

# Gitanmaax Aboriginal Headstart Program

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## Parent Handbook



## **Philosophy**

We believe that:

**CHILDREN** are entitled to environments and opportunities that foster positive emotional, social, cognitive, and physical development that value our language and culture, and inclusion.

**FAMILIES** are entitled to be involved in their child's Headstart Program experience and they deserve assurance of quality care for their child. We believe in involving parents, extended family, elders and community members in order to provide a holistic program for our children.

**STAFF** is entitled to a work environment which recognizes and respects their experience, training, skills, and commitment to children. This will be demonstrated through respectful communication and policies.

Some of our goals at the Gitanmaax Aboriginal Headstart Program are to:

- Teach the children about cultural awareness and teach the language.
- Provide quality care and learning experiences for children.
- Model and encourage appropriate guiding and caring for children and their families.
- Work with community agencies, support workers, individuals and organizations that support the child and family.
- Increase awareness and utilization of community resources and services that are available to families, and
- To provide a safe environment for the children.

## **Hours of Operation**

The Gitanmaax Aboriginal Headstart Program hours are Monday through Thursday from 9 am to 3 pm and Friday from 9 am to 12 noon. The program is closed for: all statutory holidays, Christmas holidays and runs according to school schedule, with Pro-D days on a monthly basis for staff development. **Cut-off** time is at 9:30 am and this will be strictly adhered to so that programming is not disrupted.

## **Arrivals and Departures**

As the Headstart staff is responsible for the safety and security of the children from the time they are dropped off to the time they are picked up, **a parent must bring the child into the building**, immediately sign the child in, and let the staff know they have

arrived. Sign in and out sheets will be located by the cubbies (door entrance). Parents, as a courtesy, please call the Headstart Program by 9 am to let the staff know if parents are going to be late, have appointments, if the child will or will not be returning after the appointment or will be arriving at a later time. This is to ensure that the staff-to-child ratios are maintained. If there is no notice given to staff, and staff has been sent home due to the ratios, your child will not be allowed to attend that day.

**If an adult other than a parent or guardian will be picking up a child, the person must be on the list as a person authorized to remove the child from the facility. This section is on the registration form. If the person is not on the list, it is the responsibility of the parent to provide this written information to the Headstart staff prior to pick up time. Children will not be released without written permission from the parent.**

**Children will not be released to an adult under the influence of drugs or alcohol. The emergency contact person will be contacted or other persons authorized to remove the child from Headstart. If the staff encounters any conflict with the person under the influence of drugs or alcohol the proper authorities will be notified. The Ministry of Child and Family Services will be notified if staff cannot find an authorized person to pick up the child.**

**\*note\*** If your phone number has changed you have to inform the Headstart immediately as your child will not be allowed to attend the Headstart until a new number is given to staff.

If you are not going to make the 3 pm closing time, **call the Aboriginal Headstart Program and let staff know your situation.** If a child is not picked up within an hour of the Program closing and the alternate contact for the family cannot be reached, the Program will notify the Ministry of Child and Family Services. An intake worker will come and help the staff member resolve the problem.

### **The Aboriginal Headstart Program School Bus Service**

- Parents must sign a permission slip allowing your child to use the bus service. Please ensure that you have included a drawn map and your physical address in your application package.
- The Headstart Program offers a bus service of one pick up location and one drop off location per child. For safety purposes it is very important that your child have a consistent and regular bus stop. **Please do not request alternate pick up and drop off locations for your child as it can create confusion and disrupt the bus route.**
- Please ensure that someone is home to greet your child. Keep in mind that the bus may be earlier or later than the arranged time.
- The bus schedule and route will be determined by the Bus Driver and it may take a couple of weeks before the schedule is consistent. **Please make sure your child is dressed and ready for the bus. The bus does not wait for more**

**than two minutes per stop.** If your child is not ready you will need to arrange your child's transportation.

- Bus children are required to listen to the bus driver and/or bus monitor and stay in their seats for safety purposes. Children who do not listen to the bus driver or bus monitor and have difficulty following the bus rules may be suspended from the bus for up to 3 days at the driver or monitor's discretion.
- Bus service may be cancelled in extreme weather conditions, if the bus is in the shop for repairs or work, during bridge closures, or driver unavailability.
- Please keep in mind that this is a service for your child and if you have concerns or questions to direct these to the Headstart teacher or the Education Coordinator at the Gitanmaax Band Office.

