chance to speak, to be heard, and to be treated equally. Encourage different opinions and perspectives through discussion. Watch for opportunities to politely limit participants who over-participate and for opportunities to bring in those who tend to be more reserved.

When facilitating a First Nation workshop for parents and caregivers, keep in mind that participants may become overwhelmed or triggered by certain topics such as historical trauma, personal experiences etc. If you think a topic might trigger some participants, be sure to let the participants know at the beginning of the workshop. Let them know that if they need assistance, you have staff or an Elder there for support.

### **The Role of the Caretaker – Elder**

When hosting a workshop it is worthwhile to invite an Elder, to provide opening and closing ceremonies, and also to provide knowledge and support throughout the session. The Elder may also provide one-on-one comfort to participants who may need it. The Elder is also available to participants who may need a little extra support, which may include smudging or going to a quiet place to sit and talk.



While the content and design of many First Nation workshops are culturally specific and strengths based, it is best to have someone working with you who can fulfill the role of caretaker. If an Elder is not available, you could invite another staff member to act as the caretaker. The caretaker can watch for participants who may become emotional. The caretaker has the ability to leave to check up on someone without suspending the workshop. This person also has the ability to provide support throughout the day including breaks and lunch.

When looking for an Elder for your workshop, it's always good idea to ask co-workers if they can recommend an Elder they have worked with in the past. Ask about their experience with that particular Elder and what they most liked about them. Some organizations keep a list of Elders that they work with on an ongoing basis. Elders are not necessarily seniors. Some are younger individuals who have been recognised by their community as a spiritual person who has earned the respect of being called an Elder.

When you are contacting an Elder, if possible, make a point of visiting them or meeting with them so you can speak to them directly. If this is not possible, phoning the Elder is welcomed too. When you are talking to an Elder be clear and direct when addressing them. Give them information about your workshop including the purpose, the type and number of participants, the date and time of the workshop, and their role as caretaker.

Ensure you are using the cultural protocols that might be specific to that region or First Nations group when approaching an Elder. Many Elders have helpers who can assist in conveying such protocols. Ask if there are certain ways or customs for addressing a certain Elder if you are unsure.

If you are visiting an Elder in person it is customary not to have consumed alcohol up to 4 days prior to the visit. Women should also schedule their visits when they are not on their moontime. It is customary to give tobacco as an offering when approaching an Elder. The tobacco offering can be given in the form of a cigarette, pack of cigarettes, loose tobacco pack, or a tobacco tie. It is also appropriate to ask the Elder what form of tobacco she/he would like to receive.

It is customary to provide some form of honorarium to an Elder. This is most often done with the giving of tobacco (a pinch in a simple cotton tie). It can also include a special gift or a monetary sum. If you are providing an Elder with a monetary honorarium it should be enough to cover transportation costs plus extra to thank them for sharing their knowledge and time. You can ask co-workers about the appropriate Elder honorarium for your workshop.





## Planning and Preparing the Workshop

### Cycles of Learning

The purpose of a workshop is to empower participants with knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that will help them make positive changes to their ways of seeing, thinking, and doing. During the workshop we are also acknowledging that participants are all teachers and learners and that we all have a responsibility for our own personal learning journeys. The workshop process is meant to encourage equal participation among all who are present and to acknowledge that learning is an ongoing process that is cyclical in nature, involving your whole being, including physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual aspects.

First Nations use various types of teachings, for example the use of circles or wheels to show where information fits with First Nation cultural values and beliefs. Elders say that learning is a life long journey. The success of the learner is dependent on their own willingness to listen, to trust, to engage, and to be open to new ideas and beliefs. Facilitators can help to set the stage for listening, trusting, engaging and openness to new ideas and beliefs.

Adults have many different ways of learning and taking in new information. When you are designing your workshop try to make sure it is engaging and interactive for participants. This could mean using various formats when transmitting information such as videos, role plays and discussions. Adults also have different levels of understanding, so use terms and explanations that can be understood by the group.



