

Caring for our Children newsletter

BC Aboriginal
Child Care Society

www.acc-society.bc.ca

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"The relationships we build today will help nurture the well-being and future of our children," Mary Teegee, BCACCS Board President.

"Majagalee' (they are our flowers)"¹

By Graham Giles, Researcher & Policy Analyst, BCACCS

Documentation Research

Research and policy work at BCACCS this year began in a beautiful way. Many of the documentation interviews we did last year began to come together in important 'conversations' that we are beginning to share online: On healing and Indigenous ELCC, on language teaching and the importance of language revitalization, on the debates around cultural revitalization and school readiness for Indigenous children and their families, and on BCACCS 20th anniversary. Please look for these and more on the BCACCS website.

Our approach to documentation is to stimulate something, to change conversations, to set things in motion. Following Margaret Kovach, conversation is an Indigenous research methodology we take seriously at BCACCS.² If childhood—families and children—is a gathering, we should document this in all its diverse strengths to search in sharing together for new ways forward.

Please be aware that, in addition to undertaking a variety of other kinds of research,³ we continue to document important conversations about 'what matters' in Indigenous ELCC. If you, and/or your community and/or centre would like to co-develop some documentation with us, we will be eager to work with you to share challenges and celebrate strengths and accomplishments.

Policy Developments

As the year unfolded, a broad preoccupation soon moved over the horizon of BCACCS research and policy planning and work. Following a resolution of the Assembly of First Nation (AFN) Chiefs in July of 2016, the AFN convened an 'experts working group'

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** Thank you to Eagle's Nest AHS Pre-school for the children's photos used in the "Majagalee" article.*





* both a kind of emergent community development work, and capacity development for community self-governance, particularly as led by women. Engagement ‘works’ creatively and constructively when communities told us how it has to be, rather than tried first to fit their demands and aspirations into what already is.

to conduct regional engagement for the purpose of developing a national Indigenous early learning and child care framework. BCACCS was then mandated by the First Nations Leadership Council to lead regional engagement for this effort. You may have heard of it, other engagement processes were also ongoing through many organizations and communities. It was very good that specifically Indigenous ELCC was prominent in so many conversations this year, and BCACCS has been privileged to be a part of many of them.

We tried to do our best with what time was available. Initially, we were motivated by coming together with other regional partners, and then also by the federal government’s apparent willingness to do things differently: To engage in change that will see Indigenous people make decisions about the care and support of Indigenous children. In this, government struggles to move from a decision-making to a resourcing role (and they need a lot of ‘help’ to do that). Fortunately, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples⁴ is clear about Indigenous participation in decisions that affect Indigenous peoples, as has been the Truth and Reconciliation Commissions of Canada (which is why the TRC Calls to Action repeatedly refer to the UN Declaration as the “framework for reconciliation”⁵ at “all levels and in all sectors of society”⁶).

As we began the engagement process we devised in consultation with as many First Nations institutional partners we could ‘pre-engage’ with, our motivation shifted. The engagements took on a life of their own, carried by the energies and conviction of so many First Nations people—in early childhood development and care and otherwise—and organizations with enduring commitments to their children, families and communities. We were lifted up by this, honoured to be engaged in such heart-felt contributions, and also arrested in the profound responsibility to do them justice in our reporting and framework development work.

I remember in a community engagement in the North West hearing that “this is the most important thing we are doing now” as ELCC community engagement became apparent as

I also cannot forget feeling a searing humility at the Elders’ gathering as we shared our approach to framework engagement, when told that “cultural memory is coming alive as I am listening to you.” As in gratitude my own tears rose, Elders too cried at the memories of those who had taught and loved them.

We are grateful to Danielle Alphonse for helping lead that particular engagement, as we are Kathleen Jamieson in our community case studies engagements, Cheryl Brooks and Marlaena Mann in partners engagement, and Veronica Ghostkeeper Gerow in regional community engagements. Many have helped us along the way.

Nevertheless, we struggled to have the capacity to engage with as many as we believed we should. We also struggled to remain responsive to community priorities and needs, to not prescribe too much what engagement should look like. We worked hard throughout the six-month engagement process to not ‘overdetermine’ the framework itself. “What is it? What will it be? What will it do?” we often heard. “Please...you tell us,” we replied, “what should it do, and how?”

Leading Change for Indigenous Children, Families, Communities and Nations

This placement of community leadership at the forefront of transformative change can be difficult sometimes, as existing institutions struggle over budgets in a competitive environment of historical neglect and as governments hesitate and delay about the reality of Indigenous rights and title in social policy. Some days the status quo can look like a huge encircling wall none can glimpse over. Fortunately, First Nations leadership continues to reiterate the basic coordinate of the struggle for Indigenous self-determination. Engaging among bureaucracies about funding tends to be where they meet their stiffest tests.