### **What does your child need to bring?**

- Your child will need to bring a nutritionally and dentally sound snack each day including a drink. Children may bring snacks such as cheese and crackers, sandwiches, yogurt, fruit, pudding, vegetables and juice. Children are not permitted to bring pop, chips, candy, chocolate bars or gum.
- **Please inform the staff of any allergies and/or special conditions your child may have.**
- Your child will need to bring a spare set of clothes to keep at the Headstart Program in case of an accident, and/or spills. Please ensure that all of Your child's clothes are labeled.
- Indoor shoes or runners that are comfortable and skid proof with a soft or rubber sole. Velcro or other slip on shoes they can put on themselves are recommended.
- Outside shoes should also be comfortable and appropriate for running and playing. We strongly discourage footwear that makes outside playtime and walks difficult. High heel shoes, flip-flops, slip on shoes without ankle straps are not recommended.
- We recommend play and outdoor clothes at the Headstart Program as dress clothes may become damaged and may limit play and participation in activities.
- Please send your child dressed appropriately for the weather and changing seasons.

**Fall** – warm layers, outdoor clothes.

**Winter** – Winter coat, snow pants, winter boots, hat, scarf and mittens. Also please dress children in long sleeve shirts and warm clothes for indoors.

**Spring** – raincoat and rubber boots.

**Summer** – sunscreen, sun hat, extra water and drinks.

To avoid confusion please print your child's name on his/her belongings.

Your child should have a large backpack to carry snacks and belongings to and from school.

### **Toys or special personal belongings**

We discourage children from bringing their personal toys or belongings to the Gitanmaax Aboriginal Headstart Program. The special toys may be lost, damaged, or create arguments. Children may bring in personal belongings for the purpose of show and tell if they have parents and staff permission.

### **Absence**

Please call to inform staff if your child is not going to be attending Headstart for any reason. Please be advised that a space cannot be held for a child who will be absent for more than one month.

### **Immunization**

As immunizations are one of the most effective ways of preventing the spread of communicable diseases, we recommend that all families have their child's immunizations brought up to date prior to starting at the Gitanmaax Headstart Program. Please provide the updated immunization information as required.

### **Illness**

Please keep your child at home or make alternate arrangements for your child if they are ill. We are sensitive to the stress that illness may cause for families; we are not able to care for children who are ill.

If your child becomes ill during the day, we will attempt to contact you (phone numbers need to be updated at all times). If we cannot reach you we will try to reach your emergency contacts. We will keep your child comfortable until she/he is picked up. If the situation becomes urgent, we will follow the emergency procedures.

You will need to keep your child home if your child:

- Has a communicable disease
- Has a contagious infection, including pink eye
- Has a fever over 38 degrees Celsius
- Is vomiting or has diarrhea
- Has a runny nose or thick discharge from the nose
- Is not well enough to participate in all program activities including outdoor play.

Please notify the Headstart Program if your child has a communicable disease so that other families can be notified. Please follow the doctor's instructions on when your child is no longer infectious and can return to school

### **Administering Medication**

The Headstart Program staff **do not** administer medication to the students. Parents are to notify the staff in writing of any medications given to the child outside of the Headstart Program start hours. Written notification should include the name of the medication, the dosage, and the possible side effects. This information will help the staff recognize changes in your child's well-being.

