

ELDERS AND GRANDPARENTS

# Words of Encouragement

Elizabeth Hardisty

Elizabeth Hardisty is a mother, grandmother, and great grandmother living in Fort Simpson within the Dehcho Region.

Babies, and children of any age, may be birthed or adopted. My family was grown through both options, and all my babies and children were loved and supported. Custom adoption is another way for families and babies to receive care.

I allowed my younger children, and then my grandchildren, to play outside in the bush and in nature. They were watched over and kept safe while they used tools, explored, and tried new things. During this play, they built play forts and tree houses. This type of play built the foundation for the children to build their homes and families in the future. We also had intergenerational family activities, including when my husband and I went out on the land with all our children, their aunts and uncles, and my parents for spring hunts which lasted a couple of months.

*It's Important to provide a sense of safety and security to babies and children. They need to be protected from danger, harm and hurt.*

We lived out of town, and I would drive my youngest child and my grandchild to school. This was a time where we noticed and talked about the things happening in nature around us.



We talked about seasonal changes, like migration of birds, changes in colours of the land and trees around us and anything else we appreciated in nature. This can be done with babies of any age and in any of our languages.

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Some of the ways to do this are for parents to live a healthy lifestyle and include their children in as many daily activities as possible while providing their babies and children with experiences and opportunities.

**Community celebrations, events and family gatherings can provide a sense of identity and belonging for babies, children and families**

Babies and children notice when their parents and caregivers are gone and may become upset. Family and friends can help parents watch over their children, so they are kept safe and feel included. They are a gift to us, a strong faith and belief that they are given to us to raise, helped guide me in raising my children.

Canada Day and National Indigenous People Day are examples of opportunities where community comes together to celebrate. During these celebrations and family gatherings, we often eat our healthy food and wear our traditional clothing. Food without chemicals, such as berries and breastmilk, if it's possible to breastfeed, keep our babies and children healthy and strong. Our traditional clothing, like wrap arounds and fur mitts keep our children warm while allowing them to be outside and provide movement activities for them. Eating healthy, being active and having support is important with babies and children to experience, and this includes during pregnancy also.

**We need to support those who are pregnant and have a new baby. Family and freinds also help to love and support the babies and children.**

