

The Aboriginal HIPPY Program - The Empowerment of Our Children

Definition: HIPPY – Home Instruction for Parents of Pre-school Youngsters

Some time ago my sister-in-law, Diane Paul, told me wife and I she was going to work for the HIPPY Program. I remember thinking to myself that makes sense considering both Diane and I are around the same age, we both lived in North Vancouver and we both would have been influenced by the "HIPPY Movement" in the 60's. I laughed and said "Okay Diane, what's happening!" I am sure Diane told me then what the Program was all about, but it went right over my head.

Two weeks ago, Diane asked if I was interested in covering the "Second Annual gathering of the HIPPY Program" that was being held in North Vancouver on the Burrard Band's Land. She reminded me what the Program was doing and how well it had been progressing, so I called Kwatamus and told him I would like to cover it.

On Saturday June 12, 2004, we went to the Tsleil'waututh First Nations Community Centre on the Burrard Band Reserve for the Second Annual HIPPY Program Graduation. Immediately Diane introduced me to Ms. Tammy Harkey, who is the Manager of the National Aboriginal HIPPY Program. Tammy was only able to spend a few minutes with me because of her involvement with setting everything up. Greta and I were seated at a table up in front and we enjoyed watching a lot of parents and children come into this grand community centre.

We were told that the Aboriginal HIPPY Program is currently available with five bands and that each band has a Home Visitor. They are:

- Robin Adams – Katzie Nation
- Jenn Point – Musqueam Nation
- Diane Paul – Sechelt Nation
- Melinda Cassidy – Tsawwassen Nation
- Vanessa Gonzalez – Tsleil-Waututh Nation

As luck would have it Chief Leonard George came in and I was able to have a few words with him. Leonard George is in fact a member of the Board of Directors for "HIPPY Canada." Leonard told me that when he was first introduced to the HIPPY Program three years ago, he was in full support of developing an Aboriginal HIPPY Program.

I believe that I should explain just exactly what the HIPPY Program represents. From their own text, "HIPPY is an early intervention Program designed to maximize the educational potential of young children at risk. The HIPPY program's goal is to ensure those children of low-income families are ready for Kindergarten and that their parents play a key role in preparing them."

The HIPPY Program recognizes the power of the parent as a primary educator

– a child's first and best teacher. Home visitors work with parents to teach them to improve their children's linguistic, social and cognitive skills through a wide variety of structured and play-based activities. Together, the home visitors and parents build a framework that enables the children to flourish. The HIPPY program's strategy is simple; it works by helping parents help their children to succeed early in life! HIPPY believes that all children can benefit from effective early childhood development programs.

In November of 2002, HIPPY Canada and the Chief Dan George Centre for Advanced Education entered into a Memorandum of Understanding intended to establish a relationship that would support the implementation of HIPPY within First Nations, Inuit, and other Aboriginal and First Nations communities. This would be done in a way that honours and respects Aboriginal cultures, languages, and unique circumstances. Aboriginal HIPPY was born!

Our luck was extended when Ms. Carol Slater joined us at our table. Carol is the chair for the Board of Directors for HIPPY Canada. She was able to provide me with a lot of information about the Program. I was also informed that the HIPPY Canada Program and the Aboriginal Program are really two different programs. I had the pleasure of speaking to Tammy Harkey and Ms Connie Bailey of the Katzie Band. They made it clear to me that the Aboriginal HIPPY Program has special needs as far as the Program is concerned, that in fact their Program is targeted toward Aboriginal problems and issues.

When I asked all of the representatives why the Aboriginal HIPPY Program was not available with all Aboriginal communities, Tammy Harkey replied that other communities have yet to launch this Program because of non-awareness. The Program has just been piloted in these communities, which is called "The Aboriginal Vancouver Consortium."

The Program is the first Aboriginal HIPPY in North America.

Tammy's job is to introduce the communities to the Program and assist them in launching the program, training staff and finding funding.

Back to the Celebrations! Next came the speakers to the stage.

