



# Taking Care of Our Children

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FACILITATOR GUIDE:  
PARENT WORKSHOP ON CHILDREARING IN FIRST NATIONS FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

*best start*  
*meilleur départ*

by/par health **nexus** santé

# Acknowledgements

This resource was developed through a literature review, advisory input, and interviews with key informants. Chi-miigwetch to these incredible knowledge holders for generously sharing their wealth of knowledge, stories, teachings, and personal experiences to develop this resource. *Taking Care of Our Children* would not be possible without you and your wise and loving ways. In addition Best Start Resource Centre would like to acknowledge and thank Kerry Bebee for her role in researching and drafting this guide.

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*This document has been prepared with funds provided by the Government of Ontario. The information herein reflects the views of the authors and is not officially endorsed by the Government of Ontario. The resources and applications cited throughout this resource are not necessarily endorsed by the Best Start Resource Centre or the Government of Ontario.*

# Introduction

*“We do not own our children; we are their caretakers for as long as they need us.”*  
– Janet Fox (Cree)

This guide will help facilitators provide a parent workshop about childrearing in First Nations families, including information about the roles and responsibilities within First Nations families and communities related to childrearing. Some content may also be relevant for workshops for Inuit or Métis parents. This guide includes contemporary and traditional parenting styles and approaches. It also shares information about ceremonies, guiding children, responding to the needs and behaviours of our children, ensuring safety and security within our parenting, managing stress, etc.

This guide shares teachings from a range of First Nations in Ontario including Anishinaabe, Cree, Métis, and Haudenosaunee. It uses a culture-based approach that includes knowledge shared by Elders and knowledge holders such as references to traditional parenting methods, ceremonies, practical exercises, links to videos, etc.

In addition to the information in this guide, it is important to learn about and share teachings that are relevant to the parents in the workshop. You may want to ask a local Elder or knowledge holder to share teachings and provide support during your workshop.

Information about the impact of Canada’s Indian Residential School system on parenting in First Nations communities is incorporated in this guide to provide context related to current parenting challenges.

**Note:** *In this guide the term **parents** is used when referring to anyone who provides regular and consistent care for a child. This may be a parent, grandparent, extended family, foster parent, or another important person in the child’s life. In this guide the term **participants** refers to those who attend the parenting workshop (e.g. First Nations parents). For simplicity this resource refers to **your child** although workshop participants may have more than one child.*

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# Preparing For the Workshop

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## Using this Facilitator Guide

This facilitator guide includes information and tools to help you prepare for and provide a workshop for participants (First Nations parents) about childrearing from birth to age seven.

This guide includes:

- A section on preparing for the workshop (this section).
- Sections on facilitating the four parts of the workshop.
- A section with additional resources that may be helpful to facilitators or to workshop participants.
- An appendix with handouts for workshop participants.
- An appendix with forms you can use to assess the effectiveness of your workshop.

Before the workshop, review the four Workshop Sections: The Welcome, Parenting Our Children, Specific Parenting Issues and Challenges, and Wrapping Up. Each section provides information, teachings, and facilitation suggestions. You may also want to review materials from the Additional Reading section of this guide before facilitating a parent workshop on this topic.

The parent workshop can be adapted to suit participant needs and different facilitation styles. The content in this guide can be used in a one day workshop or over several shorter workshops. Facilitators can present the material in this guide in different ways such as an oral presentation with printed handouts, a PowerPoint presentation, and/or by using flipchart paper and markers. Use a presentation style that you are comfortable with and that sets a good learning environment for the participants. Keep in mind that there are many different types of adult learners and that each individual learns in their own way (see Adult Learning Styles and Diverse Backgrounds).

The appendices have materials and forms you can print for participants in preparation for your workshop, including pre and post workshop participant questions and participant feedback forms. Participants can use the handouts to follow along during the workshop and to review the information after the workshop. You could also develop your own handouts, activities, and forms.

## Facilitators for the Parent Workshop

We recommend two facilitators for this parent workshop in case issues such as intergenerational trauma emerge during the workshop. One facilitator can take the role of caregiver and can leave the room with a participant if they are triggered by a topic or a discussion, or require additional support.

If your workshop plans include an Elder, grandparent, or knowledge holder as a speaker, make sure they have the full details about the workshop (location, time, type and number of participants, workshop content, their role, etc.).

If you are new to facilitating workshops, or for a review of protocols for inviting and involving an Elder, please refer to the First Nations Workshop Facilitator Guide (available at [www.beststart.org](http://www.beststart.org)).

## Adult Learning Styles

There are many different ways to learn. Adults have different educational backgrounds, vocabularies, and levels of understanding. In your workshop, use simple, direct language that includes terms or descriptions that everyone can understand. Describe an important concept in more than one way or give examples. If the discussion is getting off track, guide the group back to the workshop content.

It is essential that parent workshops are interactive and engaging as too much lecture style can cause participants to become disinterested or distracted. Ice-breakers can be used to help participants to get to know or become more comfortable with other participants. During the workshop, use a variety of formats such as videos, role playing, games, or discussion groups. If participants are sitting for a long period of time, a break, energizer, or active workshop component is helpful so that participants can stand, stretch, and move around. It is good to consider these aspects as you develop your workshop agenda.

Generally, there are three types of adult learners (Russell, 2006) and most of us are some combination of these learning types:

- **Visual Learners:** These learners visualize things or create a mental picture. Provide material in a variety of visual formats. Make handouts as visually appealing as possible, including diagrams. These learners like charts, pictures, and videos.
- **Auditory Learners:** These adults like to have someone talk them through a process. Write down key words and talk about the concepts in different ways. Incorporate sound where you can, such as music, recordings, or video clips. First Nations and Métis often use humour in day-to-day communication. Short personal stories of humour can be helpful to illustrate particular points.
- **Kinesthetic Learners:** These are the movers and the shakers – they like to do things! To reach these learners, movement needs to be included. Schedule frequent breaks or activities that allow movement.

For all learners, use multi-media resources, videos, and pictures. Encourage movement, stretching, and position changes throughout the workshop (Russell, 2006). Sometimes doing a craft helps participants enjoy and learn during the workshops. They can decorate their Journals while listening. It also takes the spotlight off participants.

Provide opportunities for workshop participants (First Nations parents) to contribute, elaborate, and embrace their own parenting practices to reinforce their own parenting abilities. As a facilitator, your role is to support participants to continue their own effective childrearing practices along with the transfer of new knowledge to strengthen families in the context of childrearing in First Nations families and communities.

## Diverse Backgrounds

It is important to recognize that participants may have different backgrounds, ages, income levels, family structures, health concerns, etc. There are different ways of thinking, depending on cultural context and worldview. Participants may have traditional or mainstream beliefs and practices, or some traditional and some mainstream beliefs and practices. Participants may come from different tribal backgrounds especially in urban settings. For example, Cree parents and Mohawk parents may have different ideas on the same topic. This is important to consider when conducting the workshop. Care should be taken to be inclusive of different perspectives. As a facilitator, show respect, compassion, and understanding, and avoid making assumptions. If you are not familiar with teachings for a First Nation community, involve an Elder or knowledge holder, or encourage participants to contribute during the workshop, if they feel comfortable.

Gentle humour also encourages sharing and ease. Laughter can help lift the energy of the room as well. Ensure that laughter is not directed at someone, but is inclusive. There is a longstanding Aboriginal practice of using a mild self-deprecating humour (poking fun at oneself) to create an easy and relaxed space for communication. For example, if you are comfortable, you could tell a short funny story of how you learned something through a mistake that you made.





## Creating a Safe Space

Some workshop participants may have a history of personal trauma and all are likely to have some intergenerational trauma. Participants have most likely faced discrimination, racism, or exclusion from non-Aboriginal peoples/society. They may have a background with social services or child protection services. As a result, participants may be prone to distrust, feeling judged, or feelings of guilt or shame. They may be accustomed to surveillance which may have made them unwilling to share openly due to concerns about negative consequences.

The systematic colonization and assimilation policies and practices of the Government of Canada disrupted the transmission of traditional childrearing knowledge and practices. Parenting practices were forcibly lost, leaving generations of First Nations families with little to no traditional knowledge with which to parent their own children. The intergenerational effects of the Indian Residential School System on the health and well-being of First Nations communities, families, parents, and children must be taken into consideration in all stages of parenting (BSRC, 2006).

Facilitators are encouraged to remind themselves that parents are generally providing care to the best of their abilities. Many First Nations parents continue to struggle with the intergenerational effects of Indian Residential School system as well as related issues such as abuse, substance use, poverty, etc. First Nations communities care deeply for their children. Strong parenting skills are a personal and collective responsibility. By strengthening all relationships, children, family, clans, nations, and communities will be improved.

Facilitators can create a safe and comfortable space where all parents are accepted and at ease. Creating a safe space for sharing from the beginning is very important. It is good to state this explicitly, by indicating, *“Together we will create a safe space for sharing.”* The opening prayer and smudge also help with this, as does stating of ground rules and description of the workshop (see The Welcome). During your workshop use trauma-informed approaches (RNAO, 2014), for example:

- Emphasize safety.
- Build trustworthiness.
- Maximize choice and control.
- Offer collaboration and power sharing.
- Create empowerment.
- Focus on strengths not deficits.

You might want to provide a quiet caretaking space apart from the group where a participant can sit, have a cup of tea (cedar tea or berry tea is nice), and perhaps talk one-on-one to the Elder or caregiver for a few moments. The Elder or caregiver could offer a smudge if the participant is experiencing strong emotions. If you are able to offer a caretaking space for participants, briefly explain this early in your workshop.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Katsi Cook



## Child Care

Since this is a workshop for parents, think through your options for child care. Will parents arrange for someone to take care of their child while they are in the workshop? Or do you have the funding to offer child minding services during the workshop? Or perhaps a co-worker could provide this service during the workshop? The child minding services could be in the same room or in a separate space. If you are arranging for child minding services, think through the logistics, such as:

- Who will care for the children?
- Is the space safe for young children?
- Are there snacks and activities for the children?

## Developing the Workshop Agenda

In this guide there are many activities to choose from. Some may be omitted or shortened depending on available time or all could be used over several workshops. You may want to focus on only some areas of the workshop content, depending on participant needs, interests, and time available. For example you could focus on parents of children in a specific age group, a specific cultural group, or a small number of parenting topics.

The following table is a summary of the time and materials required for potential content that could be included. Please note that some sections may be longer or shorter depending on the amount of content you want to share and the learning opportunities you select. As you develop an agenda to suit your needs, remember to include breaks as required (for example, a mid-morning break, lunch break, and mid-afternoon break).

## Time and Materials Required for Potential Workshop Components

Time	Topic	Content	Forms and Handouts
<b>The Welcome</b>			
15 minutes	Opening and Prayer	Page 13	
10 minutes	Introductions	Page 14	
15 minutes	Workshop Description and Agenda	Page 15	
10 minutes	Workshop Ground Rules	Page 16	
15 minutes	Icebreaker	Page 17	
10 minutes	Participant Pre Workshop Questions	Page 18	Form 1, Page 81
<b>Parenting Our Children</b>			
45 minutes	Family Roles and Responsibilities	Page 20	Handout 1, Page 51
45 minutes	Traditional Parenting	Page 21	Handout 2, Page 59
30 minutes	Non-Interference	Page 23	
30 minutes	Storytelling	Page 25	
30 minutes	Traditional Ceremonies	Page 27	Handout 3, Page 66
<b>Specific Parenting Issues and Challenges</b>			
30 minutes	Parenting Styles	Page 29	Handout 4, Page 68
45 minutes	Needs and Behaviour	Page 30	Handout 5, Page 70
30 minutes	Time-in and Time-out	Page 32	
15 minutes	Teachable Moments	Page 34	
30 minutes	Safety and Security	Page 35	
20 minutes	Screen Time	Page 37	Handout 6, Page 76
45 minutes	Stress Management	Page 38	Handout 7, Page 77
<b>Wrapping Up</b>			
15 minutes	Reflections and Key Messages	Page 41	
10 minutes	Participant Post Workshop Questions	Page 42	Forms 2 and 3, Page 82, 83
10 minutes	Participant Feedback	Page 42	Form 4, Page 84
10 minutes	Closing Prayer	Page 43	
<p><b>Note:</b> Facilitators can choose the workshop components that suit the participants, time available, etc. Times are estimates only. Actual timing for each component depends on the selected activities, the knowledge and interests of the participants, time available, your facilitation style, etc.</p>			

## Energizer Exercise

Short activities can be included in the agenda or used as needed to re-energize the participants and lighten the mood. It doesn't take long and then you have good energy to get back on task. Keep a few energizers in mind, in case you need them! They can also be used to indicate the importance of movement, laughter, and play. Here is a sample energizer:

1. Tell participants to silently think of a child of a specific age, from newborn to age 7.
2. Then tell participants to arrange themselves from youngest to oldest. Participants can only make the actions and noises typical of a child of that age, without talking.
3. After they have finished, have participants say the age of the child they were thinking about.



## Gathering Needed Materials

Bring together the following items before your workshop:

- Flipchart, markers, masking tape.
- Pens (for you and for each participant).
- If you are using videos: equipment for showing the video, internet connection or video.
- Name tags.
- Ininasin Journal for each participant (see Putting Together Participant Handouts).
- Items for decorating the Ininasin Journal such as scissors, glue, stickers, ribbon, markers, coloured pencils, etc.
- Pre and Post Workshop Questions and Feedback Forms for each participant (Forms 1, 2, and 4, Appendix 2).
- One copy of the Answers to Questions (Form 3, Appendix 2).
- List of relevant community programs, supports, or resources.
- Smudge bowl, Sweetgrass, Cedar, or Sage, as required by Elder or caregiver.
- Tea, teapot or thermos, and mugs, if creating a caretaking space.
- Talking feather, stick, shaker, or stone.
- Other materials you may want to have on hand such as snacks, bus tokens for participants, etc.

## Putting Together the Participant Handouts

In Anishinaabe the word *ininasin* (pronounced ih-nih-nuh-sihn) means jewel. The Ininasin Journals are binders that hold the participant handouts, a few blank pages, etc. Participants can use their Journal to take notes such as teachings or other pieces of information that might be important to them. During the workshop, while listening to lecture format sections or discussions, participants can decorate their Journals. After the workshop participants can refer to the information at home.

Create an Ininasin Journal for each participant using a basic binder. Each Ininasin Journal should contain the participant handouts in Appendix 1 that support your agenda as well as 3 hole punched lined paper for taking notes, drawing, etc.

You may also want to include:

- A page with a blank box for an inspirational message.
- Blank page to paste in a drawing from their child or photo of their child (at home).
- A list of local services.
- List of additional reading material, helpful websites, etc.

## Setting up the Room

If possible arrange the tables in a “U” shape, or sit at a round table. This will allow participants to work in a circle formation. The facilitator should be at the open end of the circle with the flipchart, etc. If there will be an Elder or Traditional Person you will need a table for their medicines. If you are providing a caretaking space, then have a small table and chairs available apart from the group, with teapot or thermos of tea and mugs.