### **Planning your Workshop**

When you are in the initial stages of developing a workshop, it's always useful to identify your needs and priorities. You can start by asking some simple questions such as:

- What is the topic of my workshop?
- Who is the audience?
- What do I want the participants to get out of this workshop?



### **Making an Agenda**

A sample agenda is included in Appendix 3. When you are planning the agenda, build in time for opening, icebreakers, sharing content in interactive and interesting ways, and for closing. Make sure to include breaks. Think about the time you need to cover the content well and about the available time. Sometimes you and/or your participants have limited time and you may want to spread the content over a few shorter sessions.

### **Setting a Date and Time**

Choose a date that allows sufficient time to plan and promote your workshop. Confirm that the time of day is suited to your participants. Ensure there are no other community events or ceremonies at the same time as your workshop.

### **Promoting your Workshop**

Workshops can be done in small or larger groups, depending on time and needs. In some communities it can be a challenge to bring larger groups of people together to participate in group activities.

Be sure to allow for enough time to promote your workshop so that you get enough participants. There are a variety of ways you can promote your workshop including posters, mail, person to person, newspapers, radio, social media, etc.

It is often helpful to offer incentives, and to list these incentives on the promotional materials when advertising your workshop. Incentives can include things like food vouchers, draws, gift cards, etc. Think about how you can address barriers participants may face in attending the workshop such as transportation, child care, etc. It can also be helpful to include information in the promotional materials about any meals or snacks that will be provided as part of the workshop. When registering participants, be sure to ask about any allergies, food requirements, or accessibility requirements.



## Location and Setup for the Workshop

### **Workshop Environment**

Be mindful that the physical environment plays an important role in a successful workshop. Participants need to be comfortable and feel safe. Try limiting outside distractions while being aware of room temperature, lighting, air quality, layout, etc., when planning and facilitating a workshop.

### **Room Set Up**

If you have the option, arrange tables or chairs in semi-circle or “U” shape, or use a round table. This format will allow participants to see the facilitator, Elder, and all the other participants in the room. The facilitator should be at the open end of the circle with flip charts, etc. If there will be an Elder/Traditional Person, you will need a table for their medicines.

### **Food/Catering**

If you are planning a full day workshop it is best to provide food and refreshments for participants during breaks and at meal times. Food is a significant part of First Nations culture during events, meetings and ceremonies. It connects people together through the sharing of a meal. Food, especially traditional First Nations foods, can also be very healing.

### The Four Sacred Medicines

Ask about culturally appropriate opening and closing activities in your area. Find out if smudging is a culturally appropriate opening/closing for parents in your workshop. Also be aware of smudging protocols for the people in your area such as women who are pregnant or on their moon time.

Ensure that you have permission from the building staff to light your medicines for smudging. If you are not permitted to light your smudge inside, there are other options. You can smudge in a garden outside, or use a dry form.



First Nations people like the Anishnawbe use four sacred medicines. Sacred medicines such as cedar, sage, sweet grass or tobacco are burned in an abalone shell or a small pan.

- *Sweetgrass* is used for ritual cleansing.
- *Tobacco* absorbs prayers and carries them to the spirit world. It is used to thank the Creator for his gifts or to make a request.
- *Cedar* is used for purification and for positive energy, feelings, emotions, and balance.
- *Sage* is a woman's medicine, conferring strength, wisdom, and clarity. It also drives away negative energies.

Smudging is a way for us to cleanse our body and minds while bringing about focus. It is customary when entering into any ceremony or circle, to enter with a good heart and good mind. It is a way of ensuring that we are all together with the same intentions.

