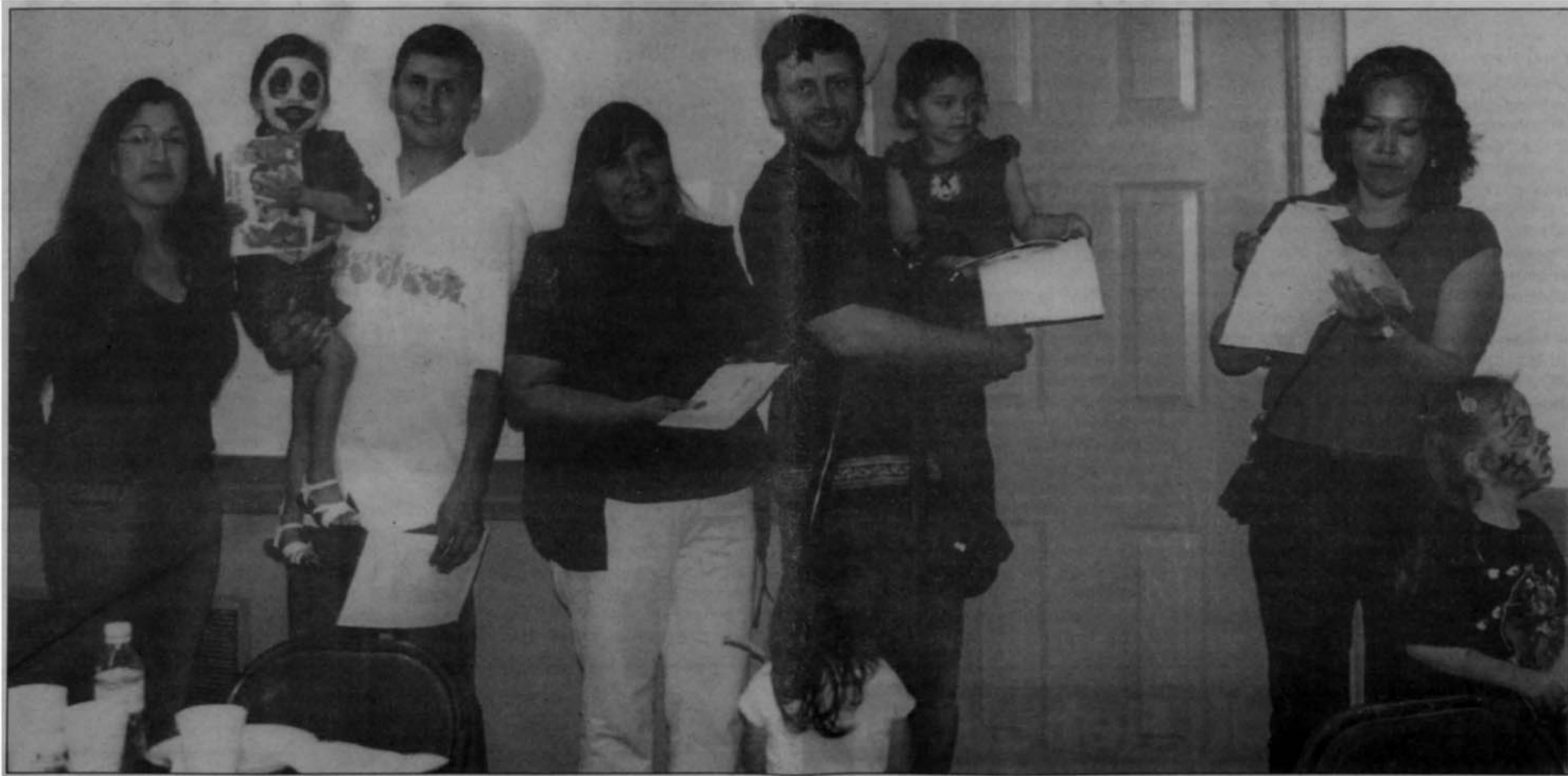


ABORIGINAL



An exciting new educational program for parents and children



Zanetta Campbell (far left) celebrates the HIPPY program with other parents.

This isn't a story about an aging First Nation rebel from the 1960s. Aboriginal HIPPY is about getting First Nation children prepared for schooling.

HIPPY stands for "Home Instruction for Parents of Pre-school Youngsters". It's an exciting program where para-professionals (specially trained home visitors) help parents give school readiness skills to 3, 4 and 5-year-old children.

Now for the first time, HIPPY is available to Musqueam families on the reserve under the guidance of Tammy Harkey, the Vancouver Aboriginal HIPPY coordinator.

Through weekly home visits by HIPPY paraprofessionals, usually parents themselves, the program promotes parents as every child's primary teacher. Parents learn activities they can do with their children and receive storybooks and activity packets to teach and review with their children during the week. Since the initial HIPPY was conducted in Vancouver, the program has demonstrated positive outcomes for children as well as enhancing the confidence of parents in their ability to support their child's academic progress.

"Initially, the concept of being your child's teacher can be daunting," says Zanetta Campbell, who took her child through HIPPY and later trained to become one of the Musqueam HIPPY home visitors. "But when I did it as a parent with my child, I didn't even know I was learning, it's so straight forward, easy and fun."

Zanetta noticed that the education training she took to become a home visitor combined with the actual visits to families brought side benefits. "We show parents how to interact with their children in a playful way to help expose the child to education. Then, after the parent plays with the child, the child often takes the fun learning experiences to aunts, uncles and grandparents. It can even spread to neighbours and others in the community. There seemed to be more interactions between people."

Zanetta works 20 hours per week visiting parents to initially set up home instruction and then returns once a week to answer questions and offer advice. Tammy Harkey trains Zanetta and other Musqueam home visitors.

"There is 150 hours of job training, so it's more than just a pre-school-readiness training program. They learn about parent enrichment specifically but along the way they get job skills too. Home visitors can step up to become the coordinator too, so there's room for career advancement in this job."

What can parents expect on their first visit from HIPPY? For starters, they get a HIPPY container including a binder, crayons, pencils and shapes. This stays in the home to be used by the parent and child. Then the home visitor will take the parent through some exercises they can play with their children.

"I usually have a coffee and chat with the parent at first to relax them," says Zanetta. "Then I'll role play with them, I'll pretend I'm the parent and the parent plays the child. This is how they learn to help their kids."

"It's very step-by-step," says Tammy.

"INITIALLY, THE CONCEPT OF BEING YOUR CHILD'S TEACHER CAN BE DAUNTING,"

"We show the parents what to do and what their child will be learning from them."

"And we can proactively intervene if special learning problems emerge. It's always better to deal with problems early on before they become bigger."

Last June, Tammy held a special event at the Katzie First Nation in Pitt Meadows, to celebrate successfully completing 15 weeks of Aboriginal HIPPY. She invited parents, homevisitors, and others. Over 100 people showed up to hear traditional drumming and singing. There was even a non-traditional clown.

"I have had so many wonderful experiences and met a lot of beautiful and unique people through the program," says Zanetta.

For more information about Aboriginal HIPPY, call Tammy Harkey at 604-266-9037.



A cake for the HIPPY party at the Katzie First Nation.

HIPPY Open House

October 23, 2003
At the 51st Avenue Hall

Do you want to help your child's education? Come, learn about HIPPY. There will be demonstrations and goods handed out. There will also be a door prize.