



## Letters from Our Members



As always, the First Nations Parents Club is very pleased to share the following submission from the Ucluelet Parents Club. We found it very inspirational, and look forward to sharing more submissions in the next newsletter.

Hello Everyone

I am a member of the Ucluelet First Nation Parents Club. Being involved with my community is something I really love, especially working towards helping our children. I first learned of the Parents Club from a workshop I attended in Nanaimo, and hearing about all that is available to our communities and how one can help made me jump at the chance to start one in my community. Since this is still fairly new to the community we are still in the process of getting things into place. One item I am writing about is that through our club we managed to have a dinner at the end of June 04 for our children. This was organized by our club and volunteers in the community. The dinner was to acknowledge our children for completing school year 2003-2004. Certificates were made and given to every child from preschool to high school. Following the dinner and presentations we had a family game night. I feel that everyone thoroughly enjoyed the night and they are telling me that they are looking forward to next year's event. Thank you to the Parents Club for making it possible, as from the parents' club newsletter we have learned ideas that make us all aware of how our clubs can help our children advance and achieve goals in life.

*Susan Mundy, Ucluelet First Nation Parents Club*

### Peanut Butter Balls make a quick and tasty snack

1 cup peanut butter      1/2 cup honey  
1/4 cup toasted wheat germ      1 cup crisped rice cereal

Combine peanut butter, honey, toasted wheat germ, and crisped rice cereal. Roll the mixture into small balls, about 1 inch in diameter. You can then roll the balls in anything else you might like, such as toasted coconut, graham cracker crumbs, finely chopped nuts, toasted wheat germ ...

Place the balls on waxed paper and let chill for about 2 hours. If they are covered in wheat germ, store the balls in the refrigerator. Otherwise, they will keep in either the refrigerator or in an airtight container at room temperature. They will keep well for up to one week.



#### Need more information?

Is this the first time you've heard about the First Nations Parents Club? If you would like more information about the initiative, please contact our office at (604) 925-6087. The First Nations Parents Club is sponsored by the First Nations Schools Association to recognize the tremendous dedication of parents who support their children's learning. All Club materials and activities are available for free. To start a Club in your community, just contact us and request a Parents Club start-up package. We'd love to hear from you!

## FIRST NATIONS PARENTS CLUB



## BULLETIN

NOVEMBER 2004, ISSUE 1, VOL 6

### Features

1  
Happy November!!

2  
Spending Time  
Together... In An  
Especially Meaningful  
Way

3  
Homework Help?  
Here's How

4  
Letters from our  
members

Recipe:  
Peanut Butter Balls



#### Contact Us!

First Nations Schools  
Association Parents Club  
#113 - 100 Park Royal South  
West Vancouver, BC  
V7T 1A2  
Toll Free: 1-877-422-3672



## Happy November!!

We hope that you have all made it through the first few weeks of school without too much stress. Isn't it hard to believe that the fall is moving along so quickly and winter is already on the way?

On the topic of time passing quickly ... we know that you all have very busy lives and it can be really hard to get everything done and still fit in quality time with your kids. For that reason, in this month's edition of the newsletter we've included an article focused on spending meaningful time as a family. That article includes some simple questions you can ask yourself to help monitor how you are spending your time. We've also included an article with some suggestions for making the most of your children's homework time.

We also thought you might enjoy some of the following tips for simplifying your life, which we've adapted from [www.mommytips.com](http://www.mommytips.com). We hope that some of the ideas will help you to eliminate a bit of stress from your lives.

- Set priorities! Make a list of your to-do's and put them in order of importance. This will help you stay focused and less stressed about trying to remember everything you have to do.
- Keep your prioritized to-do list and a calendar handy. Take 5 minutes at the end of each evening to celebrate anything you got done, and to wake up the next morning with a plan for your day.
- Schedule family time. Including family time on your to-do list or calendar will remind you of its importance. Don't feel guilty during that time, as if you should be doing something else.
- Include the whole family in chore time. Make it fun by playing music, or drawing names to determine who does which tasks, or having a race to see who finishes first ...
- Don't stress about the house! It doesn't have to be perfect.
- Limit your kids' extracurricular activities. Allow them to pick a number of activities that fits into your family schedule, and make sure there is still time left for the family to have unstructured fun together.
- When cooking, double your recipes and freeze half for later. Try cooking and freezing things like browned ground beef or baked chicken in advance to reduce your kitchen time on busy weeknights.
- Turn off the TV! You will be amazed at how much more time you have once the TV is off.



Please let us know if any of those ideas help you, or share your suggestions for making life more manageable. We'd love to share your ideas in future newsletters.





## Spending Time Together... In An Especially Meaningful Way

We know how busy life can be. By the time you finish grocery shopping, making meals, straightening the house, and trying to get a few hours of sleep, there can be very limited time remaining! Recognizing all of the pressures on parents' time, in 2003 the Boys and Girls Clubs of America and Kidspace introduced a tool to help parents think about how much "meaningful time" they are spending with their children.