Set out a copy of the Pre Workshop Questions (Form 1, Appendix 2) and an Ininasin Journal for each participant, as well as a pen and a name tag. Set up the flipchart. On the flipchart paper write out the workshop description, agenda and ground rules (see Workshop Description and Agenda and Workshop Ground Rules). Post these pages on the wall so participants will be able to see them. If you are planning to show a video or use PowerPoint, set up and test the equipment.

Make the room as comfortable as possible, paying attention to temperature, lighting, and noise.



***Section 1:  
The Welcome***

# Opening and Prayer

## Cultural Context:

Traditionally before council or important gatherings First Nations would have an opening prayer to bring all the minds together for a purpose and to provide thanks to the Creator and all Creation.

## Purpose:

Begin the workshop in a traditional manner and focus attention of participants on work ahead.

## Workshop Activities:

Introduce yourself. Welcome the participants to the workshop.

Welcome the Elder and invite the Elder to offer a prayer to start the workshop in a good way.

If you do not have an Elder, you could do the prayer and ask a participant to take the smudge around. Or you may know a participant or staff member who is knowledgeable and could do the prayer and smudge for you. Thank the Elder once they are done. For a review of protocols for welcoming, involving, and thanking an Elder, please refer to the First Nations Workshop Facilitator Guide (available at [www.beststart.org](http://www.beststart.org)).

## Materials:

- Smudge bowl and matches or lighter.
- Sweetgrass, Cedar, or Sage.

**Time:** 15 minutes (at the discretion of Elder).



# Introductions

**Purpose:** Participants have a clear understanding of the topic, purpose, and plan for the workshop. Participants and facilitators are introduced and know about the building.

## Workshop Activities:

Introduce yourself again. Ask each participant to introduce themselves (name, where they are from, any expectations of the workshop, etc.), going around the circle. You might want to pass a feather (shaker, stick, stone) so each one knows it is their turn and the others know to shift their focus to that person.

Ask participants to fill out their name tag and put it on.

Provide any relevant information about the building such as:

- Location of fire exits.
- Location of washrooms.
- Smoking areas.



Let participants know if you have a caregiver and caretaking space available during the workshop. Let them know if they will be able to smudge during the workshop, if needed.

## Materials:

- Nametags, pens.
- A feather, shaker, talking stick, or small stone.
- Comfortable caretaking space with chairs, table, tea, mugs.

**Time:** 10 minutes.



# Workshop Description and Agenda

**Purpose:** Participants have a clear understanding of the topic and plan for the day.

## Workshop Activities:

Introduce participants to the workshop by covering the following:

- Review the Workshop Description (posted on wall prior to the workshop) with participants (see content in this section).
- Review the agenda you developed for the workshop with participants (posted on the wall prior to the workshop). Explain when the breaks will occur and when the workshop will wrap up.
- Introduce participants to their Ininasin Journals and the meaning behind the name Ininasin. Provide materials so participants can decorate their journal during the workshop.



**Workshop Description** (to review with participants, depending on the selected content and activities)

This workshop will provide information about:

- Parenting roles and responsibilities in First Nations families and communities.
- Traditional parenting practices and ceremonies.
- Parenting styles.
- Responding to the needs and behaviours of children.
- Time-in and Time-out.
- Teachable moments.
- Managing safety, security, screen time, and stress.

**Ininasin Journal** (to review with participants)

In Anishnawbe “ininasin” (pronounced ih-nih-nuh-sihn) means jewel. The Ininasin Journals include the workshop handouts. Participants can use their Journal to take notes, for example teachings or other pieces of information that might be important to them. At the end of the workshop participants can take their Journal with them and refer to it at home. Participants can add photos of their child or drawings from their child to their Journal.

## Materials:

- Flipchart page with workshop description and agenda.
- Ininasin Journals, items to decorate Journals.

**Time:** 15 minutes.

# Workshop Ground Rules

**Purpose:** Participants understand respectful conduct while attending the workshop.

## Workshop Activities:

Review the workshop Ground Rules (see examples in this section) with participants to ensure everyone understands the conduct to be observed during the workshop. Refer participants to the ground rules that you posted on the wall prior to the workshop. Ask if participants have any other ground rules they would like to add to the list. Add relevant ground rules to the list on the wall.



## Examples of Ground Rules

1. We will turn off our cell phones unless we are expecting an emergency call. As a sign of respect to other participants we will not use our cell phones during the workshop.
2. We will show respect and common courtesy to other participants (i.e. do not interrupt when a participant is speaking, save private conversations for breaks).
3. We will participate during the workshop in ways that we feel comfortable.
4. We will do our best to create a safe and supportive space so everyone is comfortable participating. It is not our place to judge—we all make mistakes, we are all learning together!
5. When in a talking circle, we will not interrupt the participant holding the feather, stick, shaker, or stone.
6. We will ensure time is given to others in the circle—there will be other times for lengthy, in-depth discussions.
7. What we say and do in the circle, stays within our circle. Other peoples' stories are not shared outside this group without their consent.

**Materials:** Flipchart paper with list of ground rules, markers.

**Time:** 10 minutes.

# Ice Breaker

**Purpose:** Participants become more comfortable in a group setting. Participants get to know one another and the facilitator gets to know the participants.

**Workshop Activities:**

A feather is passed around (or shaker, talking stick, small stone). Ask each participant in turn to answer the following question:

*“Can you name a positive characteristic or personality trait of your child that you really appreciate?”*

Each parent states a positive character trait of their child and perhaps a brief description of how their child exemplifies this. If sharing is slow to start, the facilitator can begin as an example. This is a chance for participants to briefly share a positive description of their child to start things from a good place. When everyone has responded, acknowledge that children all have their own personality and that different parenting strategies work better for children with certain personalities and parents can adapt their behaviour and expectations accordingly.

Depending on time and size of group and the time available, this first discussion can be followed by a second question:

*“Can you name a difficult situation that comes up with your child that you would like to handle in a better way?”*

Parents will state situations that they find particularly challenging or that they identify as needing to work on to a greater degree with their children, i.e., a consistent bedtime, easier morning routines, tantrums, etc. This exercise allows parents to see that other parents are dealing with parenting challenges. It also gives you examples to return to later in the workshop. Remind participants that all parents can benefit from support and information about childrearing.

**Materials:** A feather, shaker, talking stick, or small stone.

**Time:** 15 minutes.



# Participant Pre Workshop Questions

**Purpose:** Participants assess their own knowledge prior to the workshop.

**Workshop Activities:**

Ask participants to complete the Pre Workshop Questions (Form 1, Appendix 2). Be clear that this is not a test. They will be the only ones to see the results. Once they have completed their form, let them know that they will refer to it again at the end of the workshop. Explain that, following the workshop, they will complete another set of questions and compare their results.

**Materials:** Form 1: Pre Workshop Questions for each participant (Appendix 2).

**Time:** 10 minutes.



***Section 2:  
Parenting Our Children***



# Family Roles and Responsibilities

## Cultural Context:

Elders from various tribal backgrounds emphasise that, traditionally, the most important roles in the community were motherhood and fatherhood, raising the next generation and the leaders of the community for the future. Aboriginal traditions were disrupted by colonization and have changed family roles and responsibilities in many families. We have learned and adapted, as any survival culture does.

**Purpose:** Participants learn about traditional roles and responsibilities related to childrearing.



## Workshop Activities:

Share relevant teachings about family roles and responsibilities with participants. There are several ways to do this. You may want to use one or all of these methods:

- Ask an Elder or knowledge holder to share teachings about the roles of family members in childrearing.
- Chose relevant information from Handout 1: Family Roles and Responsibilities (Appendix 1) and describe these teachings to participants.
- Ask participants to share teachings they may have heard about traditional family roles and responsibilities.

Ask the participants to write down their child's developmental stage in their Journal (newborn, baby, toddler, young child) as well as things they can do to support this stage. Ask participants to share what they wrote down, if they want to. Encourage parents with children of different ages to respond.

## Materials:

- Handout 1: Family Roles and Responsibilities (Appendix 1).
- Ininasin Journal and pens.

**Time:** 45 minutes.

# Traditional Parenting

## Cultural Context:

*“The spirit of the child was of the utmost importance—you do not wound the spirit of a child.” – Edna Manitowabi (Anishinaabe)*

Parenting was a very strong part of traditional life and traditional parenting practices are still used in many communities. Traditional parenting is also being revitalized in our communities that have been affected by colonialism, residential schooling, poverty, and the difficult conditions that have resulted from the past.



In the early years the child was the center of attention.<sup>2</sup> The relationship between a child and a parent was seen as the most important thing.<sup>3</sup> It was recognized that the child came into the world from a sacred place. Their innate wisdom was acknowledged and care was taken not to harm the spirit of the child. A child was never dismissed or looked down upon and punishment was not generally used.<sup>4</sup> Loving guidance was offered to children by parents, siblings, extended family, and community members. Important teachings were shared with children on a daily basis. Guidance was primarily by role modelling, discussion, storytelling, and natural consequences.

**Purpose:** Participants learn traditional childrearing practices in First Nations families and communities.

## Workshop Activities:

Depending on the participants and the time available, choose from the following activities:

1. Share relevant teachings and practices about children and parenting with participants. There are several ways to do this and you may want to use one or all of these methods:
  - Ask an Elder or knowledge holder to share teachings.
  - Chose relevant information from Handout 2: Traditional Parenting (Appendix 1) and describe these teachings to participants.
  - Ask participants to share teachings and practices about children or parenting.

After sharing a few relevant teachings and practices, promote discussion using the following prompts if needed:

- *How could these teachings and practices help with parenting?*
- *Are any of these teaching helpful for a specific development stage?*
- *In what situations might they be helpful?*
- *What strengths do these teachings and practices build in children?*

2. Edna Manitowabi, Kelly Jonathan, Janet Fox

3. Leanne Simpson

4. Janet Fox, Edna Manitowabi, Kelly Jonathan, Nicole Bell

2. Provide the participants with a parenting situation that is relevant to their children (for example a young child pushes another child) and ask:
  - *How can a parent talk things through with the child?*
  - *Are there other traditional parenting approaches that might be helpful?*
3. To help participants think about how they can change certain parenting behaviours, ask them:
  - *If a parent wanted to stop a certain parenting practice (such as yelling), or if they wanted to start doing a new parenting practice (such as storytelling), how could they go about making this change?*
4. Suggest that the participants write any teachings or practices in their journal that they would like to use and why.

**Materials:**

- Handout 2: Traditional Parenting (Appendix 1).
- Ininasin Journals, pens.

**Time:** 45 minutes.



# Non-Interference

## Cultural Context:

There was a philosophy of non-interference. Natural consequences to a child's actions were allowed to occur, in a safe and supervised way, to allow children to learn their own lessons about life and behaviour.

**Purpose:** Participants learn about the traditional practice of non-interference in parenting.

## Workshop Activities:

Briefly describe the concept of non-interference in parenting. Depending on the participants and the time available, choose from the following activities:



### 1. Ask participants:

- *What is an example of a natural consequence?*

Prompt as required using this information:

- Things that follow from an action naturally, for example:
  - If we forget our lunch we will go hungry.
  - If a child hits another child, they will not want to play with them anymore.

### 2. Ask participants:

- *Are natural consequences the same as punishment?*

Prompt as required using this information:

- Natural consequences can teach us a lot.
- Natural consequences are different than a parent imposing a consequence, like taking away TV privileges. This is not a natural consequence, it is a punishment.

### 3. Ask participants:

- *How can non-interference (natural consequences) be used safely to guide young children?*

Prompt as required using this information:

- Allowing young children to learn from their actions in age-appropriate and safe situations.
- Providing adequate supervision.
- Intervening when things are not safe.

4. Divide participants into 3 or 4 groups and give each group a few pictures of children in different situations (safe and unsafe). These could be cut from a magazine or copy the line drawings in this section. Ask the groups to discuss this question:

- *Do the pictures show appropriate uses of non-interference? Why or why not?*



Reconvene and ask the groups to summarize their main points around safe practice of non-interference.

**Materials:**

- Pictures of children in different situations (safe and unsafe) for each group.

**Time:** 30 minutes.

# Storytelling

## Cultural Context:

Storytelling is a traditional approach that was used to guide children. Stories were told that illustrated what happened when someone did not follow the teachings, such as the Nanabush stories.<sup>5</sup>

**Purpose:** Participants learn how storytelling can be used to guide children.

## Workshop Activities:

In the three stories in this section, three traditional child guidance techniques are described by a parent.



Ask the participants to get comfortable for story time. Introduce the topic of storytelling and then read one or more of the stories, depending on the interests of the participants and available time.

After reading the story or stories, open up discussion. The following questions may be helpful:

- *What do you think of the story or stories?*
- *How can stories be used to guide our children?*
- *Do you have any thoughts or questions about the methods described in the stories?*
- *Have you tried any of these techniques (water medicine, red willow, healing stone)? How did they work for you?*
- *Do you know any other traditional parenting techniques?*

## **Water Medicine (from teachings shared by Kelly Jonathan, Mohawk)**

*(story to read to participants)*

One method of discipline is using water as medicine for a child who is acting out and cannot calm down. The water teaching, it is the first major discipline medicine. It can help when the child is really upset. Gently put water on the face of the child, not tap water but spring water or snow. Bottled water can be used too. Snow can be melted and warmed up a bit. Put the water in a bowl and gently take the water in the child's hand until they get used to feel of the water and are not shocked. Rub their hands back and forth and cup their hands in yours, within the bowl. Sing their song or another song the parent knows, or a tune can gently be hummed. Talk to the child about the medicine. We want the child to remember that calm time, refer to the time in the womb. Take their hands and use the water to gently wash their face from the forehead and temples to the cheeks. After say to them, "Hmm, I think you need to calm down, I think we need to go get water." Remind them that that water medicine is there to help. The first medicine is the water.

5. Gail Anishinabe, Leanne Simpson, Nicole Bell

**Red Willow Medicine (from teachings shared by Kelly Jonathan, Mohawk)***(story to read to participants)*

Another medicine is the red willow. A child would be accompanied by an adult to find the red willow stick. They find one that grows by itself, out in a field. Tobacco is offered, the stick is cut taken back home. A tobacco burning is done at the house and tobacco is offered to the fire with words spoken to that medicine. Help is asked for and the child is told that this is his/her medicine to guard the child from bad activities. The red willow is used to take away bad energy and negativity. My grandmother would place the red willow in my bedroom leaning in the corner or on the windowsill as a reminder. It was a reminder of all those good words and wishes she had said for me when offering the tobacco to the red willow. It is up to the parents to remind the child of all those words that were said at the time of giving that red willow during times of upset. Taking a child to the willow and sitting with them and talking, and asking, *"What do you remember about this medicine? What does this medicine represent to you? What do you remember about the words that were said at the time this was given to you?"* After a year the parent breaks the willow and puts it in the fire to bring an end to the teachings. The red willow is given back to creation.