In regional First Nations ELCC engagement we heard repeatedly that space must be made to reconsider First Nations childhood and its supports as widely as possible: In the context of governance transformations underway and to come, in the contexts of poverty and need and mainstream neglect, in the contexts of cultural practices reasserted and celebrated, in the contexts of existing wonderful work in First Nations ELCC despite so much difficulty, and in the interrelated contexts of holistic supports for children and families (to which silos, or “funding” as the Elders said, are a continuing colonialism).

The great push we felt as we tried to summarize and validate so much impassioned and determined advice, guidance and direction, was to the need to work together more, and better; the need to not continue to allow our divisions permit governments to take paths of least resistance where First Nations children and families are concerned, and so to delay newly possible and long-needed supports for their children, communities and cultures.

As we move forward in our policy work—and the research and engagement that informs it—toward the creation of a draft national ELCC framework (BCACCS is on the framework writing team), we see its success ahead of us in terms of how we can work together to lift each other up within this opportunity for change. Indigenous peoples have a right to (and governments the obligation to provide) the financial and technical support for the realization of self-determination (along with other UNDRIP rights). This support must come to existing programs and services where communities continue to want and need them, but also to promote capacities in and for communities to lead in charting the paths of the future for their own children and families. This mixture of capacity and authority will result in child care supports for communities in ways that make most sense to them, ways that they create via their own decisions about traditional obligations and contemporary opportunities in raising their children.

A policy framework that is facilitative and affirmative must oblige governments to change in ways Indigenous peoples determine, for so long as governments will continue to have the privilege to support First Nations children and families. It is time they begin to get it right. The IELCC framework is one step in that direction, and it will be successful so long as First Nations community members in these territories see in it a good way ahead for them and their children, and their children's children, and their children too.

September - FASD Awareness Month

September was Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) Prevention and Support month. Working together we can raise awareness about the risks of alcohol use during pregnancy. Alcohol use during pregnancy can cause fetal alcohol spectrum disorders, which are physical, behavioral, and intellectual disabilities that last a lifetime.

September is an opportunity for communities across Canada to share the resources, tools, and videos they have created to help support those who live with FASD, and parents of FASD children.

In Gratitude

With gratitude for the trust placed in us so far, and for the privilege of doing this work, we look forward to continue to devote our every effort to support First Nations children, families, communities and nations on your many journeys of healing and hope.

In this spirit I always return to the gift of children, and repeat in conclusion with our friends from the northwest: “Majag-alee’ (they are our flowers).”

The BCACCS research and policy workshop at the BCACCS conference in October will be an opportunity to consider together new directions in Indigenous-led research in Indigenous ELCC, along with the strengths and challenges of our existing efforts in research and policy development and advocacy.

Please join me to continue the conversation: graham@acc-society.bc.ca.



References

- ¹ I share this in respect and gratitude to those who participated in BCACCS regional community ELCC engagement in Terrace June 22, 2017. Your contributions are better honoured in the forthcoming regional engagement report of BCACCS to the AFN ELCC working group, and will be included with the forthcoming proposed national Indigenous early learning and child care framework.
- ² Kovach, M. (2010). Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts.
- ³ For more: <http://portal.acc-society.bc.ca/BCACCSResearch>
- ⁴ http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS_en.pdf
- ⁵ http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/File/2015/Findings/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf
- ⁶ TRC “Principles of reconciliation 1”: http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/File/2015/Findings/Principles_2015_05_31_web_o.pdf



Some links to resources:

- <http://www.cdc.gov/features/fasd-awareness-day/>
- <http://canfasd.ca/>
- http://www.acc-society.bc.ca/files_2/fetal-alcohol-spectrum-disorder.php

News from the Frontline

Diana Joseph, Singing Frog AHS Preschool, Senior Educator

Diana Joseph is a member of the Squamish Nation and enjoys participating in community classes and events when she can. She has volunteered at sporting events and child minded in the past for meetings. She enjoys spending time with her family and friends whenever she can, and enjoys soccer, cooking and movies.

Diana is the SR. Educator at Singing Frog Aboriginal Head Start. She completed her basic Early Childhood certification in 2008 and has been a licenced Early Childhood Educator and working in the field since 2009.

Q: How does your team collaborate to ensure that all the children at the preschool program are able to thrive?

Answer: *We are in constant communication with the families, we believe the families know the children best and we can learn a lot from them. The staff always shares their observations with each other and think of strategies to support all children.*

Q: Traditionally Aboriginal families encompassed parents, caregivers, Elders, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins and/or community members. Are urban preschool parents less likely to have these supports and does this create some challenges for them?

