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Have You Heard?

Research shows that putting feelings into words produces therapeutic effects on the brain. When children (or adults) name their feelings, they increase activity in the brain's prefrontal cortex, an area responsible for "executive functions" such as self-control, focus, and discipline. This in turn produces less activity in the amygdala, the part of the brain involved in emotional reaction. When children learn to label their emotions in SOE, they are literally changing their brains. Levels of cortisol (the stress hormone) decrease. They become calmer and more competent in dealing with

News From a Tiny Seed

Seeds of Empathy spreading in Seattle

Tiny seeds sometimes travel far... even bridging national borders! That's certainly true this year with Seeds of Empathy (SOE), which has just celebrated its first international launch in Seattle, Washington. This year, SOE is reaching 100 children in the Seattle area, funded generously by The John and Nancy Sabol Foundation. Meanwhile SOE's "older sibling," Roots of Empathy (ROE), which has been running in greater Seattle since 2007, has already reached 1,700 children in three years.

Faces of Tomorrow available for purchase



A popular board book created by SOE Creator Mary Gordon for parents, babies, and preschool children, is now available for sale from the SOE website. The 20-page *Faces of Tomorrow* book contains beautiful full-colour portraits of babies from diverse backgrounds, accompanied by text in five languages (English, French, Spanish, Punjabi, and Chinese). "The words in the book are for parents - they are words of encouragement and admiration," says Gordon. "The love they share with their children makes it possible for children to have happy and productive lives. The photographs are for babies and little children, who love to look at faces. Together, the words and pictures strengthen the emotional bond between parent and child."

Consider *Faces of Tomorrow* if you are looking for a meaningful gift for a new parent. All proceeds from the sale of this book are reinvested in the Seeds of Empathy program.

Mary Gordon at Langley early years conference

Mary Gordon was the keynote speaker at a half-day early years event in Langley, British Columbia, recently. The event, called Seeds of Success, was presented by the Langley Community Services Society and held on January 18, 2010. Gordon inspired the audience of early years educators, speaking passionately about the importance of empathy-focused programs for children and her work creating the SOE program.

their feelings. Ultimately, this benefits their happiness and physical and mental wellbeing.

Why is our newsletter called *Lavender Blanket*?

In Seeds of Empathy Centres, children gather around a lavender blanket where the loving relationship between a parent and baby is the lever for learning. The blanket is where learning and sharing takes place - and we want this newsletter to be a place for learning and sharing too! If you have comments about the newsletter at any time, please [email us](#).

Thank you holiday donors!

Thanks to all of our very generous donors for making SOE's first holiday e-fundraising campaign a success. The December 2009 "Gift of Empathy" campaign raised critical funds that are helping to bring SOE to thousands of children. Consider SOE this year if you are looking to give or request a meaningful gift for a wedding registry, birthday, baby shower, or for any occasion. You can [make a one-time or monthly donation](#) through CanadaHelps, a charity helping charities.

Sharing Circle

Centre profile: Seabird Island



Staff and children at Seabird Island

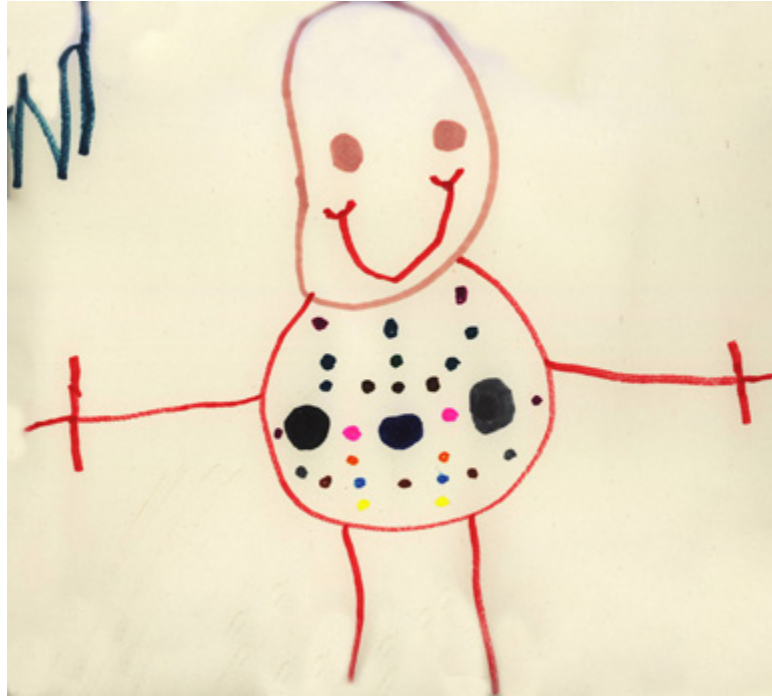
"So long Baby Aidan and see you soon!" sing twenty children in Halq'emeylem. The children, who are receiving SOE at their local childcare centre, are members of the Seabird Island First Nation, a community of 700 in the Fraser Valley region of southwestern British Columbia.

At Seabird Island Preschool/Head Start, traditional teachings are strong. As with many Aboriginal peoples, this community does not say "goodbye" but rather "see you" or "so long." And so Seabird Island has altered the usual SOE "Goodbye" song to align with their cultural values. There are many other ways early childhood educators at Seabird Island are weaving culture and traditional language into the SOE program. For example, the Culture and Language teacher often stops by to participate in SOE literacy circles and family visits.

Recently, this childcare centre was identified as one of six leading models of early childhood development programming in

Canada by the national Aboriginal Head Start program - and SOE was showcased among its best practices. The centre is in its fourth year of offering SOE and was one of the first communities in the province to pilot it in 2005. Today the Seabird Island program has come full circle, since the volunteer SOE baby from that first year is now in preschool and attending this year's program. It's all part of an exciting, beautifully expanding circle of interconnection between the program and the community.

Feeling happy



"He's feeling happy. He has rainbows in his heart."
- Anson, Normandeau Day Care, Red Deer, Alberta

Anson is connecting print to meaning, showing he is at the early stage of letter recognition and representation. He has represented the letter N, which is the main consonant in his name. Anson has succinctly captured in colour and words his inner sense of happiness by locating "rainbows in his heart."

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