**The Rock (from teachings shared by Kelly Jonathan, Mohawk)***(story to read to participants)*

It is hard when there are discipline problems. Parents ask, *"What do we do? This child is blind to the problem. They are blind to us, they are blind to our words. They can't see the problem and they can't figure out how to behave properly."* My grandmother taught me to take that problem and work with it in a different way. Get a rock. Each one of my children has a special rock. Sit and tell all of your problems to that rock and put all of your anger into that rock. It's actually part of that rock's job to take that on, to take that from you as they are considered grandfathers and grandmothers. Tell that rock what you need to. I can say, *"Go get your rock and hold on to it. Rub it and be as angry as you have to be."* My grandmother used to say, *"Don't tell them not to be angry. They need to feel that and deal with that."* Make a special place in their room where they keep that rock. Have them make a special home for the rock, like a bag or a bundle, by their bed or on their shelf. They can tell all their problems to that rock. Any time they are feeling stressed they can talk to that rock, or if they don't have the words for it, what they are feeling or why, they can just hold on to it. My grandmother used to ask, *"How much do you think you can hurt a rock?"* This way the child is separated from the negative emotions. We tell them, *"If you have a problem, you can always come and talk to mom and dad, but if you are so frustrated that you cannot talk about it, use your rock."*

**Materials:** The stories in this section.**Time:** 30 minutes.

# Traditional Ceremonies

## Cultural Context:

The first ceremonies were very important for setting the stage for the child's life ahead and their role within the community. Families were careful to perform the appropriate ceremonies for their children throughout childhood as a solid base for well-being and identity. Ceremonies were used to celebrate key developmental stages in children such as the naming ceremony and the walking out ceremony.

*"Honour the naming ceremony and be sure that you know your clan and that clan's role... a child must know this, as it gives direction in life, a purpose." – Edna Maniwabi (Anishinaabe)*



**Purpose:** Participants learn about traditional childhood ceremonies.

## Workshop Activities:

Before the workshop, review the information and ceremonies in Handout 3: Traditional Ceremonies. During the workshop, share a few ceremonies that are relevant to the participants, or ask an Elder or knowledge holder to share this information.

Encourage discussion about ceremonies and children. Use the following as prompts if required:

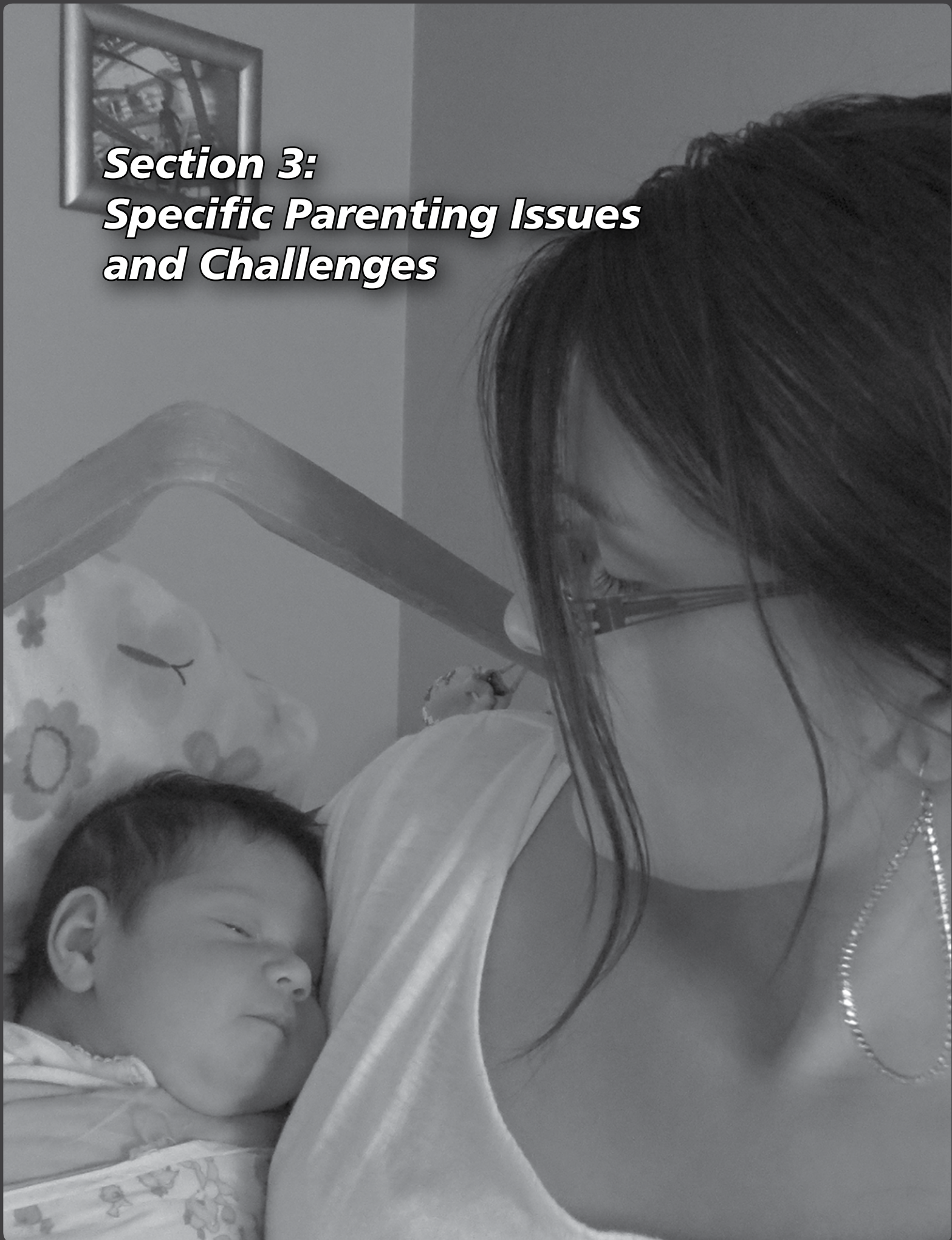
- *Would anyone like to share the story of a ceremony that was held for their child? Or the story of a ceremony they had as a child?*
- *Does anyone have any questions about planning a ceremony for their child?*

Support and encourage group discussion in answering any questions about planning a ceremony.

**Materials:** Handout 3: Traditional Ceremonies (Appendix 1).

**Time:** 30 minutes.

***Section 3:  
Specific Parenting Issues  
and Challenges***



# Parenting Styles

**Purpose:** Participants consider various parenting styles.

**Workshop Activities:**

On a flipchart to write down the names of each parenting style in Handout 4: Parenting Styles (Authoritarian Parenting, Permissive Parenting, Helicopter Parenting, Attachment Parenting, Non-Interference/Loving Guidance). Ask participants what they know about each parenting style. Build on their knowledge by providing key information from Handout 4. Ask participants to suggest any negative or positive consequences for each parenting style.



If there is time, encourage discussion among the participants using the following questions:

- What parenting styles do you use? Do you use a combination of parenting styles?
- Are there other approaches to parenting that you have heard about?

**Materials:** Handout 4: Parenting Styles (Appendix 1).

**Time:** 30 minutes.

# Needs and Behaviour

## Cultural Context:

It is important to separate who our children are from their behaviours. Sometimes unmet or unrecognized needs result in undesired behaviours that can be prevented. Learning to recognize things that lead to some of these undesired behaviours is helpful. Children have different needs and behaviours at different ages, related to their developmental stage. Their needs and behaviours may also reflect any special needs they may have such as difficulties learning or remembering.



*“Remember to be a human being not a human doing. That is what my grandmother used to say. We get wrapped up in our human ‘doings’, we get busy and occupied but we always have to come back to just being, to be that human ‘being’. Back to what you need in life. What does the person need? What does that child need?”*

– Kelly Jonathan (Mohawk)

**Purpose:** Participants reflect on the needs and behaviours of children at different developmental stages.

## Workshop Activities:

Before the workshop, think about the parents who will be in your workshop and their children (i.e. the ages of the children and any special needs that they may have). Choose content from Handout 5: Needs and Behaviour to share verbally with participants. For example if it is a group of parents with babies, focus on the content about babies.

Post three or four pieces of flipchart paper on the walls in different places in the room. On each piece of flipchart paper write a question related to parenting (1 question per page of flipchart paper). Choose parenting situations that were raised during the icebreaker activity, or based on your knowledge of the parents in the workshop. Here are some examples:

- What can I do when I am getting angry or frustrated with my child?
- Why is my child clinging and whining at times?
- What can I do when my child has a tantrum?
- When going to the grocery store with my child, how can I help my child be calm and interested?



Divide the participants into three or four small groups. Direct each group to a piece of flipchart paper. Let the participants know they have five minutes to write down everything they can come up with regarding the question on their piece of flipchart paper. After the time is up, ask the groups to rotate to the next station, adding to the list already on the flipchart paper.

After moving through all stations, ask the participants to re-convene and discuss the key points they came up with for each of the flipchart questions. Join in as appropriate but let parents lead discussion.

**Materials:**

- Handout 5: Needs and Behaviour (Appendix 1).
- Three or four pieces of flipchart paper placed in different areas of the room, markers.

**Time:** 45 minutes.



# Time-in and Time-out

**Purpose:** Participants reflect on the parenting practices of Time-in and Time-out.

## Workshop Activities:

Write Time-in and Time-out on the flipchart. Describe Time-in and Time-out to the participants using the content in this section.

Ask participants:

- *What are the pros and cons of each of these methods?*
- *What have been your experiences with them?*
- *Are there other methods you have tried that worked better for you and your child?*



## Content about Time-in and Time-out (to review with participants)

- **Time-out** is a parenting method that involves removing a child from a situation for a short time because of something that the parent viewed as misbehaving. During Time-outs children are asked to stay in a specific space (another room, or a particular place in the room). Parents do not give attention to the child during Time-outs. The method was originally encouraged as a non-violent parenting solution that allowed both parent and child to calm down while taking some time to consider the situation. Research is now showing that there are some problems with Time-outs. Young children are not able to calm down by themselves and need a calm adult to help them. Time-outs do not teach appropriate behaviour and do not provide needed contact or support from a caring adult. Rather than leading to better behaviour in children, some children respond with distress, frustration, or anger. Forcibly separating children from their families, even just in another room or space within the room, does not feel good to many First Nations parents who recall all too well what forced removal of children looked like in the historical past. Time-outs can cause a child to feel abandonment, even just temporarily, but this can still have an overall negative effect. The child sees themselves as bad and undeserving. This can lower self-esteem. It also encourages more bad behaviour. When children are told they are bad, they are more likely to behave badly. Time-outs often contribute to power struggles and don't let children learn to work through their strong emotions with assistance of a caring adult. Time-outs do not address any underlying factors for the behaviour (such as hunger or fatigue), do not show caring and understanding, and do not guide children to appropriate behaviour. At times, parents can benefit from a Time-out to calm down so they can address a child's misbehaviour in a calm and loving manner.

- **Time-in** is similar to traditional First Nations approaches. It can be combined with other traditional approaches such as the 20 to 40 Positive Strokes a Day approach in Cree childrearing tradition. In a Time-in, a child who is having a difficult moment is invited to sit with a parent for comfort and calming. During the Time-in, the parent helps the child express their feelings and point of view, listening to and empathizing with the child. The parent explains why the behaviour was a concern and helps the child problem-solve, discussing other ways to address the situation. The parent actively listens to what the child is saying and respects the child's perspective and feelings. Time-in strengthens bonds between parents and children. During a temper tantrum, or a major meltdown, it is not possible to teach a child. Staying nearby and calming them (if possible) is the only option until they settle. Then the empathetic discussion can start. William Kingfisher describes a situation with his young son:

*"There were trying situations. I remember one time, I was tired, I had him and three bags of groceries, and everything was taking a long time. He used to carry this blanket with him as a small boy, everywhere. He was sucking his thumb and he had his blanket. We had to go down the escalator. I talked to him really carefully before we went. I told him you have to hang on to your blanket and not drop it. Because of course it could get caught. I prepared him and then we got on the escalator, I was juggling the groceries... well, of course he dropped it and it was getting caught. I grabbed him strongly and yanked the blanket out and marched off the escalator as best I could, trying to hold everything. I was pretty stressed out. Well, he got mad at me for grabbing him. So we just sat on a bench together and waited and I comforted him and we talked about it... for a long time it felt like, we sat there. It was a time where fear and frustration came into the picture. But when things settled, we were able to move on, I just had to calm down and then calm him."*

– William Kingfisher (Anishinaabe)

**Materials:** Flipchart, markers.

**Time:** 30 minutes.

# Teachable Moments

## Cultural Context:

A teachable moment is something that occurs randomly, such as an event or a situation that parents can use to teach their children something valuable. Teachable moments often arise out of overhearing what a child is saying, then using the child's lead, their own interest, as a chance to explain more, to answer questions, share a teaching, or provide opportunities for further exploration. This was an important way that First Nations parents taught their children. Our ancestors created short stories out of everyday events that reflected teachings important to living one's life in a good way.

**Purpose:** Participants learn about using teachable moments.

## Workshop Activities:

Using the information in this section, let participants know what a teachable moment is and provide a few examples. On the flipchart paper, list age categories relevant to the group (e.g., toddler, young child).

Ask the participants to suggest examples of teachable moments for each of the age categories. If things are slow to start, provide a few examples such as a child interested in a bird on the bird feeder, going through the fruit section of the grocery store, etc. Write the suggestions on the flipchart.

For each suggested teachable moment, ask participants to mention some of the things that can be taught (what different birds eat, names of fruits, where they grow, colours, numbers, etc.). Write the examples on the flipchart.

## Content about Teachable Moments *(to review with participants)*

Parents can take advantage of their child's interest in the moment to teach something related. Using teachable moments often works better than just deciding to tell children something you want them to know. Teachable moments provide meaningful context for children as they can see, hear, and directly experience the lesson. We can use situations in our everyday lives as teachable moments. Recognizing teachable moments requires observing our children interacting in the world to identify those times that can become teachable moments. A teachable moment can also serve as a bonding experience and can be rewarding for a child and a parent, bringing both emotionally closer.

**Materials:** Flipchart, markers.

**Time:** 15 minutes.



# Safety and Security

## Cultural Context:

*"I think it is important to start with a good home environment. Where it is safe for everyone and the children are equals in that."* – Leanne Simpson (Anishinaabe)

**Purpose:** Participants discuss ways to keep their children safe and secure.

## Workshop Activities:

Before the workshop, list the different types of safety on three or four pieces of flipchart paper (each piece of flipchart paper would include the following titles: Safe environments, Emotional security, Supervision, Safe identity). Put these pieces flipchart paper up on the wall around the room.



During the workshop, briefly describe the different kinds of safety using the text in this section and read any relevant quotes to participants.

Next have the participants break into three or four groups and send each group to one of the pieces of flipchart paper. Have participants brainstorm and write out ideas about ensuring safety and security for their children for each of the types of safety for 10 minutes.

Reconvene, facilitate a group discussion, and watch the 4 minute video on circle of security, available at: [www.circleofsecurity.net](http://www.circleofsecurity.net)

## Content about Safety and Security (to review with participants)

- 1. Safe Environments:** It is essential for children to have a safe home environment and to be able to explore and play safely. A safe environment includes healthy food, safe drinking water, safe physical activity and protection from environmental contaminants.
- 2. Emotional Security:** Every child needs a strong, secure, and loving connection with a warm, consistent adult from infancy onwards in order to develop emotional security. Trust begins early in child-parent relationships. As children grow they need to feel safe and supported to explore their worlds and require parents to be close by when they are scared or upset. When they come back to the parent (their secure base) they need to be warmly welcomed, comforted, and reassured. They will then return to their exploration. This parent needs to be strong, confident, wise, and kind.

