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What to tell parents when reading

Are You Hungry?

About *Are You Hungry?*

The Babies, Books and Bonding team is proud to release *Are You Hungry?* a children's book featuring the story of a northern Saskatchewan family as they hunt, gather, prepare and share a healthy meal. Written, illustrated and translated by northerners, this book was published by Northern Healthy Communities Partnership in direct response to requests from northern Saskatchewan parents for books in local Aboriginal languages to be included in the Babies, Books and Bonding program.

Children begin learning language from a very young age, even before they are born. When children grow up in homes filled with language, and when they are engaged in conversation, storytelling, reading and songs, even before they can speak, it helps them learn to talk and learn to read. Reading links to academic achievement, employment, and health status over the lifetime.

As well, cultural continuity, including traditional language knowledge, may be a protective factor for the health and well-being of Indigenous people, including protecting against suicide and diabetes. The publication of *Are You Hungry?* aims to encourage not only language exposure and literacy development, but also promote the use and preservation of the northern Saskatchewan's Indigenous languages and cultural traditions.

Key Messages for Talking with Parents

- Reading, talking and signing to your baby is a simple and important way to help your baby learn to speak and to help build a strong bond between you and your baby.
- Hearing many different words, in English and in other languages, can help your baby grow into a good reader, a strong student and a healthy successful adult.
- Learning your traditional language can help with literacy later in life and can help strengthen cultural ties that can protect children as they grow and into adolescence and adulthood. If you are a fluent Cree, Dene or Michif speaker, it is good to speak to your child in your language.



- *Are you Hungry?* Was published in Cree, Dene and Michif versions at the request of parents like yourselves and to support Aboriginal language use in northern Saskatchewan. You can choose the version best suited to your family.
- One word in each sentence is highlighted in Cree, Dene or Michif and in English. This way, parents can still teach children the Cree, Dene or Michif words from the book even if they are not fluent.
- Here is a simple strategy you can use to help your baby learn more words in Cree, Dene, Michif, English or any language. The more words your baby learns before school, the better prepared they will be to success when they get there.

Simple Vocabulary Building Technique

Explain and demonstrate this simple technique for building vocabulary to parents. Encourage them to use this technique when reading *Are You Hungry?* or any other book to their baby.

1. Read the sentence in English
2. Point to the Cree, Dene or Michif word on the page, say the word by stressing it. You can stress a word by pausing before you say the word or saying it a bit louder than the rest of the sentence. You could also just say the word on its own.

For example: Point to the Cree, Dene or Michif word for “pick”. Say the word and stress it.

3. Demonstrate what the word means. The parent can do this by pointing to the part of the picture that shows the word or by gesturing what the word means or using real life prompts to show the meaning.

For example: Point to the illustration where someone is picking something. Make a picking gesture with your hands.

4. Say the Cree, Dene or Michif word again.
5. Explain what the word means in English.

For example: “That means pick. See, she’s picking the mushrooms”

6. Repeat the word both in English and in Cree, Dene or Michif.
7. Encourage parents to use the word later in conversation with their child.

Notes: If a parent is able to read the Cree, Dene, or Michif, they can read the sentences in that language instead of in English. If the child is fluent in Cree, Dene or Michif then there is no need to explain the word in English. It would still be helpful to point out the word on the page to raise print awareness. This technique can also be used with other words and books to further grow a child’s vocabulary,