### **Head Lice**

We request that if you know or suspect that your child has head lice, please do not send him/her to the Headstart program. If an active case of head lice is found, parents will be notified and required to pick their child up. The child's hair **must be treated and free of lice and nits prior to their return** to the Program. **\*note\* Policy states that a child can return to the Program after 2 days to ensure that the child is free of head lice.** A note from a nurse stating that the child's hair has been treated and is clean and free of any lice is recommended.

### **Medical Emergency**

If your child's injured or becomes ill while at the Gitanmaax Aboriginal Headstart Program, staff will quickly assess the situation and decide what action/attention is required. Outline below are three (3) procedures that may be followed:

If First Aid treatment is required, staff will:

- Provide first aid treatment
- Acknowledge the child's feelings
- Provide close supervision to ensure that the child does not require further first aid or medical attention, and
- Inform the family.

If medical attention is required, the staff will attend to the needs of the child while the other staff:

- Contact the family; contact the emergency contact if the family is not available
- Contact the hospital

- Access the child's file for medical information and permission
- Access transportation to take the child and family to the hospital
- Provide information to the doctor and family/contact person

**If emergency medical attention is required**, staff will attend to the child while other staff:

- Call and request an ambulance
- Contact family or emergency contact and arrange to meet at the hospital
- Access medical information
- Accompany child to the hospital
- Provide information to the doctor and the family
- Support the child and family

### **Short Notice Closure**

In the case of extreme weather conditions, power or heat failure, fire or evacuation, the Gitanmaax Aboriginal Headstart Program may be forced to close on short notice. The staff will care for the children until they have been picked up by family or emergency contacts.

### **Birthdays and Celebrations**

Parents are welcome to bring cake/cupcakes on birthdays and other special occasions. They are greeted by the children as special treats. Please let staff know in advance of your plans so that we can prepare.

### **Guidance and Discipline**

Gitanmaax Headstart staff members will not practice forms of discipline that may be physically or mentally harmful to the children enrolled in the Headstart Program. Staff will respect the child and his or her feelings in guidance and discipline situation.

- It is crucial for the caregiver to know about, understand, and respect the developing child and apply this knowledge and respect through appropriate experiences and interactions.
- All caregivers will use verbal comments, voice tone, face and body posture to help the child's learning and development of self-discipline.
- Problems are viewed as learning opportunities and children are encouraged to solve their own conflicts where possible.
- Positive behaviour will be reinforced and minor negative behaviour will be ignored.

- The use of “No” will be limited to emergency safety situations. Children will be given allowable choices and redirected to acceptable behaviours.
- Children will be removed from the situation when, owing to intense emotions such as anger, frustration, hurt or loss of control. A period of time to settle the child down with the caregiver’s direction may sometimes be necessary. The caregiver will use a firm, consistent approach while maintaining a positive attitude towards the child.

**Child Abuse**

Any kind of abuse on a child attending the Headstart Program will be documented in an incident report and immediately reported to the Education Coordinator and to the Ministry of Children and Families.

**Confidentiality Agreement**

Authorized visitors to the Gitanmaax Aboriginal Headstart Program are required to abide by the confidentiality practices and respect confidentiality of children, programs, projects and staff.

**Management Structure**

The Gitanmaax Headstart program is run by the Gitanmaax Band Office located in Old Hazelton. The facility is managed by the Teacher and acts as a resource for parents and staff. The on-site Teacher oversees the daily business of the Aboriginal Headstart facility. The Gitanmaax Aboriginal Headstart program falls under the Education Department of the Gitanmaax Band. Any concerns regarding the Gitanmaax Aboriginal Headstart Program need to be properly addressed with the on-site teacher first. If a parent is not adequately satisfied with the outcome he/she may bring the matter to the attention of the Education Coordinator.

**Contact Phone Numbers**

Headstart Teacher	Angie Olson	250-842-6009
Headstart Vice Principal	Wendy Davis	250-842-5297
Education Coordinator	Monica Simms	250-842-5297