3. **Supervision:** Parents need to ensure that there is safety and supervision at all times, whether their children are inside their home, playing outside, or with other family members or care providers. Parents have a right to check out any child care services or programming to find out about safety and supervision. Children need to know how they can get help, who they can talk to, and how to avoid unsafe situations. Open communication between children and parents is essential to ensure security. When asking children about their experiences with certain adults or situations, be sure to do so in private so children can respond frankly.

*"We need to listen to them and be very connected in order to determine the degree of supervision and the degree of independence that is appropriate for their age."*

– Edna Manitowabi (Anishinaabe)

4. **Safe Identity:** Children need to have a good and positive view of themselves, their family, and their cultural background. It is important for children to be proud of who they are. Parents should be alert for situations of bullying, racism, or discrimination.

*"My son is mixed race, his mother is non-Native. I worried about him being accepted in the family, in the community. I did not say anything, but my uncle, an Elder, he saw my concern and he told me, "He belongs as much as any of us belong. And he always will." So I felt reassured, and I took that attitude into myself and it didn't matter anymore what others might think. Maybe some others felt differently, but I didn't care. And it was my job to make sure he knew he belonged." – William Kingfisher (Anishinaabe)*

**Materials:**

- Flipchart paper with the 4 safety titles, markers.
- Circle of Security video and equipment for viewing the video.

**Time:** 30 minutes.

# Screen Time

## Cultural Context:

Elders have noticed the negative effect screens are having on First Nations children.

*“Screens and electronics are a problem—they are used too much and undermine some of our traditional methods. Children don’t know how to listen well anymore.” – Gail Anishinabe (Anishinaabe)*



**Purpose:** Participants understand the potential negative impacts of screen time on children. Participants learn how to manage use of screens by their children.

## Workshop Activities:

Start by defining screen time for participants (i.e. television, electronic games, cell phones, etc.).

Ask participants to describe some of the negative consequences of screen time in children. Ask them about the negative consequences if parents spend a lot of time focusing on screens. List the responses on a flipchart. Add any consequences they may have missed.

Describe the Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines and write them on the flipchart paper:

- No screen use for children under 2 years old.
- A maximum of one hour per day for children 2-4 years.
- A maximum of 2 hours per day for children and youth 5-17 years of age.

Ask participants to suggest strategies to manage screen time in the home. Prompt as required with suggestions from Handout 6: Screens in the Home.

## Materials:

- Handout 6: Screens in the Home (Appendix 1).
- Flipchart paper, markers.

**Time:** 20 minutes.

# Stress Management

## Cultural Context:

*"You must learn to love and be at peace with yourself. Once you love yourself then you will be able to love others."*

– Janet Fox (Cree)

Parenting is an important job and traditionally the community provided guidance to parents and children. Extended family support gave parents opportunities for breaks from parenting. Traditional techniques such as drumming, singing, and sweat lodges were used to manage stress.

**Purpose:** Participants learn ways manage stress while parenting.

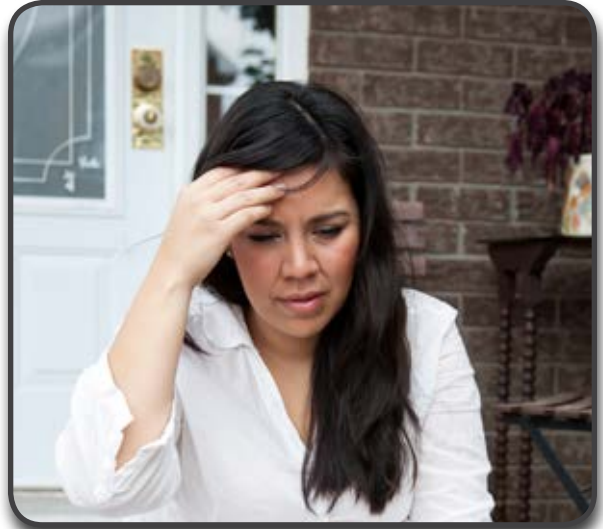
## Workshop Activities:

Start by reminding the participants that all parents benefit from support and from a break now and then. Ask participants to suggest ways to take a break, manage stress, and control emotions while parenting. Prompt as required with your own examples, such as:

- Getting a family member or a trusted friend to watch the child while you take a bath, have a nap, or go outside for a walk.
- Trading a night off by babysitting for another parent. This can be helpful when there is little money to hire a sitter.
- Learning about services such as community centres or parenting programs that offer child care while parents take a course or a craft.
- Becoming better connected to community to reduce isolation, for example getting involved in community events.

If there is time, teach participants specific techniques to calm themselves, such as belly breathing and tapping (see Handout 7: Self Calming for Parents). You (or an Elder) may have other techniques to mention or share such as drumming, smudging, sweat lodges, or singing.

If you choose to use the belly breathing activity or tapping activity, use the video links to learn the steps before the workshop. Then guide the group through the process by reading the instructions to them step by step while demonstrating to the participants. When finished, ask the group if they feel any differences after doing the exercise.





Wrap up by giving participants a list of community services that may be helpful in managing stress while parenting. Remind parents to make sure any supports they access are trustworthy and meet their needs. Supports may include child care services, respite care, parenting groups, traditional gatherings or societies such as the Longhouse or a women's or men's drumming group, physical fitness opportunities or courses, mindfulness courses, stress-reduction courses, and counselling.

**Materials:**

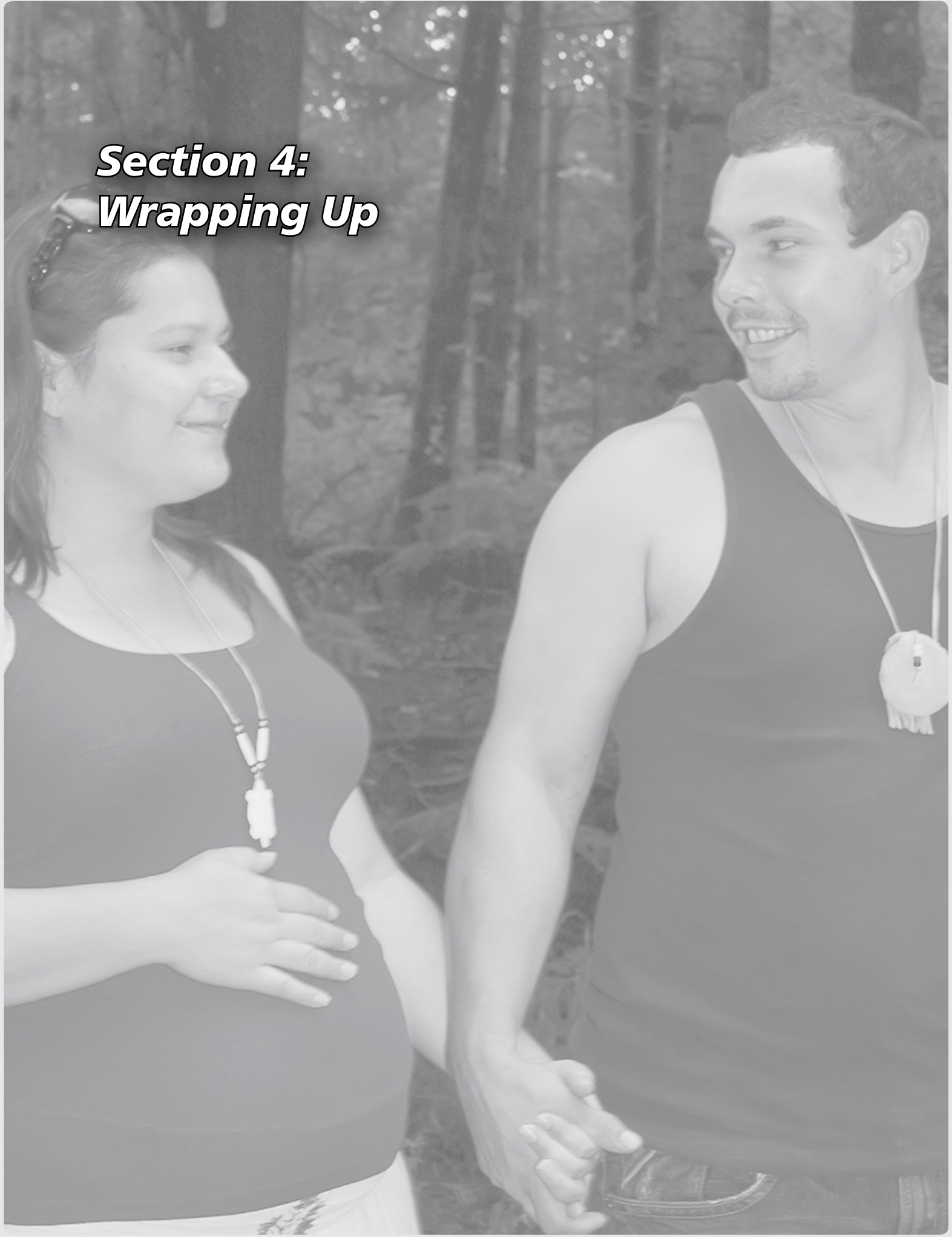
Depending on the selected workshop activities, you may require:

- Handout 7: Self Calming for Parents (Appendix 1).
- Video of self-drumming exercise and equipment for viewing the video.
- List of relevant community services (copies for all participants).

**Time:** 45 minutes.



***Section 4:  
Wrapping Up***



# Reflections and Key Messages

*"We all have these problems and that's why we are here together, we are building the circle. And acknowledging that we can parent. These parents right here are the best ones to parent... no one can be a better parent than the parent of their own child... they just need some support." – Katsi Cook (Mohawk)*

*"It's difficult being a parent! Let's be honest about that. I have never done anything as difficult as parenting on an emotional level, a physical level, a spiritual level, and an intellectual level." – Leanne Simpson (Anishinaabe)*

*"For me the traditional is very important—with my own son, how I incorporated this was in form of spending time with Elders and knowledge holders and doing it together. It was very important that we did this together as father and son, that we spent that time together. It was not about dropping him off at a traditionally-based program. We learned together." – William Kingfisher (Anishinaabe)*

*"You're raising the next generation, the nation builders, you are raising somebody's ancestors!" – Leanne Simpson (Anishinaabe)*

*"For me, I wanted to be the type of father that I didn't have... I knew I needed to know how to be a parent. My father never hugged me. Yet I will always hug my son—whether he is 4 years old or 24 years old, I will always hug him." – William Kingfisher (Anishinaabe)*



**Purpose:** Participants reflect on key workshop content.

### Workshop Activities:

Using a feather, shaker, talking stick, or small stone, ask each participant to share their reflections and thoughts about what they learned from the workshop. If you are running out of time ask participants to sum up what they learned or how they feel in one word. If you have more time, you can ask them if there is anything specific they learned or what they plan to do differently with their child.

If there is time, read a few quotes about parenting from this section (or from other sources). You may also want to write the quotes on the flipchart. Suggest that participants write down a few of their own thoughts and priorities about being a parent in their Journal.

### Materials:

- A feather, shaker, talking stick, or small stone.
- Flipchart, markers.
- Ininasin Journals, pens.

**Time:** 15 minutes.

# Participant Post Workshop Questions

**Purpose:** Participants consider what they learned in the workshop.

**Workshop Activities:**

Hand out the Post Workshop Questions Forms (Form 2, Appendix 2). Once the participants have completed their form, ask them to compare it with their completed Pre Workshop Questions Form. Then discuss the answers as a group (Form 3, Appendix 2).

**Materials:** Form 2 for participants and Form 3 for facilitator (Appendix 2), pens.

**Time:** 10 minutes.



# Participant Feedback

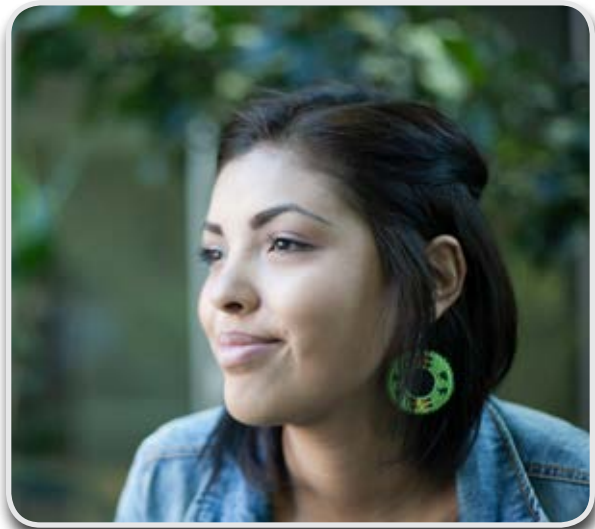
**Purpose:** Participants share what went well and what could be improved.

**Workshop Activities:**

Pass out the Feedback Forms (Form 4, Appendix 2) for participants to fill out. Ask participants to hand in the completed forms before they leave. Let them know that you appreciate learning from them through their feedback about the workshop.

**Materials:** Form 4 for participants (Appendix 2), pens.

**Time:** 10 minutes.



# Closing Prayer

Traditionally when a gathering adjourned a prayer was offered at the end the day. The prayer would give thanks to all of Creation and the Ancestors for their guidance, freeing them to leave and rest. At most traditional gatherings there was a smudge with medicines or a fire burning for the duration of the meeting. Once the meeting was finished the fire would be put out after the prayer signalling the end of the meeting. Some meetings lasted for days while some lasted only a few hours, it all depended on the reasons for the meeting.

**Purpose:** To acknowledge the end the workshop and give thanks to the collective work of participants.

**Workshop Activities:**

Invite the Elder to provide closing remarks and prayer at the end of the workshop. Thank the Elder once they are finished.

**Time:** 10 minutes (at the discretion of the Elder).



# Post Workshop Facilitator Debrief

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It can be helpful to debrief at the end of the workshop if there was more than one facilitator. Take time to discuss the workshop and review the participant feedback forms. This can help you identify ideas for additional workshops, things that went well that you would like to replicate, things you would change, any needed follow up, etc. If you did the workshop alone, you can take some time to reflect and take notes for future workshops.

It may be helpful to consider the following questions when reflecting on or discussing a recently completed parent workshop:

1. What did I learn from the participants that I didn't know before?
2. What went well and why?
3. What part of this workshop was most valuable to participants?
4. Was I successful in creating a safe and comfortable space for participation?
5. Were there any changes in participant knowledge, skills, attitudes, or feelings as a result of the workshop?
6. What would I do differently next time and why? (Think about how the workshop was promoted, where the workshop was held, how the workshop was facilitated, the agenda, group activities, handouts, etc.)

