

Supporting Indigenous Languages in Early Learning and Child Care Programs



March 31st was National Indigenous Languages Day. BCACCS recognizes this day to honour the importance of Indigenous languages and to promote their revitalization and survival. It is a day that we pause and recognize Indigenous language loss, reclamation, and protection represent a part of our shared history.

Every day, in communities across the province, there is inspiring, creative work being done to ensure access to traditional languages for children and families.

Linda Mitchell, Head Start Manager at Kwantlen First Nation, has generously shared some of the journey she has been on to support language revitalization in her program. There are no longer many traditional language speakers in the community. When the program is unable to have a full-time language teacher, Linda finds creative ways to continue supporting learning traditional language.

Linda shared, “We try to weave traditional language into everything we do with the children. We play games that incorporate language learning and we have guest language speakers visit the children.”



Children learn best when they are engaged and having fun. Linda has made a number of matching games that can be used to learn how to count. She also created several versions of Bingo, one with clothing and one with animals, that encourage the children to learn the language while they are playing.



Being in a location where there are multiple traditional languages (Hul'q'umi'num' / Halq'eméylem / həŋqəmiñəŋ) can be a challenge. With support from the IELCC Transformation Initiative funding, Linda created a book called Toti:ltQ'ép (Learning Together) that incorporated the traditional name of colours, numbers, and local animals like fish and birds from Halq'eméylem language, but was intentionally structured to be flexible.

“I wanted to create a book that supports anyone to read and allows the reader to speak their own words depending on which language they speak,” explained Linda.

You can create a book or make your own matching and Bingo games too! How do you weave traditional language into your program? Share your innovations and creativity. Send an email to communications@acc-society.bc.ca and we'll share your story next month to help inspire other programs.

Kwantlen was able to accomplish some of this important work due to funding provided by the Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care Transformation Initiative. If you would like to find out more about accessing this funding contact lisa@acc-society.bc.ca.

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Photos courtesy of Linda Mitchell - Kwantlen