Answer: *I think we are privileged to have a lot of families have their relations in the program, they meet here and make plans after school, I've also seen a lot of friendships that have continued on after families have moved onto kindergarten. We have a lot of some past parents dropping off new students; it's a nice community here with Grandview families as well. Even though a lot of the families have moved far from their communities they have built strong relationships through the program.*

Q: You serve as a role model for your colleagues because of your dedication and ability when working with children who require extra support. What is it about working with these children that inspires you?



Diana with her sister and mother. Photo credit: Patrick Joseph

Answer: *I think seeing successes is always inspiring, meeting the goals we have with parents/guardians and specialists.*

Q: Do you have any advice for early childhood educators (ECE) who want to increase their skills in this area?

Answer: *My advice would be to keep an open mind; each child teaches me something new, communicate with staff to best support each other and the child and families.*

Q: As a student practicum supervisor and mentor what are the top three most important things you can share?

Answer: *I enjoy having practicum students because they bring in teachings from their schooling, are very helpful, and bring a positive energy to the classroom. Students always bring in new ideas and great activities for our children and I really appreciate that.*

Q: As an ECE what do you find most challenging about documentation?

Answer: *I think deciding as a team how we want to showcase the children's learning experiences here at Singing Frog. We have improved a lot; we have had a lot of discussions, and as a team we decide on how we would like to present it to families.*

Q: Has your practice and understanding of documentation had any benefits that you would like to share?

Answer: *I think the benefits of documentation for our classes is that it can be a good visual for families to see their children participating in writing, physical activity, cultural teachings and how much they have grown here at Singing Frog.*

Q: What role does traditional language play for you as an early childhood educator?

Answer: *We decided to use the language of the territories mainly, Squamish and Hul'q'umi'num but we have recordings of Nlaka'pumux, Dalkelh, and Haisla we start with colors, body parts and animals. We rely on each other because different teachers have shown strength in different languages and ask families for any language they can share at the beginning of the year. It's great to see the children catch on quickly and repeat the language to their families.*

Q: What challenges have you had to overcome at the preschool program?

Answer: *Teaching culture and language to so many different nations! It's coming together and staff have many ideas to bring culture to the classroom.*

Q: Why do you think what you're doing at the program is important?

Answer: *I think what I'm doing at the program is important because I really enjoy working with different families and hav-*

ing a positive school experience.

Q: What is the best part about being a senior educator at your preschool program?

Answer: *The best part for me is working on the floor with the teachers, learning how to become a leader and work as a teammate, working with different specialists and taking on different tasks with our family worker and Coordinator. I have learned and continuing learning by different situations and I feel has made me more of an understanding person.*

Q: What kind of strengths do you see from the children and families in your preschool program?

Answer: *I love seeing the confidence the children have in themselves and the love they have for their families. I've seen families step out of their comfort zone and make new friends and help in the classroom on field trips and the P.E.A.C.*

Q: Do you have a short story you would like to share about a child or family you work with that inspires you?

Answer: *I have a lot of stories but one recently I think is great is our seeds of empathy baby now in enrolled in our class. Seeds of Empathy is a program we practise in the classroom and we bring a baby in the classroom for 9 months to teach*

the children about empathy. Her first day of circle she was moving all around the room and I looked at her mom and said "I wonder if she remembers this room?" and she said "probably! She thought she was never going to start here". It will be interesting to see her participate in the class.

Q: What advice would you give to ECEs or program managers who wish to follow in your footsteps?

Answer: *I think to be a successful ECE teacher or program manager is to be able to partner with families and staff to best support the child.*



Photo credit: Singing Frog AHS Preschool

National Child Day

Show support; wear a royal blue ribbon on November 20th!



Photo credit: Eagle's Nest AHS Preschool

Each year in Canada and around the world, people celebrate National Child Day.

This is the day when people across the country take time each year to celebrate Canada's most precious resource – our children. It's a day to remember that children need love and respect to grow

to their full potential. It's a day to marvel at their uniqueness and all they have to offer. It's a day to celebrate the family and think about how adults affect the development of children close to them. National Child Day was proclaimed by the Government of Canada on March 19th, 1993 to commemorate two historic events for children: the adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of the Child in 1959, and the UN adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1989.

Canada's future depends on the healthy development of our children. The blue ribbon shows that you think Canada's children deserve prime consideration in all economic, social and political decisions, policies, programs and expenditures.

UNICEF: Little Book of Children's Rights and Responsibilities: https://www.unicef.org/rightsite/files/little_book_rights.pdf

Take the BCACCS Stakeholder Survey

Your feedback is important!

The BC Aboriginal Child Care Society (BCACCS) is committed to reflective and engaged practice to ensure the work we do improves the lives of Aboriginal children, families and communities, however; we cannot achieve this without your support and guidance.