# Additional Reading

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## Information for Service Providers

**Best Start Resource Centre**, [www.beststart.org](http://www.beststart.org)

- Zhi-gid-minaan Nda-nii-jaan-sag - Growing Together with Our Children – Facilitator guide for a parent workshop on parent-child attachment (2015)
- A Child Becomes Strong: Journeying Through Each Stage of the Life Cycle – Manual for service providers (2010)
- A Sense of Belonging - Supporting Healthy Child Development in Aboriginal Families – Manual for service providers (2011)
- The Sacred Journey from Preconception to Parenting for First Nations Families in Ontario - Manual for service providers (2012)
- A Facilitator Guide: Planning a First Nations Workshop for Parents (2015)

**National Collaborating Centre on Aboriginal Health**, [www.nccah-ccnsa.ca](http://www.nccah-ccnsa.ca)

- Strengthening Urban Aboriginal Families: Exploring promising practices (2013)
- Caregiver-Infant Attachment for Aboriginal Families (2013)

**Wabano Centre**, [www.wabano.com](http://www.wabano.com)

Parenting Bundle: An Aboriginal Cultural Parenting Program Manual for All Caregivers of Children

## Information for Parents

**Dad Central**, [www.newdadmanual.ca](http://www.newdadmanual.ca)

Website for dads (including videos) with a section for Indigenous fathers.

**Father Involvement Research Alliance**, [www.fira.ca](http://www.fira.ca)

Information for First Nations fathers.

**National Collaborating Centre on Aboriginal Health**, [www.nccah-ccnsa.ca](http://www.nccah-ccnsa.ca)

- Parents as First Teachers – booklet about how children learn (2013)
- Family Connections – booklet about bonding with your child (2013)
- Fatherhood is Forever – booklet on fathering (2013)
- Growing Up Healthy – booklet about healthy children (2013)

**Rabbit and Bear Paws**, [www.rabbitandbearpaws.com](http://www.rabbitandbearpaws.com)

Books for Children on the Seven Grandfather Teachings by Chad Solomon (Anishinaabe).

**University of Victoria, Early Childhood Development Intercultural Partnerships**,

[www.ecdip.org/order/index.htm](http://www.ecdip.org/order/index.htm)

Indigenous Fathers Resource Kit – materials include video, booklet, poster, information sheets

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# Appendix 1: Participant Materials (Ininasin Journal)

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## List of Participant Handouts

In the participant Ininasin Journals, include copies of the handouts that are relevant to the content you want to share in your workshop:

- Handout 1: Family Roles and Responsibilities
- Handout 2: Traditional Parenting
- Handout 3: Traditional Ceremonies
- Handout 4: Parenting Styles
- Handout 5: Needs and Behaviour
- Handout 6: Screens in the Home
- Handout 7: Self Calming for Parents

# Handout 1:

## Family Roles and Responsibilities

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*This handout includes brief information about traditional family roles and responsibilities. Traditions vary by nation and community. More detail can be provided by an Elder or knowledge holder. Be sure that if you are approaching an Elder that you do so in a respectful way, paying attention to protocol.*

### Preparation for Parenting

Getting ready to be a parent can begin long before having children. Family members, close friends, resources, and services in the community can help with this journey. In Aboriginal traditional culture, the father or partner was considered to be pregnant as well as the mother. That spirit was seen to be spiritually connected to those people who would become his or her parents. This was a belief common to Haudenosaunee, Anishinaabe/Algonquin, and Cree cultures.

The questions future parents asked themselves were:

- Who do I want to be as a parent?
- What challenges do I face?
- How can I get ready?

The journey then continues throughout parenthood. We always need to think about our thoughts and actions, work on ourselves, and continue on our healing journey. We need to take small bits of time when we can to renew ourselves, nurture that self-love, and improve our parenting skills.



### Family Roles

Long ago, family roles and responsibilities were different than they are in many homes today. Aboriginal traditions were disrupted by colonization. We have learned and adapted, as any survival culture does. Many Aboriginal peoples today are involved in healing themselves and their communities. They are bringing back cultural practices to their day to day lives.

Our families today have many different forms. There may be two parents, a single parent, or the primary care provider may be a grandparent. Many share parenting with the grandparent or another relative such as an auntie. There may also be a foster parent or another relative caring for the child. Parents may consist of a mother and father (or step-father/step-mother) or consist of two mothers or two fathers in the case of two spirit families.

## Single Parents

Today there are many single parents. Ideally, they have family members and close friends to fulfill certain roles, as best as possible. Traditionally, if one parent was left to raise a child, the whole family would help out and the community had a special role to play as well.<sup>6</sup>

## Roles for Both Parents

Traditionally, Elders from various tribal backgrounds have emphasised that the most important roles in the community were motherhood and fatherhood, raising the next generation and the leaders of the community for the future.

Independence was fostered by close connections with both parents. If children were brought up in a way that was secure enough, they would become strong and independent. Good conduct was described through storytelling and modelled by community members.<sup>7</sup>

Some things were the responsibility of both mothers and fathers. It is important to note that these roles were not rigid. The women needed to know the male roles and responsibilities, and the men the women's roles in case of a time when one could not be present. This was a matter of survival.<sup>8</sup>



*"Men, however, [also] taught the children. When babies are small, mothers are a bit weak, so the men would do all the work like cooking, gathering of diaper moss. In the wintertime the moss is hard to find, you look at the lay of the land and it's in the valley. Men would go in the bush to get this, they would thaw it dry and clean it."*  
Slavey/Dogrib Elder George Blondin, as quoted in *In the Words of Elders* (1999)

Parents worked together on some parenting tasks. Cradle boards were generally made by the fathers-to-be. They were decorated with special designs and items by the women so that the child's spirit would be happy and protected.<sup>9</sup>

## Mothers

*"There were four sacred gifts that were given to a mother. The first is that she is the keeper of the waters. The second was the moss bag and tikinaagan. The third was the swing or hammock, (wewepison, we called it). And the fourth, it was the lullabies."* – Janet Fox (Cree)

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<sup>6</sup> Edna Manitowabi

<sup>7</sup> Katsi Cook

<sup>8</sup> Edna Manitowabi

<sup>9</sup> Janet Fox

Mothers are generally considered to be the first teachers. They are also the caretakers of the child's emotional well-being for the first seven years.<sup>10</sup>

Breastfeeding was seen as vitally important for the health of the child and mother, and in establishing the mother/child relationship. The bond created by breastfeeding was seen as the most sacred bond, the most sacred gift. Breastmilk was not only seen as the first food but the first medicine.

The mothers were the heart of the home. The home was their realm, they were the authority there. When families were travelling, the man, the father, became the authority, but while at home it was the women and they were to be honoured, listened to, and their instructions followed. They had the biggest responsibility of caring for the little ones, so they in turn were cared for and protected.<sup>11</sup>



## Fathers

*"A Father's responsibility is to imitate the sun; get up early everyday with the east shining light; protect and provide for all life (family); work all day long and when the sun goes down he may rest. And like him, the sun is expected to be there again tomorrow morning." – Elder Jake Swamp, as quoted in A Child Becomes Strong (2010)*

*"The fathers helped to give that sense of security to the whole family."  
– Edna Manitousabi (Anishinaabe)*



Historically the traditional role of fathers in First Nations society was to provide and protect. Close connections with a father built and strengthened a child's sense of security and also helped the father understand his child. These key roles were negatively impacted by the reserve system, the pass system, loss of land, children being taken away (residential school, sanatoriums, foster care), with no recourse available. The men were powerless to stop it. This created a very bad soul wound and there was a profound denigration of traditional roles in First Nations communities. This has resulted in a lack of involved fathers in many First Nations communities, but this is changing.

10 Katsi Cook, Janet Fox, Kelly Jonathan  
11 Kelly Jonathan



Healthy, thriving families and communities can be built back up. Fathers who grew up without the presence of strong, caring male family members can find parenting to be challenging. There is a focus now on sharing the traditional fatherhood roles of kindness, caring, and providing.

*“When we think of the traditional role of the father in Aboriginal cultures we think of the hunter who provided food and shelter for his family. Many men, particularly those who live in urban settings, are no longer able to carry out that traditional role. But as Elders point out, there are other important roles for fathers and men to play in their communities - teacher, healer, scout, protector, and leader.” – John Wasauksing (Anishinaabe), as quoted in 24 Hour Cribside Assistance (n.d.)*

Traditionally, fathers had specific roles to play during pregnancy, with newborns, and as children grew.

*“It starts in the womb... you talk to the unborn child, you sing to them. You take care of the mother, even if she is grumpy and not feeling well... It’s hard at times, but it’s getting you ready for when there are hard times later on between the parent and child. You get ready.” – Kelly Jonathan (Mohawk)*

*“In our traditions the men compose an original song to sing to their newborn. It’s a big responsibility. Parents connect with the baby through song and they connect with children when you sing to them later in life... throughout the childhood. I made the cradle board—it teaches patience and focus. I prepared.” – Kelly Jonathan (Mohawk)*

It was quite common that traditionally, the man also had the role of the disciplinarian. Edna Manitowabi describes how this worked:

*“The man was given the Adam’s Apple, a voice box that has a different tone, so he is kind of like the thunder. So he was the disciplinarian. It doesn’t mean he would yell or shout. He would just use a deeper tone like thunder rumbling. And back then, you just had to look at a child who was misbehaving a certain way, and the child would know. It was a signal to check your behaviour. The tone, the voice was used but gently because you can wound a child with the voice as well. It has a power.” – Edna Manitowabi (Anishinaabe)*



Sometimes parenting is not easy and fathers can remind themselves of what they want for their children and what they need to do as fathers.

*"I decided... I would never ridicule. I would never put him down."*  
– William Kingfisher (Anishinaabe)

Traditionally it was acknowledged that it was important for children to see healthy relationships between the mother and father. It was understood that this has a great effect on the children and the boy in particular will act as his father does. A father's involvement, however, was very important not just with boy children but also with girl children. They were to role model what it is to be a good man so that she would recognize it later in life.<sup>12</sup>

*"What is really important is being a good role model... behaving properly with their mother... never let them see you treat her disrespectfully or argue. Sometimes, if we really need to work something out, my partner and I, I say, come on, let's go for a drive. Then we discuss it out, away from the kids. We get someone to watch the kids and we go. It is important to role model that self-control."* – Cecil Sveinson (Cree)

## Two Spirit Parenting

*"For some people, the term two-spirit means carrying both the spirit of man and woman, but may have different meanings for different people. It is used to describe lesbian, bisexual, gay, and transgendered people in Aboriginal communities. Historically, each nation had their own terms and concepts for two spirit people. The role of the two spirit people was teachers, caregivers, medicine people and helpers. They were highly respected for their understanding of both man and woman. They were also seen as having special spiritual gifts."* From *A Child Becomes Strong* (2016)

Traditionally there were two spirit families. In some communities their roles as uncles or aunts had special status as it was said that they could take on either the male or female roles with validity. They were often teachers, healers, and ceremonialists.

For two spirited families, the two parents worked out the roles based on who had which talents and characteristics, who was birthing the child, who was staying home—it all depended on the situation.

*"An Elder talked about... Men's teachings, women's teachings, and our roles. I'm sitting there as a two-spirit woman thinking, that kind of fits... but when it was my turn to speak I said I was a two-spirit woman, and I am going to have a baby. And I said, "My partner is a woman and she is not going to fit what you said. There is no man, here." The Elder did say, "There are two-spirit roles and we are learning them now."* – Doe O'Brien-Teengs (Cree), as quoted in *Supporting the Sacred Journey* (2010)

## Grandparents

Historically, grandparents have always helped to watch the children and taught children skills and knowledge. They often resolved conflicts, being able to have a larger view of the situation. They became the authorities on family matters and were shown a great deal of respect, care, and love. They were often the problem solvers during difficult times. They often had special roles and ceremonial roles related to families.



*"In some nations the grandparent has the honour of introducing the newborn to the community and also is responsible for observing that newborn as it grows and journeys along the life cycle.*

*The grandparent observes the child's behaviours and strengths to get a keen understanding of that child's role within the community and nation. It is their responsibility to inform the family of these strengths so the child can be nurtured to fulfill its purpose in life."* From *A Child Becomes Strong* (2010)

Storytelling was an important part of the grandparents' role, particularly in winter time, the time of year which traditionally was storytelling season in First Nations communities.<sup>13</sup> Stories were ways of sharing teachings about life, cautionary tales about relationships, creation, and the environment. They could also convey important history and sacred knowledge.

An Elder tells of a visiting grandparent, who after a good meal with family, sitting near the fire, would sit down and ceremonially take out a bag. The children would crowd around barely able to contain themselves with anticipation—it was story time. The grandparent would slowly reach into the bag and root around in it while the children squirmed impatiently. Delighting in drawing the process out as long as possible, the children's attention would become even more focused. The grandparent would take out an item and begin to tell a story about it. Perhaps it was a turtle shell and the teachings of how the turtle wears a calendar on his back would be told. This process could continue on, with the reaching into the bag again and again. Thus, winter time entertainment unfolded.

*"I love my grandkids. I love imparting something new to them that their parents are too busy to realize. My joy is helping to transform these family situations, as a grandmother."* – Katsi Cook (Mohawk)

Ideally grandparents play a large role in a child's life but this is not always possible. Some families no longer have a living grandparent or grandparents are just not available to some families, due to age, disabilities, distance, etc. Some communities are creating programs where families can adopt a grandparent/grandchild such as Six Nations of the Grand River and Akwesasne First Nations.

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<sup>13</sup> Katsi Cook, Edna Manitousabi, Janet Fox

In our communities, there is also a longstanding tradition of grandparents stepping in to raise children. In some communities, it was a traditional practice that the first grandchild go and live with the grandparents at a certain stage and be raised in their home. This was done to ensure that the teachings were passed on in a good and thorough way, to bring joy to the Elders life, and to help the grandparents as their strength and ability diminished.<sup>14</sup> Birth parents were still very involved in these circumstances. Some adults today were very lucky to have been raised in loving and traditional ways by their grandparents and carry a lot of cultural knowledge which they are now able to share.

Today, grandparents may provide the primary parenting role when the mother and father are very young themselves, single parents, or going to school. Sometimes they adopt their grandchild in cases of family breakdown or problems. Grandparents face special issues in parenting their grandchildren.

*“As a child, I was brought up by my grandparents from birth. My mom had me when she was pretty young, like 13 or 14 years old. So she was unable to care for me. My grandparents thought it was more suitable for them to take care of me. I grew up in a really good home with my grandparents. We ate traditional food—duck, moose. Discipline was really gentle—was never hit. This was really different from my friends, how they were brought up.” – Gail Anishinabe (Anishinaabe)*

## Extended Family

As needed, family members remind children of the teachings and provide advice, child care, discipline, guidance, role modelling, support, good humour when times are tough, and storytelling for guidance.<sup>15</sup> Children who are parented in extended family groups grow up with a strong sense of belonging and a secure connection to family.

Young parents had a certain amount of dependence on older relatives for teachings and guidance. Grandparents, aunties, and uncles were very important. At times they were the disciplinarians as they were less emotionally connected to an event of misbehaviour than a parent, more calm and neutral. However, if an auntie or uncle was called in, the infraction was generally serious in nature. This was usually very effective in halting bad behaviours without harshness. Extended family networks have been disrupted and are no longer intact today for many people.

