

NEWS RELEASE
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Ministry of Education

StrongStart BC centre focuses on First Nations culture

KAMLOOPS - Education Minister George Abbott helped celebrate the official opening of the A.E. Perry StrongStart BC centre by reading to kids and their parents from a book of First Nations stories called Thanks to Animals and presenting a copy of the book to the centre.

A.E. Perry StrongStart BC, located at A.E. Perry Elementary school, was created with a First Nations focus which is reflected in its setting and activities. The centre has a carpet featuring First Nations motifs, in addition to First Nations dolls and a tepee for the children to play in. Activities have included moccasin-making, traditional First Nation snacks, as well as First Nations readings and songs.

While the centre has a strong First Nations focus, the current users come from many cultural backgrounds and bring aspects of their own culture to the centre to share with one another, promoting a diverse learning environment for children and parents.

StrongStart BC early learning programs provide free school-based early learning programs for adults and their children, aged from birth to five. A.E. Perry is one of ten new StrongStart BC programs this year, bringing the total number of funded programs throughout the province to 326. Last year more than half a million children visited StrongStart BC programs.

Quotes:

Minister of Education George Abbott -

"B.C. is such a culturally diverse province, and it's great to see a StrongStart BC centre like A.E. Perry embrace that diversity and recognizing the important role of First Nation families in their community."

"StrongStart BC centres are a key part of BC's Education Plan as they help parents to play a key role in the early development of their child so they can be a partner in their child's education and success."

Dr. Terry Lake, MLA for Kamloops-North Thompson -

"The StrongStart BC centre at A.E. Perry Elementary is a fantastic resource for the families in our growing community, and is a place where young children can explore, learn and develop during their early years. This centre is a welcome addition to the other great early learning programs in our district."

Kamloops/Thompson board of education chair Denise Harper -

"StrongStart BC centres provide great opportunities for families in our school district to come together, learn from one another and prepare our youngest learners for success. The A.E. Perry StrongStart

BC centre will cater to many of our First Nation families, and is a welcome addition to our school community."

Quick Facts:

- * Both children and adults can benefit from StrongStart BC centres and programs. Children have access to high-quality learning environments while the adults learn new ways to support learning.
- * The Kamloops/Thompson school district (SD 73) received \$52,000 for the A.E. Perry StrongStart BC program. This included \$20,000 to prepare the space, including renovations and the purchase of new equipment and learning materials and \$32,000 to fund the year's operating costs, including staff, professional development, supplies and healthy snacks.
- * Seven StrongStart BC programs are operating in the Kamloops/Thompson school district.
- * Since 2006-07, the Province has committed \$43 million for the expansion of StrongStart BC programs. Ten programs were added this year, including A.E. Perry. There are now 326 funded programs, which support 385 communities throughout the province.

Learn More:

- * For more information on StrongStart BC centres and programs, visit:
http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/early_learning/strongstart_bc/
- * To read BC's Education Plan and have your say on the future of education, visit:
<http://www.bcedplan.ca>

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