

## WELCOMING FAMILIES BACK TO LEARNING SPACES

BY LISA PROVENCHER, LANCE POTSKIN, & ERICA KOOPMANS

Alas, the fall season is upon us in Northern BC. The long summer days are ending, and many families are settling back into the routines of school and early years programs. This season can be exciting with the start of new phases as children begin attending a new daycare, community program, or enter their first year of preschool, kindergarten or primary school. This season can also be challenging due to new transitions, schedule changes, added expenses, and intense emotions. Below, we share a few simple but concrete ways to support families during these seasonal transitions.

- Since the new school year can come with added clothing and school supply expenses, explore ways to support families and reduce this burden at your program, such as hosting a clothing exchange or having a box for donated extra school supplies that all families can access.
- Nutrition is vital in ensuring children have the energy they need for learning and play. Check out [Appetite to Play](#) for helpful resources on eating and playing that can be shared with families, and consider having healthy snacks available in a common area that is accessible for all children in your program.
- Remind families that growth and development are hard work. As children play, they physically exert themselves, learn social skills, hone cognition, practice fine motor and gross motor skills, discover emotions, and try to organize all this information. That is a lot! Encourage families to give their child(ren) space to decompress at the end of their day. Just like adults after a long workday, children may need space to regroup before inviting you into their world to share in the joy of their discoveries and sharing about the day.
- Remind families that transitions and establishing routines take time. They are doing a great job!

Check out our recent contribution to the Northern Health Research & Knowledge Translation Newsletter

[VIEW HERE](#)



### NEWSLETTER HIGHLIGHTS


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[Learning and Engagement Opportunities](#)

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# The Reading Bear Society: Promoting Early Health Literacy in the North

BY CRYSTAL MCLEOD & LEANNE VARNEY, READING BEAR SOCIETY NORTHERN CHAPTER CO-CHAIRS

The Reading Bear Society (RBS) was created in 2013 to promote health literacy among school-aged children in metro Vancouver. In 2020, students of the Northern Medical Program began a new RBS chapter in Prince George. The hope of this new chapter was to offer RBS community programs in a way that suited and benefited northern BC. Three years on, the largest community deliverable from the Prince George chapter is classroom-based presentations with 'Dr. Bear'. In this program, medical students present a story of teddy bear patients visiting Dr. Bear and then invite students to learn about health by providing a 'check-up' to their own teddy bear (often brought from home).



For children participating in the program, it is hoped they benefit by becoming familiar with healthcare procedures and equipment. Previous research from the United States has shown that children who participate in 'Teddy Bear Clinics' like our Dr. Bear visits feel more at ease in healthcare settings. In the north, we also hope the visits act as an early touchpoint for children to learn about careers in healthcare that they may not have been exposed to yet.

The Prince George RBS Chapter is excited to begin a partnership between the Northern Medical Program and the UNBC School of Nursing. This partnership will see student volunteers across healthcare disciplines working together to deliver programming. In the current training model, healthcare trainees are often siloed. This can make it more difficult to appreciate how the roles come together for patient care in a team context. We hope this collaboration will positively impact the recognition of what each discipline provides for patient care within a team model.



The RBS has roots in community relationship building to foster empathy, compassion and inclusivity. This network extends beyond elementary classroom visits to enhance the teamwork capacity of those who volunteer with the organization. The experience offers medical students valuable opportunities to work with young children (we currently visit children aged 0-6 years).

[\*\*CLICK HERE TO LEARN MORE ABOUT RBS\*\*](#)

# LEARNING AND ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

## NORTHERN ABORIGINAL EARLY CHILD DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE

The Prince George Native Friendship Center is pleased to be hosting four days of Professional Development on October 17 – 20th 2023.

Registration forms can be submitted via email or fax to [aifpdadmin@pgnfc.com](mailto:aifpdadmin@pgnfc.com) or Fax at 250-564-5946 by Oct 1st, 2023.

[CLICK HERE](#) to learn more about this opportunity



## EARLY YEARS CONFERENCE 2024

Registration is now open for the 2024 Early Years Conference hosted by the University of British Columbia. The theme of this year's conference is:

***Connecting & Belonging in the Early Years: Enhancing Relationships Between Professionals, Families, & Children***

Date: February 1-3, 2024

Location: Hyatt Regency Vancouver

[CLICK HERE](#) to learn more about this opportunity and registration details.

## STRENGTHENING THE MENTAL WELLNESS OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN BC

Join the Public Health Association of BC and Northern Health for a regional networking event focused on mental wellness. This event aims to bring together public health professionals and community partners to engage in a meaningful conversation about promoting the mental well-being of children and youth. The event will serve as a platform for participants to share insights, discuss challenges, and explore innovative strategies to enhance the mental well-being of children and youth in our communities.

**Date: October 13th, 2023 Time: 10:00 am - 2:30 pm**

**Location: Prince George (Venue TBD)**

To RSVP or if you have any questions, please contact Emily Faris at [emily.faris@phabc.org](mailto:emily.faris@phabc.org).

In partnership with:  
BCCDC Foundation for Public Health

### Strengthening the Mental Wellness of Children and Youth in BC

A conversation and networking event to address the role of public health and its partners in strengthening child and youth mental wellbeing

Save the Date

- Date: October 13th, 2023
- Time: 10:00am - 2:30pm
- Location: Prince George, BC (Venue TBD)
- RSVP: email [Emily.Faris@phabc.org](mailto:Emily.Faris@phabc.org)

Hosted by: Public Health Association of BC

In collaboration with: BC Centre for Disease Control, REPRESENTATIVE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH, fraserhealth, Interior Health, island health, northern health, Vancouver Coastal Health

If you have news, stories, resources or opportunities to share in future newsletters please send an email to [seed@unbc.ca](mailto:seed@unbc.ca)