## Community

Families are part of a community and they have responsibilities to their community. Communities have the responsibility of ensuring their community is a safe and supportive place for children and families.

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<sup>14</sup> Janet Fox  
<sup>15</sup> Katsi Cook

## Babies

In Anishinaabe/Algonquin culture, even the youngest children have jobs or responsibilities and a role to play in the family and community. This speaks to how all beings are equal. We all have an important place in the community. It is the baby's role to bring joy into the social environment. An adult will immediately smile when they lay eyes on a baby. At that time the baby is greeted and acknowledged. Even though all beings are equal in Aboriginal worldviews, there is a very special treatment and reverence for young babies. Their connection with the spirit world was acknowledged through their open fontanel, their newness to our plane of existence, and their dependence upon us.

## Toddlers

The toddler's role is to reinforce teachings of patience and focus within the context of love. You have to always be aware of what that little one is up to. They try to climb and try to get into cupboards. They keep us centered on the now and remind us to practice patience in our lives. They teach us to stay centered in love, even if the milk is spilled again, or if all the toilet paper is off the roll and sitting on the floor in a big pile. You stay centered in that love that the toddler carries and you start over, you clean up together. They make us work on this part of ourselves.

## Young Children (up to age 7)

The next stage is up to seven years old. These little ones keep us honest. That is their job. They listen and listen and we have to be careful what we say. If you are exaggerating a story, they are first to pipe up, a little voice can be heard saying, "That's not how it happened Mommy." They will call us out or repeat things we wish they hadn't heard, humbling us. They teach us to be careful with our words and to always be honest and down to earth.

Generally a child is very honest at this stage, unless there is fear involved, fear of punishment. Traditionally punishment was not a part of the Good Life (the stage of life from birth to seven years old). Young children are taught more independence and are given little responsibilities, beginning in a playful way. These responsibilities are age appropriate and grow in number and complexity as the child grows.

Young boys were encouraged to spend time with their female relatives in order to get a good understanding of what it means to be female, and to encourage open and thoughtful communication between genders. Young girls were to spend time with the men in their family for the same reasons—also it was to see the positive role modelling in order to choose a good spouse later.



# Handout 2: Traditional Parenting

This handout includes brief information about traditional parenting techniques. Traditions vary by nation and community. More detail can be provided by an Elder. Be sure that if you are approaching an Elder that you do so in a respectful way, paying attention to protocol.

*“The spirit of the child was of the utmost importance—you do not wound the spirit of a child.” – Edna Manitowabi (Anishinaabe)*

## Traditional Parenting

Many of the Elders and knowledge holders had similar teachings despite being from different tribal backgrounds. Parenting was a very strong part of traditional life and traditional parenting is still used in many communities. Traditional parenting is being revitalized in our communities that have been affected by colonialism, residential schooling, poverty, and the difficult conditions that have resulted from the past.



## Children

In the early years the child was the center of attention.<sup>16</sup> The relationship between a child and a parent was seen as the most important thing.<sup>17</sup> Respecting the spirit of the child was paramount as well as recognizing that the child comes into the world from a sacred place. As Edna Manitowabi says, the child could be a very, very old spirit.<sup>18</sup> We should acknowledge their innate wisdom and be careful not to harm the spirit of the child. The greatest gift that a person could have in traditional society was gentleness and this was especially important with children.<sup>19</sup> A child was seen as being an equal in terms of value and importance and accordingly given deep respect. A child was never dismissed or looked down upon.<sup>20</sup>

In traditional society children had certain responsibilities and roles from a young age. They were respected and acknowledged in this. Children were involved in the work of the household and community.

<sup>16</sup> Edna Manitowabi, Kelly Jonathan, Janet Fox

<sup>17</sup> Leanne Simpson

<sup>18</sup> Edna Manitowabi

<sup>19</sup> Katsi Cook, Janet Fox, Edna Manitowabi, Kelly Jonathan

<sup>20</sup> Janet Fox, Edna Manitowabi, Kelly Jonathan, Nicole Bell

## Traditional Parenting Methods

*“Model positive behaviour in all your interactions. It starts in the womb... you talk to the unborn child, you sing to them.” – Edna Manitowabi (Anishinaabe)*

Parents were charged with nurturing and protecting their children, helping their children learn beliefs and values, and teaching children the skills they needed to survive and grow throughout the life cycle stages. Children knew what was expected of them because the rules were clear and consistent, most often defined by the community as a whole. Traditional methods that are widely used as learning opportunities included role modelling, storytelling, songs, ceremony, open and in depth communication between parent and child, and safely supporting natural consequences.



*“The old ways were... that discipline was done in a good, kind way. And they showed you. They took you by the hand and they showed you. Non-interference was the philosophy. And you learned skills for survival early, like using a knife as a small boy.” – Gail Anishinabe (Anishinaabe)*

## Non-Interference

Historically, there was a philosophy commonly referred to as non-interference based on natural consequences. This is sometimes misunderstood and equated with permissive parenting or letting children do whatever they want. A lot of care and attention was put into guiding children in a loving way. Within non-interference approaches, the child was acknowledged as having autonomy and self-determination. The rules that applied to a child, applied to every human being in the community. Loving guidance was offered to children by parents, siblings, extended family, and community members. Important teachings were shared with children on a daily basis. Natural consequences to actions or behaviours were allowed to occur as learning opportunities, within safe limits. They were often followed up with discussion or a story.

## Traditional Teachings

Traditional methods were based on key traditional teachings. For Cree people, there were the Fifteen Teepee Pole teachings (among other teachings). For the Anishinaabe, there were the Seven Grandfather teachings and the Four Hills of Life (among others). For Haundenosaunee people, there were the Longhouse teachings (among others). Summaries of some teachings are included here as a starting point. If you wish to learn more, approach an Elder or seek access to a traditional program or traditional society. There are many details and nuances to these teachings that cannot be captured by this resource. Descriptions of these teachings are meant as an introduction only. There are many other teachings as well.

## Cree Teachings

The Cree teaching of Twenty to Forty Strokes a Day is a particularly beautiful teaching. As described by Janet Fox, it was the prescription given to each new family to carry out with each child a minimum of twenty to forty strokes or affectionate gestures per day, bestowed with love and affection. Forty was the minimum for babies and small children, and twenty was the minimum for older children who had gained more independence. A stroke could be a kiss, a hug, a stroke of a child's hair, a back rub, a kind word, a caress, a hand upon a shoulder. These strokes could be as simple as sitting and holding a child in quietness. This was thought to be necessary in order for a child to feel properly loved and accepted by the parents and family.<sup>21</sup>

The Fifteen Teepee Pole teachings were a way of sharing fifteen important values or virtues with children. Each teepee pole represents a value and a teaching is paired with that value. The teepee was the first classroom.<sup>22</sup> The teachings follow Wahkotowin or natural law. The values are as follows:



1. Obedience (Good Listening Skills)
2. Respect
3. Humility
4. Happiness
5. Love
6. Faith
7. Kinship
8. Cleanliness
9. Thankfulness
10. Strength
11. Good Childrearing
12. Hope
13. Ultimate Protection
14. Control Flaps from the Wind. (Discernment/Protection from Outside Influences)

The first three values (obedience, respect, humility), were the first values taught. The word obedience in English does not adequately translate the Cree meaning which means good listening skills. These skills were learned from a very young age by the baby from being held in the moss bag within the cradleboard or tikinaagan and watching all that went on within the family. Each value would be introduced in turn to the growing child and taught through role modelling, storytelling, and certain age appropriate tasks. Janet Fox suggests creating virtue cards (like story cards), to help parents incorporate these values.<sup>23</sup>

21 Janet Fox

22 Janet Fox

23 Janet Fox

## Anishinaabe Teachings

For the Anishinaabe, the important teachings were the Seven Grandfather/Grandmother teachings. There is a long and very important story that goes with the Seven Grandfather teachings. Ask someone knowledgeable in your community or view online information to learn more. The Seven Grandmother/Grandfather teachings (OFIFC, n.d.) include:

- **Wisdom:** To be able to know the difference between positive and negative and the consequences of one's actions. The ability to see the inner qualities of people and to form good relationships. The ability to have sound judgment—to know when to listen, when to act, and when to wait.
- **Love:** To learn to love and be at peace with ourselves and then be able to love others. To show kindness, caring, and respect to others.
- **Respect:** To honour the value of all people, and all of creation including plants and animals. To show regard, consideration, and appreciation for all these things. To honour the teachings, our families and our communities. Do not cause harm to anyone—emotionally, spiritually, mentally, or physically. Respect is to be given freely from the heart.
- **Humility:** To have sensitivity towards others, respect other people's ways of doing things, and listening carefully to others. To be aware of our own strengths and challenges. To understand that we are all equal here upon the earth. We are just a small part of the sacredness of Creation. To accept ourselves as we are and know our capacity for growth and change.
- **Bravery:** To face life with courage. To acknowledge our strengths, face difficulty, and challenges. To stand up for our values and for those weaker than us. To not give up. To make courageous decisions and use words bravely.
- **Honesty:** To be honest in both action and character with ourselves and our families. To journey through life with integrity. To be trustworthy. To accept the truths of life.
- **Truth:** To know all of the Seven Grandfather Teachings and to live by them. To be sincere, faithful, and true in everything that we do.



The four R's was something that was often shared with children in Anishinaabe families. The R's stand for Respect, Reciprocity, Responsibility, and Relationships. These ideas were taught to children by role modelling, stories, assigning certain tasks, and through games. All interactions, with family, community, environment, and animals were governed by these principles.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Edna Manitowabi



## Haundenosaunee Teachings

For Haundenosaunee peoples (Mohawk, Onondaga, Oneida, Tuscarora, Seneca, and Cayuga), the Longhouse teachings were important foundational teachings based upon the Great Law of Peace. If you are of Haundenosaunee background, and you are interested in these teachings it is advisable to approach a Haundenosaunee Elder or knowledge holder as these teachings are generally shared within the longhouse setting. For some Mohawk traditions, see the teachings given by Kelly Jonathan in the Storytelling section. There are also multiple quotes for guidance offered in this resource by Kelly Jonathan and Mohawk Elder Katsi Cook.

Other common teachings included:

- Children should not play outside after dark for safety reasons.
- Children should sleep close to parents or grandparents so they could sense each other's presence (this aided in sound sleeping and greater sense of security).
- Songs were taught early and there was widespread use of drums and shakers to soothe children.<sup>25</sup>

## The Good Life

In the Seven Stages of Life, children from birth to age seven are considered to be in the stage called The Good Life. This stage includes newborns, babies, toddlers, and young children.

## Infancy and Toddlers

*"Our traditional understandings we believe that that little spirit chooses both parents. So the traditional teaching is that my little boy chose me to be his father. When I learned that it created a better feeling. My son chose me."*

John Wasauksing (Anishinaabe), as quoted in 24 Hour Cribside Assistance (n.d.)

The bond that is created by breastfeeding was seen as the most sacred bond, the most sacred gift. Breastmilk was not only seen as the first food but the first medicine.

The hammock or swing [*wewepison* in Cree]—was also very important in starting things off with baby in a good way. Babies were kept near the parents and near the family, so they could see, hear, smell, and sense their family and maintain contact. There was the gentle movement of the swing. The wrapping or swaddling was important for a sense of security as it emulated the first environment, the womb. The hammock was considered to be safe for small babies but was discontinued when the child was big enough to pull themselves up. It was always hung over the bed for added security.



To learn more about young children and the Seven Stages of Life, see *A Child Becomes Strong: Journeying through each Stage of the Life Cycle* at [www.beststart.org](http://www.beststart.org)

<sup>25</sup> Edna Manitowabi, Janet Fox, Leanne Simpson, Katsi Cook, Cecil Sveinson

Babies spent time in the moss bag and cradleboard as well, close to family, observing, and being warmly greeted up close, spoken to and sung to by family members and visitors. The movement of the cradleboard as the mother walked, that rhythmic movement is important. The movement helps to calm, relieve pain, develop the senses and motor skills, and with sleep. Being close to parents in the tikinaagan was also considered helpful for learning language, songs, developing a sense of belonging within the family, and the very beginnings of discipline, as the baby was expected to observe life. Great care goes into creating a board. This reflects the great care for the baby.<sup>26</sup>

*"Baby is right there, you can hear baby and baby can hear you. Playpens were kind of foreign concepts to us... when these were first introduced, and the cribs with the bars, the Elders disapproved saying that children were growing up behind bars and what would that mean to their lives later on!"*

– Edna Manitowabi (Anishinaabe)

Shakers were used with babies. The sound of the shaker is acknowledged as the first sound in some creation stories, and it comforts the baby when used properly (not too loudly). The shaker imitates the sound of blood rushing through placenta in the womb.

Parents are encouraged by traditional knowledge holders to make up songs that have their child's name in it.<sup>27</sup> Babies can participate in the singing of songs at family and community events.

## Young Children (up to 7 years old)

Songs learned earlier in childhood continued to be used. New songs of greater complexity were introduced. Language skills are expanding at this stage and First Nations language skills can be strengthened. This can happen through First Nations language instruction and/or by spending time with family members who speak their own language.

Storytelling was used extensively for instruction and guidance, and to encourage behaving in a good way in accordance with the teachings at this stage. Leanne Simpson describes how storytelling can be helpful in guiding children through difficult times or learning from mistakes:

*"Storytelling is a good way to externalize an issue, and to teach a certain value, without shame or embarrassment of the child, and without them resisting it. I use it a lot with the children. I observed how well it works for Elders talking to adults, and it works with children too. The*



<sup>26</sup> Janet Fox

<sup>27</sup> Kelly Jonathan, Katsi Cook, Edna Manitowabi

*Nanabush stories are particularly good. When my kids do something wrong, they get embarrassed and ashamed. So using a Nanabush story helps because he is always doing very embarrassing things! But he always has a way of working it out and he is always ok in the end. So they learn, it is normal to feel ashamed of yourself at times, but other times that shame is put on you and it is not yours.” – Leanne Simpson (Anishinaabe)*

Talking things out has always been very important as a method of guiding children in First Nations communities. It is seen as very important to take the time to do this properly when there was trouble in the child-parent relationship or the child was behaving in an inappropriate way.

*“In the old days, you had to survive and it was hard. There were no modern conveniences but there was more freedom. Freedom to move around, for children to experiment, to make errors and then to learn. The use of the firm voice – not yelling. But a strong and serious voice, and taking the time to sit and tell the child in that voice, one on one, not yelling from across the room. It worked usually. When I was acting up, I got sat down and talked to, really talked to, a thorough discussion.” – Gail Anishinabe (Anishinaabe)*

Elders recall being outdoors a lot, going for walks in the bush or farming, learning traditional activities such as tracking, berry picking, medicine identification, hunting, and fishing. This contributed vastly to their health and learning.<sup>28</sup>

*“The most important thing was being there for them no matter what state the child is in. Acknowledging their feelings is very important. A child has so much to say if we just listen.” – Gail Anishinabe (Anishinaabe)*

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28 Nicole Bell, Gail Anishinabe, Kelly Jonathan, Cecil Sveinson

# Handout 3: Traditional Ceremonies

This handout includes brief information about some First Nations ceremonies for children. Traditions vary by nation and community. More detail can be provided by an Elder and a ceremony can often be arranged. Be sure that if you are approaching an Elder that you do so in a respectful way, paying attention to protocol.