The first speaker was Chief Leonard George who welcomed everyone and sang a traditional welcoming song. Chief George explained the importance of the Aboriginal HIPPY Program on reserves and the strengthening of families and childcare. The next speaker was Carl Pointe of the Musqueam First Nations and he too sang a traditional song. Then, Terry Alec and Arthur

Paul from the Sechelt First Nations sang a song for the crowd. Connie Bailey from the Katzie First Nations was next on the podium and she read a letter sent by the Executive Director of HIPPY Canada, Ms. Debbie Bell, who had sent her heart felt apologies for not being able to attend the ceremonies. The last speaker was Ms. Carol Slater, Chair of the Board of Directors, of HIPPY Canada. She told a wonderful story of seeing an Eagle flying above the centre as she was arriving. To Carol that was a sign that the children graduating would soar to great heights in their education and lives. Carol also thanked Leonard George for sponsoring the celebration.

We then were treated to a wonderful luncheon that was provided by the Tsleil'waututh Community Centre staff. It was delicious. During lunch I was introduced to a lady named Lucy Lemare. Lucy is a Professor of Early Child Education and Development at Simon Fraser University and is involved in doing research on Aboriginal HIPPY and its effects on Aboriginal children. Lucy told me that she was originally a skeptic of the HIPPY Program, but as time has gone by she has become a big supporter.

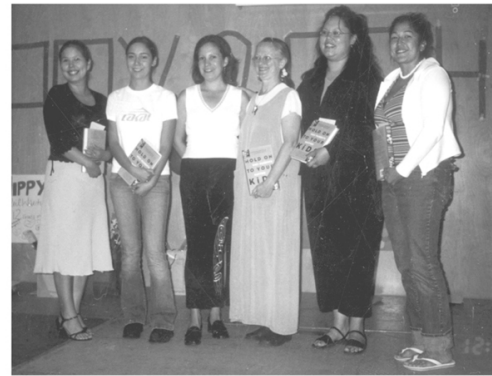
As my wife and I sat through the remainder of the festivities that included certificates being handed out to families of the Five Nations involved (about 100-150 parents and kids), gifts being given to all the children and pictures being taken of the whole group, we were more and more impressed with the work that had been done, was being done and will be done by the HIPPY Program. I do know one thing for sure; I have a whole new respect for my sister-in-law Diane. She is the sole HIPPY home visitor for the Sechelt First Nations. You could tell how successful Diane has been by the number of parents and kids that were representing the Sechelt Nation and by the support she has received from the Kindergarten teachers in Sechelt.

The best way that I heard this Program explained was by Ms. Connie Bailey when she said that Aboriginal HIPPY is a progressive Program intended to benefit a generation of successful Aboriginal children in their education and development. She also said that in this way we give empowerment to our children.

All my relations ☺



Diane Paul acknowledging Tami on behalf of the Home Visitors.



HIPPY Home Visitors - Jenn Point (Musqueam), Melinda Cassidy (Tswawwassen), Tami Harkey (Coordinator), Diane Paul (Sechelt), Robin Adams (Katzie), Zanetta Campbell (Musqueam), and Vanessa Gonzales (Burrard) missing from photo.



Pictured above-Group photo Tami, the Home Visitors and the HIPPY families who were to attend the year end celebration.



The host Leonard George and the Sechelt Drummers, Arthur Paul and Terry Alec



Terry Picard

Terry is a natural promoter of special occasions and he does it with flair with entertainment in mind to assist the sponsors in making events a special time to remember. He is a self-taught communications expert. As a youth he was taught to be an entertainer in the 'rock & roll' profession. He specialised in 'rock & roll' for a number of years, wrote his own songs and then moved on to become a facilitator for stage shows in places like the Cave Night Club in Vancouver and around the lower mainland.

As Terry grew in the business world he began writing about the events he worked on and wrote about the achievements of the events he witnessed. Organisers appreciated his writings.

There was plenty of interest to the public.

Wife, Greta Picard also helps her husband Terry by supporting him in his new vocation as a writer of First Nation special events; concerts, Design & Dress stage shows, Pow Wows, Native Auctions, Aboriginal Business Workshops and spiritual ceremonies. He loves to work for clients like the Native Education Centre and other adult Teaching facilities around the lower mainland.

If you would like to be on his list of clients please call him. For a marginal cost, Terry can assist you in your marketing and promotions.

Terry has been a spokesperson for different organisations and he likes to be a participant rather than an observer in creating an atmosphere for positive public awareness.

So, if you require assistance to promote your organisation or if you're interested in marketing your business and need someone to write articles or assist to promote your programs and special projects - call Terry at

1.604.929.7751