

# Restoring Our Spirit With Aboriginal Head Start



Indian Residential Schools were designed to break the Indigenous People's spirit.

**Aboriginal Head Start is designed to restore our spirit.**

Children are at the centre of any community – think about how 'Amber Alerts' take precedence over any other emergency. Experts say that losing a child is the worst kind of grief. Can you imagine a community where every parent loses their child? All their children? It is painful to bury your child, but some say the feeling of helpless despair is worse, knowing your child is being harmed and not being able to protect him or save her.

**Aboriginal Head Start empowers and enables parents to protect and care for their greatest gift, their child. It gives them the opportunity and the parenting skills to guide and advocate for their children. Families can experience their culture and identity, sharing and learning together. Most of all, parents support each other in this Village and receive support from teachers, Elders and the community.**

**Wellness begins when our spirits are strong so we can make healthy choices for ourselves and others.**

Residential Schools isolated the young children from their loving homes and shamed them,starved them, abused them, and denied them love. There was nobody to protect them. Nobody to comfort them. Nobody to trust. Precious young spirits were broken.

**Aboriginal Head Start believes children are our greatest gifts. Our children belong to a Village where they are valued and respected and protected. Children are nurtured and acknowledged for who they are; they are taught to be proud of their identity as a First Nations, Métis and Inuit person.**

**Well-being comes from feeling safe and cherished by those we love and rely on.**

Many of today's Elders were those children in the Residential Schools. They carry the trauma of the early experiences that taught them to mistrust and mistreat and hide who they are. Seven generations of these survivors have spent lifetimes trying to bury memories of their childhood.

**In Aboriginal Head Start, we honour our Elders and welcome them as highly valued members of our Village. We feel grateful for their stories and the knowledge they carry. Being connected to the children and other adults fulfills their need to belong to a community. Elders can witness a new experience of childhood in a safe, healthy setting.**

**Healing can happen when we forgive and accept ourselves.**

The government and churches defiled the sacredness of the child. Their policy of 'aggressive assimilation' was carried out with such savage intent that it would be deemed inhumane were it directed at animals today. When they threatened the parents and took their children, they pierced the hearts of the family. The spirit of the Village was gone.

**Aboriginal Head Start is the new Village. Children are at the centre of the program. They are loved and nurtured and protected by mothers and fathers, aunties and uncles, grandparents and Elders, teachers and community members.**

**Aboriginal Head Start is restoring the spirit of our People by giving us hope for the future.**