We need to recreate our ceremonies, with respect and care. The first ceremonies were very important for setting the stage for the child's life ahead and their role within the community. Ceremonies were used to celebrate key developmental stages in children such as the naming ceremony and the walking out ceremony. Two spirited people and grandparents often had key roles in ceremonies. Families were careful to perform the appropriate ceremonies for their children throughout childhood as a solid base for well-being and identity. Key ceremonies for children include:



- **Care of the Placenta:** The placenta was not thrown away but was taken to a special place and buried with a ceremony. In winter, the placenta was kept until the ground thawed in the spring. It is said that if the placenta is buried in a particular special place, usually the home territory, that child will not become lost in life but will return to the place where his or her placenta is buried.
- **Care of the Umbilical Cord:** The umbilical cord stump was also kept. There were different traditions depending on the tribal background. Sometimes it was wrapped in cloth with tobacco and hung as a mobile from the tikinaagan. Sometimes it was used as medicine. Sometimes it was buried at a later time—a special place was chosen based on the gender roles of the child.
- **Welcoming Ceremony:** At the Welcoming Ceremony, family, and then community members, would come and greet the new baby, introduce themselves, and speak directly to the baby. It is important not to ask the baby any direct questions, according to some traditions. There is food, songs are sung, and prayers are offered. This is common to Cree, Anishinaabe, Algonquin, Haundenosaunee cultures. Sometimes a special song, composed by the father or other parent (second mother if it is a Two Spirit family), would be sung to the baby.
- **The Naming Ceremony:** The Naming ceremony is next and is also very important as the child was given his or her spirit name. This name has a special meaning which would be revealed to the child over time throughout life. Also the child's clan and their special colours are revealed. Usually an Elder who has the gift of naming would be the one who received and brings the name and colours to the ceremony.

*"Honour the naming ceremony and be sure that you know your clan and that clan's role... a child must know this, as it gives direction in life, a purpose."*

– Edna Manitowabi (Anishinaabe)

- **Walking out Ceremony:** This ceremony is often the first time a toddler's feet touch the actual earth. In Anishinaabe understandings, when the first man was being lowered to the earth and his feet gently touched for the first time, he pointed his toes, in order to land, very, very gently upon his mother the earth. With babies, you can see that their little toes point as they are set upon the earth for the first time. The child naturally does this—they land on mother earth very gently!<sup>29</sup> In traditional times, they spent all of their time in the tikinaagan (cradleboard) or on an indoor floor, so this is significant, the first touching of the earth. This was often done in the spring or when the child was just beginning to learn how to walk. In traditional times, the child was not supposed to walk out of doors until the walking out ceremony, but indoors the child could crawl and move around freely.

- **Turning Seven Ceremony, Entering the Fast Life:** This is a significant milestone in life in Haundenosaunee, Cree, and Anishinaabe/Algonquin worldviews. When a child reaches seven years old, a special ceremony was often completed. In the past, this ceremony traditionally marked the time of the child's first fast. Children began preparing for this fast well in advance. Ash was placed on the forehead of young ones who were going without a meal as preparation for the time when they would do a one day fast. For boys, teachings involved the fire, the land, tracking, and hunting. For girls, teachings involved the land, handiworks, medicines, making foods, gathering berries, etc. Girls would also be given early teachings in order to be ready for the berry fast which would take place at puberty.



Besides these ceremonies, children are welcome at many regular ceremonies within communities. Just check in first! For example, the longhouse, the Sundance society, other traditional societies, full moon ceremonies, spring and fall fasts, feeding the bear ceremonies, and special family ceremonies.

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<sup>29</sup> Nicole Bell

# Handout 4: Parenting Styles

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There are several main styles of parenting including contemporary and traditional approaches. Some are now being recognized as less than ideal.

**Authoritarian Parenting:** Sometimes this style is called strict parenting. The parent establishes themselves as an authority with strict rules that if not followed, result in punishment. Punishment and discipline are not the same. Discipline is used to teach and guide, and teaches a child how to act. Punishment is used to control and provides a penalty for an offense or wrong doing.

Indian Residential Schools usually relied on authoritarian styles to discipline children. This had devastating effects in our communities and we are still rebuilding and repairing our hearts, minds, and spirits as well as regaining our skills and strengths. As a result we may have experienced authoritarian parenting in our own homes and authoritarian styles may come naturally to us. We may be more likely to use authoritarian approaches when we feel strong emotions. Parents are often fearful that if they are not strict something bad will happen, i.e. the family will not be safe or things will get out of control. If this parenting style is all that we know, it can be hard to do things differently.

Authoritarian style parenting is not recommended. The spirit of the child is easy to wound and punishment can damage your child's spirit. Physical punishment such as spanking teaches that hitting is okay and that people who love you are allowed to hurt you. These lessons are obviously not good to carry into the duration of our lifecycle. As well, children learn to hide information from parents to avoid punishment. This does not encourage open communication and personal safety out in the world. A power struggle may ensue as a child rebels or increases the unwanted behaviour. It can lead to defiant behaviour later on, feeling of not being loved enough, struggles with authoritarian figures, lack of freedom to play, and to express one-self, etc. Children may become insecure and may be prone to being drawn to other people who are controlling later in life because this is what they knew as a child.

**Permissive Parenting:** Permissive parenting is the other end of the spectrum. It is not setting rules or routines and letting the child have free reign provided they are not injuring themselves and others. Sometimes permissive parenting is adopted by parents who had an authoritarian upbringing—they want to avoid what was done to them.

Permissive parenting may sound like the First Nations model of non-interference but it is not the same. With non-interference, guidance was offered in a loving way within an extended family and community setting. The autonomy and self-determination of the child was respected within the same boundaries that applied to all members of the community. Children need guidance and safety parameters. They need adult help with learning how to live in a good way, how to follow the teachings, and how to deal with any strong emotions.

Permissive parenting can lead a child to feel like, *"They don't care enough to engage with me more deeply."* This can result in insecurity, difficulty at school where there are rules, or getting along with other families and children who have different expectations. The

need for routine can lead to anxiety and confusion. Staying up late all the time can lead to overtiredness resulting in crankiness, overeating, frustration, poor attention span, disrespect, and a tendency to be over-emotional. Children need limits set with gentle kindness within the context of a strong connection between child and parent. A child without limits has a hard time learning to set limits for themselves as well.

**Helicopter Parenting:** This term describes parents who pay extremely close attention to their children and their actions and behaviours. These parents hover over their children. They tend to take too much responsibility for their children's experiences. The parent becomes overcontrolling, overprotecting, and/or striving for perfection. Sometimes we can fall into this trap as parents if we are fearful or anxious and have a strong desire to protect our children, or if we felt neglected or unloved ourselves growing up and now are overcompensating. Sometimes as parents, we helicopter parent some of the time, when we are triggered ourselves. Children need to discover how to do things on their own to develop confidence. Helicopter parenting can lead to anxiety, not enough coping skills, decreased self-esteem, and a sense of entitlement in children.

**Attachment Parenting:** This style of parenting focuses on strong attachment between children and their parents, including an emphasis on preparing for parenting, breastfeeding and healthy foods, building trust and empathy, nurturing touch (including skin-to-skin contact and baby-wearing), safe sleep (including having the baby's bed in the parents' bedroom), consistent loving care, and positive discipline. Attachment parenting recommends always responding to a baby's cries (not letting a baby cry it out). It also recommends being sensitive to a child's needs, modelling good behaviour around children, and understanding the reason for any misbehaviours. Lessons have come from this style of parenting.

**Non-Interference/Loving Guidance:** This model was often used historically in healthy, Aboriginal communities including Haundenosaunee, Cree, Anishinaabe/Algonquin, Métis, as well as many other tribal groups. In this parenting style, children learn from natural consequences, within safe limits. Non-interference is different from permissive parenting in that guidance was offered in a loving, gentle way. There was a context of family and community. All community members were considered equal in value rather than above the child. All community members were expected to follow the same guidelines and limits self-imposed by the community, such as the Seven Grandfather teachings or the Teepee Pole teachings. Good behaviour was role modelled actively each day as a part of living the good life—*Bimaadizwin* in Anishinaabe and *Onkwehonwe-Neha* in Mohawk. More than just parents were involved in lovingly guiding a child—older siblings, aunts and uncles, grandparents, Elders, and community members all had active roles. To learn more about traditional parenting practices, see Handout 2: Traditional Parenting.

# Handout 5: Needs and Behaviour

## Cultural Context:

*“Remember to be a human being not a human doing. That is what my grandmother used to say. We get wrapped up in our human ‘doings’, we get busy and occupied but we always have to come back to just being, to be that human ‘being’. Back to what you need in life. What does the person need? What does that child need?”*  
– Kelly Jonathan (Mohawk)



## Needs Impact Behaviours

It is important to separate who our children are from their behaviours. Sometimes when a child’s needs are not met, they misbehave, often not even understanding their own behaviour.

Children may have temper tantrums, cry, refuse to cooperate, etc. because they feel hungry, tired, insecure, frustrated, confused, sad, or scared. Learning to recognize things that lead to undesired behaviours is helpful.

*“When your kids start to act up or act out, ask yourself: Is he hungry? Is she tired? Are they overwhelmed? Then the answer could be as easy as, feed them, or nap time, or spending some time in a quiet place, or a hug.”* – Hilary Wear (Métis)

There are some basic things all children require:

- **Physical Needs:** All children need a safe and stable home with regular access to healthy and nutritious food and clean water. They also need adequate physical activity balanced by enough sleep. They need a certain degree of care and cleanliness and medical care when needed. These are just the basic needs. Sometimes good health is more difficult due to contaminated water or limited access to healthy foods.

Junk food, highly processed foods, and too much sugar contribute to behaviour problems. Some children are very sensitive to food additives such as food dyes. They may become hyperactive and irritable. Some parents do not have enough money for healthy food and in some areas healthy food is very expensive and quite scarce.

*“Where I live, it is a fly-in community, and at our local store, a bag of chips is cheaper than an apple. And an apple is much healthier but chips are more affordable. That is what we have to deal with. It shouldn’t be that way.”*  
– Gail Anishinabe (Anishinaabe)



- **Emotional Needs:** Children need to feel loved and cherished. They need a stable and caring care provider. This may be a mother, father, grandparent, foster parent, or guardian. Children need to feel secure and attached to a stable and caring care provider, to grow up strong, confident, and with good self-esteem. They need to feel their home environment is safe and secure and that they can explore and move around freely and safely. Children need to be consoled when hurt or upset. This does not weaken them, it strengthens them. Adults must role model self-control in difficult situations. Never threaten a child, no matter how upset you are, as this can cause emotional harm.



*"There were difficult times. You get impatient, you get tired. Emotions can make you lose perspective. I had some basic guidelines to fall back on. You don't hurt their spirit. That is what you do not do." – William Kingfisher (Anishinaabe)*

Children need attention. Parents can easily give this by asking questions about their daily activities, friends, and interests. Parents need to discipline in a friendly way such as pointing out wrong doings in a gentle manner.

*"Paying attention to our children is so very important. Children have so much to say if we will only listen." – Gail Anishinabe (Anishinaabe)*

- **Need for Boundaries:** When there is structure at home, children develop a sense of security that helps them cope with difficult situations. Routines provide structure for children. When children know what to expect they feel secure and confident.

*"I realized that my son was actually a good teacher. He taught me to be a parent—a parent of him. For example, I came to realize that he needed borders in order to feel secure. He let me know that and I learned to listen and adapt... He found comfort in routine. I wanted initially to be more free-flowing with things but that was not what worked for him so I changed my approach." – William Kingfisher (Anishinaabe)*

## Responding to Needs

What are some things you can do when your children act up? Most of all, it is important to stay calm. Think about why your child is acting that way and focus on meeting any needs (food, security, attention, etc.).

*"I find that when I am disconnected from my kids, that is when I tend to lose my patience, and get frustrated, and I tend to yell or do things that I wish I would not do. And they also seem harder to handle. And the root of that is always disconnection, for us. I'm too busy. Or even though I've been home all day, I've been on my computer or not paying attention. So I find that even 10 or 15 minutes of really focused attention and attachment can shift behaviour really quickly."*

– Leanne Simpson (Anishinaabe)

## The Needs of a Baby

Babies learn mainly through their senses. Trust is being built between the child and the parent. Their brain is rapidly developing. Traditionally, when family or community members visited the baby was always greeted first and spoken to directly.<sup>30</sup> Eye contact between a baby and a parent is very important. Engage your baby up close and look into each other's eyes. The flow of warm, positive energy and emotions is important to healthy development.<sup>31</sup> Babies learn by being at the center of activity, by always being with the parent, by being carried in the tikinaagan. What they hear is important in learning language. It is a good time to use First Nations languages and songs around your baby.<sup>32</sup> Play becomes important as baby grows.



It was not a traditional practice to let babies cry it out. Babies were to be offered comfort when crying, even if the parents were not sure why they were crying.<sup>33</sup> Shakers were sometimes used to help comfort or occupy young babies to remind them of the place of comfort from which they came.

*"It is natural for a baby to cry. It is a way to express their needs... It can be very stressful to hear babies cry... they are unable to meet their own needs, they have no language at this stage, and they use crying and screaming to let adults know of hunger, sickness, cold, pain, and other discomforts."* From *A Child Becomes Strong* (2010)

30 Edna Maniowabi, Janet Fox

31 Janet Fox, Edna Maniowabi, Katsi Cook

32 Janet Fox

33 Edna Maniowabi, Janet Fox

## The Needs of a Toddler

Toddlers are beginning to explore their world and test their limits. It is important to make sure that their environment is safe so that they do not get hurt. Sometimes it can be very challenging to care for an active and determined toddler. Parents can adjust their approach to their child's temperament (shy, expressive, bold, etc.). Parents can build self-esteem by focusing their child's strengths and abilities. They can offer support in areas that challenge or frustrate their child. By providing routines, physical and emotional security, parents encourage their child's development as they try out independence and return to their parent for reassurance and affection.



*"A two-year old knows exactly what she wants. And she voices it! And it is a good teaching for me, because I often know what I want but I do not voice it. Or I feel like I need to do what other people want me to do or are telling me to do. So they are good teachers and we need to recognize that part of their role in our families."*

– Leanne Simpson (Anishinaabe)

Toddlers rely on parents, care providers, and siblings as role models in order to learn how to navigate their world. For example, toddlers may repeat behaviours and words their parents make. This can be an important learning experience for parents, if they are able to recognize it.

*"Toddlers learn through observing. They see what those around them are doing and they want to mimic every action. They are like little sponges soaking up influences that are healthy and unhealthy." From A Child Becomes Strong (2010)*

## The Needs of a Young Child (up to age 7)

It is very important to spend time with young children and to treat them with love and respect.