The tool, which can be found at [www.kidsday.net](http://www.kidsday.net), includes questions related to a number of topics that child experts have identified as critical to children's health and happiness. "Meaningful time" is defined as time that is important, enjoyable, and benefits a child's health and happiness, both emotionally and physically. In addition to the questionnaire, the web site also includes expert advice on ways to make the most of your time with children, ranging from books to read with children of all ages, to suggestions for communicating with young people in ways that will build their self-esteem.

Here is a sample of the questions highlighted at [www.kidsday.net](http://www.kidsday.net). Remember that the questions are not intended to create guilt; they're only meant to help you think constructively about how you are using your time.

- On average, how much time do you spend each week participating in physical activities with your children, such as biking, shooting hoops, walking, jogging, or swimming?
- On average, how many times a week do you and your children eat a home-cooked meal?
- Has your family discussed a specific emergency plan in the event of a fire in your home?
- Has your family discussed a plan in the event that a stranger approaches your children or tries to abduct them?
- Many parents have a very busy schedule. Regardless of how much you would **like** to be able to participate, on average, how



often do you **actually** attend your children's school activities, which may include going to plays, sporting events, and/or parent-teacher conferences? All the time? Often? Sometimes? Rarely? Almost never?

- On average, how much time do you spend each week participating in your children's education, both inside and outside of school? (For example, reading to them, watching educational programming together, attending cultural events, helping them with homework, etc.)
- On average, how would you describe the amount of time you have to talk to your children about their problems, fears, and questions? Plenty of time? Some but not enough? Rarely enough? Almost never enough?
- Think about your children, including their physical activity, nutrition, emotional security, and learning both in and outside of school. On a scale from one to ten (with "1" meaning not at all and "10" meaning extremely) how healthy and happy do you think your children are?

Check out the Kidsday web site for even more ideas. You can also compare your answers to the national average answers (it is an American site, but the results are still interesting).

Also, talking about the questions with other members of your First Nations Parents Club might start some interesting conversations. It would be great for your club to share your ideas for making family time a priority in spite of your busy, busy lives.



## Homework Help? Here's How!

Children learn as much out of school as they do when they are in the classroom. They learn things at home and in their community, and the things that parents do can have a huge effect on children's success.

For example, the interest that parents show in their children's education sends a very strong message. Asking questions and monitoring your children's progress tells them that you think education is important. Encouraging your children to complete their homework also says that you believe that they can succeed in school and reach their goals.

Homework may involve finishing or proof-reading an assignment, studying for a test or exam, organizing work, researching a new topic, or catching up on work that was missed.

Teachers assign homework for many reasons.

- It gives students extra practice so that they can master important skills.
- It allows them to apply the information they learned in class.
- At-home assignments can help students to expand their knowledge beyond what they learned in school by using the Internet, reference books, and encyclopedias to gather new information. That way, children can learn interesting things that they may not have time to explore at school.
- Homework teaches children how to work independently.

In fact, research shows that homework helps students to learn good habits and attitudes that will help them throughout their lives, including self-discipline and responsibility. On average, students who do their homework do better in school.

Homework also gives parents an

opportunity to get involved in their children's education, and with that in mind, here are a few simple tips you can use to help your children make homework time more valuable.



- Help your children to set aside a special, quiet space with good lighting where they can always do their work.
- Limit TV watching.
- Keep basic supplies, like paper, pencils, pens, markers, rulers, etc., in a box in the homework area.
- Try to set a regular time for homework each day.
- Help your children use tools to keep their work organized, like school planners, calendars, and folders.
- When your children are assigned larger projects that require a few days or weeks to complete, help them to schedule their time and break the assignment into manageable pieces.
- Be a good role model. When your children see you learning, they will be more likely to follow your lead. So if your children are reading, you can read too. If your children are doing math, you can balance your checkbook.
- Reward progress in homework. If your children are working hard, celebrate that success with a special event, such as pizza for dinner, or a family walk.

When your children come home from school, try asking some of the following questions to keep them on track. Children are more likely to do their homework if they know that their parents care that it gets done!

- What homework were you assigned today?
- Do you understand what you have to do? Would it help to call a classmate for further information?
- When is your assignment due? Can I help you to make a schedule to make sure you get everything done in time?
- Do you need special resources (eg. a trip to the library or access to a computer) or any special supplies (eg. graph paper or posterboard)?

When helping your children, be as supportive as possible. Encourage your children by pointing out the things they are doing better. Emphasizing improvements will motivate your kids, and suggestions are most beneficial when they are offered in a positive way. And remember ... it is your children's homework, not yours. They have to do the work if they are to learn anything.

Ask your children to bring home their work after it has been marked. Review the teacher's comments with your kids so you both understand what was right and what was wrong.

Now is also a great time to get to know your children's teachers and find out about their homework expectations and to share any questions you might have about how you can help.