To smudge, certain plant medicines (sage is most commonly used for such workshops) are either lit or are passed around (dry form). If lit, the smoke is fanned with a feather and the participant uses the smoke as though he or she were washing with water—passing it over various areas of the body. If dry, a sage leaf (or tobacco) is taken from a basket with the left hand (closest to the heart). The plant is held during the opening prayer then either crushed and passed over one's body or is saved for a later time when the individual can light the medicine.

Some people are sensitive to smoke so be prepared to provide access to medicines in alternative ways. Be aware of allergies and sensitivities when using Traditional Medicines. Sage can be rubbed on the skin. Water is life-giving medicine. A good belly-laugh is healing too!





## Opening and Closing the Workshop

### Openings

All openings generally have similar content. After everyone has had the opportunity to smudge (if appropriate), you can ask your Elder to provide a prayer to open the circle or you can plan a different opening. You can use a song, story, or a poem or create your own opening. After you open the circle it is customary to introduce yourself and then to allow each participant to introduce themselves.

### Icebreakers

Icebreakers are a way of easing participants into the workshop while promoting team building and shared understanding. Icebreakers can be a good way to start a workshop or to invigorate participants when attention levels are low. If you have a well-designed icebreaker it can motivate participation and allow participants get to know one another better during the session. You can choose an icebreaker that directly relates to your workshop topic or you can create a random set of icebreakers to use if you begin to notice low energy in your participants. There are numerous icebreakers on the Internet. You can also ask co-workers if they have any icebreakers that worked well in their workshops.

### Key Messages

Key messages are used to share key points with your participants. They are a helpful way to ensure your participants retain the relevant information that you are conveying. You can provide key messages throughout your workshop, you can deliver key messages at the very end or both. They are a good means of packaging and summarizing all the information in a short amount of time. A handout summarizing key messages can be helpful.

### **Reflections**

Traditionally when a council meeting ended everyone was given a chance to speak of what was learned and discussed. This was a means of ending the meeting in a good way. At the end of a workshop allow for a period of reflection before closing your workshop. This will give participants time to share their thoughts on the material learned. You can give participants a minute or two to reflect or if you are pressed for time ask each participant for one word about the workshop.

### **Closing Prayer**

Traditionally when a gathering adjourned a prayer was offered at the end the meeting. The prayer would give thanks to all Creation and the Ancestors for their guidance, freeing them to leave and rest. Invite the Elder to provide closing remarks and prayer at the end of your workshop to acknowledge the end the workshop and give thanks to the collective work completed by all participants. Thank the Elder once they are finished.



## Appendix 1 - Facilitator Tips

- Create and maintain an atmosphere of trust by being sensitive to the feelings of all participants.
- Have a “sense” for timing. Know when to bring a discussion to a close, when to change the topic, when to politely cut off someone who has talked too long, and when to let the discussion become shorter or longer than planned.
- Have the workshop planned but be flexible in response to any situation or the needs of participants.
- Show your sense of humour and share your experiences openly and freely with the group.
- Provide relevant handouts to support the messages of your workshop. Handouts are easy for participants to review later on.
- Use a variety of learning methods such as videos, group activities, discussions, etc.





## Appendix 2 - Workshop Planning Checklist

### **6-8 Weeks Before your Workshop:**

- Develop goals and objectives for your workshop.
- Prepare an event budget and list costs associated with your workshop.
- Consider potential dates for workshop. Consult with other program staff to make sure that your workshop doesn't conflict with another event. Also avoid holidays and school P.D. days.
- Confirm event date and time.
- If your organization is equipped for hosting events and workshops, see if there is a space available for the date of your event. If you don't have space within your organization, research potential locations in your community. Always consider accessibility, room style, and the estimated number of participants.
- Select and book the space or location.
- Identify and approach guest speakers (if applicable).
- Develop promotional materials for the workshop. Remember to include all relevant information (date, time, location) for the workshop.
- Prepare a form to list participants as they register.
- Approach and confirm the attendance of the Elder.