*"I treat them with the same level of respect as you would an adult."*

– Hilary Wear (Métis)

Children are able to take on greater and greater responsibilities within the home. They also need gentle guidance in order to learn their roles. They are transitioning to school and have other influences such as friends, television, and internet. Children are gaining independence. Understanding the consequences for their actions becomes a big part of their learning. Routines continue to be important and children feel secure when they know what to expect during the day. Physical activity, healthy food, and enough sleep help children learn, grow, and avoid problem behaviours.

*"Children learn about truth. During this stage, good relationships with other children and adults help children learn how to trust and feel secure. This helps them to figure out what the truth is in a future situation. The community and caregivers are responsible for teaching the children about honesty and consequences for actions. Let the child make their own decisions by giving him some choices."*

From *A Child Becomes Strong* (2010)

We can help children by maintaining a calm caring attitude, by taking time to share our activities, and by talking things through. This helps build a healthy long term relationship.

*"Storytelling is a good way to externalize an issue, and to teach certain values, without shame or embarrassment of the child, and without them resisting it. I use it a lot with the children. I observed how well it works for Elders talking to adults, and it works with children too. The Nanabush stories are particularly good. When my kids do something wrong, they get embarrassed and ashamed. So using a Nanabush story helps because he is always doing very embarrassing things! But he always has a way of working it out and he is always ok in the end. So they learn, it is normal to feel ashamed of yourself at times, but other times that shame is put on you and it is not yours."*

– Leanne Simpson (Anishinaabe)

## Children with Special Needs

Some children have special or complex needs. They may be more prone to certain behaviours when their needs are not being met. Parents know their children best and they must advocate for their needs. When a child's needs are met, their challenges no longer seem so complex. It is important to acknowledge that children with special needs come with special talents as well.

*"We need to view all children as gifts from the Creator, each bringing their own teachings. Children with special needs are viewed as gifted children and are able to grow and learn in a healthy way. They are able to make choices within their own ability... learn not to fear these differences but to embrace them... allow them to be their own individual selves."* From *A Child Becomes Strong* (2010)

Services differ from community to community and parents can learn about available supports. Sometimes parents are innovative in seeking out the supports that they need, such as online courses.

*"He was born premature and he had severe hearing loss. So then I began to learn sign language. I took sign language at college... Now he is older and I am learning more complex sign language. He is teaching me now."* – Liz Osawamick, (Anishinaabe)



Some children may have a need in a certain area. Different children develop at different paces.

Some children may not be ready to do things that others his or her age are already doing. Toilet training and learning other new skills happen when the child is ready. Most of the time, children will grow out of certain situations or may need more time to learn certain skills. If you are really concerned, talk to a health care provider or a child specialist in your community.

*"One of the children I care for is autistic. So it's hard because he is doing things that he should not be doing... So I took a workshop on it. I don't want to just give him up because where would he end up? So I am working with it. We are making adjustments. And he is going to have some more one-on-one support. And I have extended family and friends to help out on weekends, so I can spend one-on-one with them. And I make sure that I pick them up and hug them. Give them what they need. So they can feel that love."* – Liz Osawamick, (Anishinaabe)

## Parents' Needs

As parents, we also have our own needs. When these needs are not met, we are more prone to certain behaviours which are not helpful during stressful parenting situations. It is important to remember this and that we are all human. We are not perfect nor should we expect ourselves to be. As Elder Katsi Cook says, we can strive for excellence in parenting. This means recognizing our own weaknesses and our own triggers. We need to reflect on our own parenting pasts, our own mental health (including addictions, depression, anxiety, or past traumas). Do we need sleep or food? Are we stressed? What are our supports? Do we need to seek out more supports or help from others?

*"I feel like most of my parenting is self-management. My kids often trigger my childhood. And I find myself wrapped up in that suddenly. Healing is a continuous process."* – Leanne Simpson (Anishinaabe)

*"You can't always change their behaviour but you can do something about your own."*  
– William Kingfisher (Anishinaabe)

# Handout 6: Screens in the Home

*"Screens and electronics are a problem—they are used too much and undermine some of our traditional methods. Children don't know how to listen well anymore."*

– Gail Anishinabe (Anishinaabe)

Screen time is spending time on anything with a screen—whether that is TV, videos, cell phones, computers, electronic games, etc. We all seem to rely on screens more and more for entertainment, to stay connected, to relax, or to occupy our children. Too much screen time can be bad for us and for our families. This is especially true for young children.



Canadian guidelines on screen use for children recommend:

- No screen use for children under 2 years old.
- A maximum of one hour per day for children 2-4 years.
- A maximum of 2 hours per day for children and youth 5-17 years of age.
- To learn more, see [www.csep.ca](http://www.csep.ca).

Too much screen time for children may result in aggressive behaviour, risky behaviour, unhealthy weights, less energy, harder time learning in school, more exposure to commercials, difficulty sleeping at night, and difficulty paying attention. Screen time also takes away from time connecting with family and friends, being active, sleep, etc.

TV and electronic games can have an effect on a child's behaviour. Observe how your child is behaving and if there are any changes. They may get irritable, aggressive, selfish, and impatient. When you start to notice this, it is time to decrease screen time or to decide if that a game or show is not good for your child.

## What can you do to reduce screen time in the home?

Limits for children's use of on screens are advisable, including limits on how long screens can be used. For example, one hour TV show in the morning and one hour of video games after school. You may want to suggest that your children make choices about what they want to watch within screen time limits. This teaches them to be selective about how they want to spend that hour. Not having a television in the child's bedroom or where the family spends time together is another way to help address this issue.

As parents you may want to make sure they spend as much time in alternative activities such as playing outside or in sports to reduce idle time. Play with your children. Use your time at the table or in the car to talk or to sing, not for screen time. Spending time together as a family out of the house such as camping trips, hikes, backyard campfires, tobogganing, making snow men, cross country skiing, swimming, or boating helps create important family bonds and reduces screen time.

Parents also need to use less screens and focus in more on their children. Texting and checking online postings on cell phones leads to distracted parenting. It is important to set limits on how much you are on a screen as a parent.

# Handout 7: Self Calming for Parents

Parents are told to stay calm, but what do you do when your child is having a meltdown and you are not that far from joining them? This handout shares some suggestions to help parents remain calm when there are difficult parenting situations or other challenges in their lives.

## Traditional Approaches

Traditional approaches can be used to managing stress for example drumming, smudging, sweat lodges, or singing.

## Time-outs for Parents

Taking your own Time-out can prevent you from taking actions you might regret later. This may mean taking a minute to gather your thoughts or going to another room for a few minutes, before responding to a challenging parenting situation.

You can also plan time for yourself by watching a favourite show during nap time, asking a friend or family member to care for your children for a short time, or trading babysitting with another parent so you can take a short break.



## Mindfulness

Mindfulness helps people become more calm and self-aware in the moment. It involves simple forms of meditation that are not religious and are easy to learn. They help reduce stress, negative emotions, feelings, and reactions. With practice, mindfulness skills can help in dealing with day-to-day situations. Classes are available in some communities and there are free online resources and courses.

## Belly Breathing

Elder Katsi Cook recommends the belly breathing technique to calm and center yourself. When stressed we tend to use shallow breathing. Belly breathing helps to prevent the anxiety that comes with stress. It can help you to refocus in emotional or difficult situations.

Belly breathing takes practice. Here are the steps involved:

1. Place one hand just above your belt line and the other in the center of your chest above your breastbone. You will notice your hands moving as you breathe in and out. Your hands will let you know which muscles are being used. The idea is to shift from using the muscles in your chest, to using the muscles in your abdomen.
2. Open your mouth and gently and audibly sigh. At the same time let your shoulders and upper body relax, moving down the sides of your body. The point of the sigh is to relax the upper body. Try it one more time—sigh, relaxing the shoulders downwards.
3. Close your mouth and pause for a few seconds.
4. Keeping your mouth closed, breathe in slowly through your nose by pushing your stomach out. Move your stomach first and then breathe out. The motion of your stomach moving out pulls the air in. Inhale as much air as you can comfortably.
5. Pause... just briefly... to comfort.
6. Open your mouth. Breathe out through your mouth by pulling your stomach in.
7. Pause.
8. Continue with steps 4 to 7. Your stomach should be moving in and out and your chest relatively still. It is important to breathe slowly so as not to get light-headed. Do this breathing until you are calm and your head is clear. It usually only takes a few minutes.

To view the belly breathing exercise, refer to this link:  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=eRIV2R3jzaQ#t=81](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eRIV2R3jzaQ#t=81)

## Self-Drumming: A Tapping Exercise for Parents

This exercise was suggested by respected Mohawk Elder Katsi Cook, a valued First Nation knowledge holder and researcher. Tapping is a quick and easy way for parents to calm themselves and let go of negative emotions in parenting situations where they may become emotional or upset. For example, if a child misbehaves, parents need to remain calm and act responsibly.

When you are in a strong emotional state such as anger, fear, feeling upset—your body goes into defense mode and adrenaline surges, muscles tense, blood pressure, heart rate and blood sugar rise. This helps you if there is something threatening happening—like an angry grizzly bear nearby! But in life generally we do not have grizzly bears, but we do have tons of stress. Even a negative memory or a negative thought can cause stress. The brain and body can be retrained to respond differently.





Tapping is done by lightly drumming on one's own body while repeating a positive message. This re-trains your brain to react differently under stress. Using the first two fingers next to the thumb, tap repeatedly on your body at certain points, firmly, but not too hard.

1. The "karate chop" area on the side of the palm of our hand (under the baby finger).
2. Where the eyebrows meet the bridge of the nose.
3. The temple.
4. The cheekbone.
5. Under the nose.
6. The indent of the chin.
7. About 3 inches below collarbones on the top of the chest.
8. Your side, under your arm.
9. Return to the hand.
10. Return to the eyebrow.
11. The top of the head.

All the while, say a statement to yourself, over and over, while tapping at each point, for example:

"Even though, I sometimes lose my temper, even though I get upset, I can calm down, I can let this feeling go, I am a good parent, and I totally love and accept myself."

Take a deep breath and let it go. You are done! And it feels better and you are more calm and in control.

To view the tapping exercise, refer to this link: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=HBE7e6dEb8o](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HBE7e6dEb8o)

# Appendix 2: Participant Pre and Post Workshop Questions and Feedback Forms

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## List of Forms

This appendix includes the following forms that can be used or adapted to learn about the impact of your parent workshop:

- Form 1: Pre Workshop Questions
- Form 2: Post Workshop Questions
- Form 3: Answers to Pre and Post Workshop Questions
- Form 4: Participant Feedback Form

# Form 1: Pre Workshop Questions

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**This is not a test. You are the only one that will see this. Answer the questions to the best of your knowledge. At the end of the workshop you will answer these questions again and see if any of your responses are different.**

- What can you do to guide your baby/child towards good behaviour? (Think of a difficult situation that sometimes arises between you and your child and how you can manage that.)

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- Name one need that your child has for the particular stage of development that he or she is at right now:

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- Name some societal influences that sometimes pose a challenge to parents who are trying to bring their child up in a good way:

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- Name a traditional custom or ceremony that celebrates a developmental stage of babies or children:

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- Name some traditional parenting tools or techniques that assist parents with their children:

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- Storytelling can be a way to teach my child how to learn from mistakes. **True or False**

- Comforting my child when she or he is emotional or hurt will prevent them from being becoming strong and being able to take care of themselves. **True or False**

- Taking a short Time-out for myself as a parent can be helpful when I am really stressed out in a parenting situation. **True or False**

- Parents can benefit from family and/or community supports to help guide and raise their children and to find parenting information. **True or False**

# Form 2: Post Workshop Questions

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**This is not a test. You are the only one that will see this. Answer the questions to the best of your knowledge. Then compare your responses to the form completed before the workshop.**

- What can you do to guide your baby/child towards good behaviour? (Think of a difficult situation that sometimes arises between you and your child and how you can manage that.)

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- Name one need that your child has for the particular stage of development that he or she is at right now:

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- Name some societal influences that sometimes pose a challenge to parents who are trying to bring their child up in a good way:

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- Name a traditional custom or ceremony that celebrates a developmental stage of babies or children:

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- Name some traditional parenting tools or techniques that assist parents with their children:

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- Storytelling can be a way to teach my child how to learn from mistakes. **True or False**

- Comforting my child when she or he is emotional or hurt will prevent them from being becoming strong and being able to take care of themselves. **True or False**

- Taking a short Time-out for myself as a parent can be helpful when I am really stressed out in a parenting situation. **True or False**

- Parents can benefit from family and/or community supports to help guide and raise their children and to find parenting information. **True or False**

# Form 3: Answers to Pre and Post Workshop Questions

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Hold an open discussion about the responses to the following questions.

- What can you do to guide your baby/child towards good behaviour? (Think of a difficult situation that sometimes arises between you and your child and how you can manage that.)
- Name one need that your child has for the particular stage of development that he or she is at right now:
- Name some societal influences that sometimes pose a challenge to parents who are trying to bring their child up in a good way:
- Name a traditional custom or ceremony that celebrates a developmental stage of babies or children:
- Name some traditional parenting tools or techniques that assist parents with their children:

The answers to the true or false questions are as follows and can be read out or discussed.

- Storytelling can be a way to teach my child how to learn from mistakes. **True**  
*(Give an example of storytelling as teaching if desired.)*
- Comforting my child when she or he is emotional or hurt will prevent them from being becoming strong and being able to take care of themselves. **False**  
*Comforting an upset child or an injured child helps the child feel safe, secure and loved. This strengthens the child over time causing the child to become more confident and independent.*
- Taking a short Time-out for myself as a parent can be helpful when I am really stressed out in a parenting situation. **True**  
*Although Time-outs for children can be problematic, they can work great for parents! Just remember to stay close enough nearby so that children are still supervised.*
- Parents can benefit from family and/or community supports to help guide and raise their children and to find parenting information. **True**  
*Parents need a break too! There are various community supports that can provide parenting resources. Ideally close friends and family members can help out too. Make sure you can trust everyone who takes care of your child. Other parents or parenting networks can provide helpful suggestions as well.*

# Form 4: Participant Feedback Form

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Please fill out and hand back to the facilitator at the end of the day.

Facilitator's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Workshop: \_\_\_\_\_

Did this session provide you with useful information about parenting in First Nations families and communities?

- a great deal
- somewhat
- a little
- not at all

What did you gain from this session? (check all that apply)

- greater awareness of the topic
- resources/services available
- new skills and knowledge
- connections with other parents
- tips and tools of nurturing attachment
- nothing

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

Was/were the facilitator(s) knowledgeable?

- a great deal
- somewhat
- a little
- not at all

Was/were the facilitator(s) easy to understand?

- a great deal
- somewhat
- a little
- not at all

Was/were the facilitator(s) organized?

- a great deal
- somewhat
- a little
- not at all

What did you like about this session?

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What did you dislike about this session?

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Overall, regarding the workshop I feel (please choose one):

- Energized
- Good
- Confused
- Bored
- Disappointed
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

***best start*** )  
***meilleur départ***

by/par health **nexus** santé

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Early Child Development Resource Centre  
[www.beststart.org](http://www.beststart.org) | [www.healthnexus.ca](http://www.healthnexus.ca)

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