

ELDERS AND GRANDPARENTS

# Words of Encouragement



The words of encouragement below are shared by Annie Kaye, a Gwich'in Elder from Fort McPherson in the Beaufort-Delta region.

*Pregnancy is an important time for expectant parents to take care of themselves, and be taken care of by family, friends, and community.*

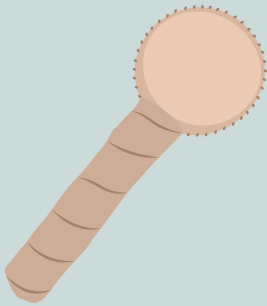
When I was pregnant, my mom and grandmother gave me the best of our traditional foods, important to our culture. I was given delicacies such as berries, caribou guts and roasted caribou head. Not all expectant mothers and families have traditional food. Attending community feasts, hunting and gathering programs, and cooking programs can be a way to access traditional foods.

Healthy eating and a healthy lifestyle, starting in pregnancy and beyond, give babies and children the best start.



Babies can hear before they are born so you can start to sing and talk to them during pregnancy and continuing to do this after they are born.

You will be helping your baby and child to learn when you do this with them. Not everyone can speak their traditional language. You may want to take a language class so you can start talking to your baby in your traditional language.



Young babies feel safe when they are held closely to their loved one.

I used a baby belt/sling or a shawl to hold my babies close to me. Providing babies and young children with outdoor time and activities helps them to learn and sleep well. Using a traditional baby swing helps to rock a baby to sleep. Some people like to sing their babies to sleep. Our mothers often used to sing to us when they were cooking, sewing and at bedtime.

When I was raising my sons and daughters, I adopted a baby born within two months of my youngest baby. "It was like having twins!". I have also helped to raise grandchildren, including three which I custom adopted. Being out on the land as a child and doing land-based activities with my family provided many opportunities to learn, grow and be together as a family.

New parents need support and help with their babies.

It is important for new parents to access available support from their families, communities, community programs and First Nation programs. We say it takes a community to raise a child and this how we come together to do this.