### **4-6 Weeks Before your Workshop:**

- Secure a guest speaker, if needed.
- Send the guest speaker a copy of the workshop description along with any other applicable information you feel they might need.
- If you are planning to serve food, contact potential caterers for quotes.
- Consider requirements such as audio visual equipment (speakers, microphone, projector screen, digital projector).
- Select a location considering factors such as transportation, space, accessibility, etc.
- Begin to draft an agenda.

### **2-4 Weeks Before your Workshop:**

- Finalize agenda.
- Book audio visual (AV) equipment (if applicable).
- Book caterer (if applicable).
- Make travel arrangements for guest speakers (if required).
- Make transportation arrangements for participants (if required).
- Promote the workshop.
- Add participants to your list as they register.

### **1 Week Before your Workshop:**

- If needed, do another promotion to increase the number of participants.
- Confirm catering details.

### **1-2 Days Before your Workshop:**

- Review the agenda for your event.
- Make sure you have all the things you need (handouts, flipchart, markers, etc.).
- Take care of any last-minute food preparations.

### **Day of Your Workshop:**

- Arrive early and make sure the room, equipment, food, and materials are ready.

### **After Your Workshop:**

- Review the evaluation forms. Think about things that went well and things that could be improved.
- If required, prepare a report along with statistical data from participant evaluations, etc.
- Send out thank you cards to the Elder and guest speaker.

## Appendix 3 - Sample Agenda

Agendas can be simple or detailed, based on your needs and the needs of the participants. Here is a sample agenda to get you started. This agenda is designed to guide the facilitator. A simplified version can be shared with participants.

Sample Workshop Agenda on Parent Child Attachment	
Topic	Facilitator Notes
<b>Section 1 - The Welcome (9:30-10:30 am)</b>	
Opening and Prayer	Elder to perform Opening
Introductions	Introduce participants
Workshop Agenda	Review workshop description, objectives and agenda
Workshop Ground Rules	Discuss workshop rules and expectations
Ice Breaker	Use an ice breaker to help you learn about participants and to help them get to know each other
Pre Workshop Questions	Have participants complete the Pre Workshop Questions
<b>Morning Break (10:30-10:45 am)</b>	
<b>Section 2 – Attachment (10:45am-12 noon)</b>	
What is Attachment?	Share the definition of attachment and facilitate the group discussion activity
Why Attachment Matters	Discuss the link between responsiveness and development of a strong attachment
Benefits of Secure Attachment	Provide information on the benefits of a secure attachment
Attachment versus Bonding	Discuss the differences and similarities between attachment and bonding
Developmental Stages	Review changes in children’s developmental behaviours related to connections with their caregivers



**Lunch Break (12noon to 1 pm)**

**Section 3 - First Nation Knowledge and Experience (1:00-2:30 pm)**

<b>Child-Parent Circle of Attachment</b>	Discuss the traditional Medicine Wheel Teaching on Child-Parent Attachment
<b>Kinship Attachment</b>	Discuss traditional First Nations kinship attachment
<b>Relationship Wheel</b>	Discuss the Medicine Wheel Teaching on Traditional Relationships in First Nations Communities
<b>Historical Trauma and Attachment</b>	Review historical factors that impact First Nations parenting and attachment
<b>Adoption and Fostering</b>	Review information on First Nations adoption and fostering
<b>Traditional Attachment Practices</b>	Discuss traditional customs and practices to promote attachment
<b>Action Wheel Activity</b>	Facilitate the Action Wheel activity

**Afternoon Break (2:30-2:45 pm)**

**Section 4 - Wrapping Up (2:45-3:30 pm)**

<b>Reflections and Key Messages</b>	Review key messages and encourage participants to share thoughts about the workshop
<b>Post Workshop Questions</b>	Ask participants to complete the Post Workshop Questions and discuss responses
<b>Participant Feedback</b>	Ask participants to complete the Participant Feedback Form
<b>Closing Prayer</b>	Elder to perform closing

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