That means we are asking you about the impact of our work. As a part of this data collection, we are conducting the 2017 BCACCS Stakeholder Survey. It should take about 10 minutes to complete.

Survey opens September 25 at 9:00am. The survey closes at 5:00 pm on October 16, 2017.

We thank you for your time and support – BCACCS Staff and Board of Directors

Please click the link below to go directly to the survey.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/563Y6JT>

Helping you find Professional Development Opportunities

By guest writer Kathreen Riel, Project Manager and Researcher, EYPD Project

“Professional isolation is an ongoing challenge for many who work in the early years sector. The EYPD portal aims to foster more connections and support for those who seek and coordinate training opportunities.”

Kathreen Riel,

Project Manager and Researcher, Early Years Professional Development Project

Looking for professional development? EYPD at earlyyearsbc.ca promotes professional development opportunities for those working in the early years sector. Upcoming training events are posted by organizers from over 75 agencies throughout British Columbia. These events include workshops, courses, conferences, and seminars that can be easily found by searching by keyword or title or by exploring the interactive map that illustrates training opportunities by location.

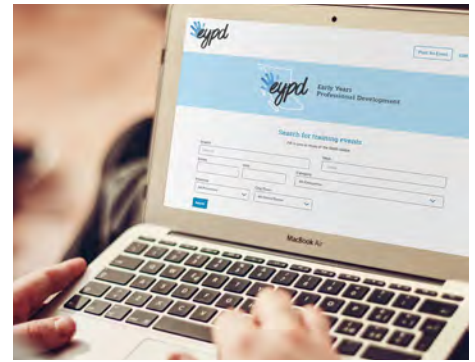
Research suggests that there is no shortage of learning opportunities for early sector professionals in B.C. This was evident in an environmental scan conducted by BCcampus, an agency that works on behalf of the Ministry of Advanced Education. The environmental scan, Professional Learning in The Early Years, identified 967 training events throughout British Columbia available in one year (Riel, 2015). Despite the numerous professional development opportunities available throughout the province, there has been no centralized process or tool that allows professionals to promote or view training opportunities across all early years sector systems. Without a centralized option to search

for current training events, many people working in the early years sector primarily rely on email or personal connections to explore potential learning opportunities. For some people this is a limiting and time-consuming search process.

In response to the needs identified in the environmental scan, The Provincial Office for The Early Years funded BCcampus to host, develop and evaluate an early years professional development (EYPD) web portal for three years in order to consolidate and promote professional development opportunities across all service systems in the early years sector of B.C. As part of this project, key questions are being explored to inform the design of the EYPD portal:

1. What factors will determine success for this project?
2. How do we ensure posted training events reflect a high standard of quality?
3. How do we engage a broad spectrum of early years professionals to use the EYPD portal particularly those in remote, rural and Indigenous communities?

Since the launch of the EYPD portal in January 2017, 486 training events have been posted and 5,753 people have visited the site. There are still more features to add to the EYPD portal and future development of its functions will rely on feedback from those working in the early years sector as well as an



advisory group made up of members representing regional, provincial and federal agencies. Future designs and features will aim to increase awareness of and access to early years professional learning opportunities throughout the province. In following a collaborative design process, further changes and improvements to the EYPD portal rely on your feedback and input. To find out more visit earlyyearsbc.ca and send your impressions and suggestions to early-years@bccampus.ca.

“You have to Google what you are looking for or hope that you are on someone’s email list that is going to send you the information. Once you’re in the role for a while you’re in the email list.”

Early Years Coordinator

Kathreen Riel, Project Manager and Researcher with the EYPD Project, will be offering a workshop at the upcoming BCACCS Conference. The workshop, *Learning Doesn't Need To Be A Treasure Hunt* is scheduled for 11:00 am on Sunday, October 29.

During this session, participants will be able to provide feedback and also discover quick tips to find professional development opportunities that meet their unique needs and interests.

REGISTER NOW

Last Chance for Early Bird

Early bird closes September 22! If you haven't already registered for the BCACCS 2017 Conference don't forget to sign up before registration closes on October 13, 2017.

This year's theme, *It Takes a Village: Coming together for children and families* reminds us of how far we've come and helps us to focus on professional development that translates our culturally rich traditions into effective early childhood development (ECD) programs and services.

When: October 27 - 28, 2017.

Where: Sheraton Vancouver Airport Hotel (7551 Westminster Highway), Richmond, BC.

You can register online at <http://acc-societybc.com/code/> or, if you do not have access to the internet please contact the BCACCS office 604.913.9128.

Special note: If you arrive on Thursday, October 26 join us for onsite registration and attend the wellness event between (5:00 – 8:00 pm). Catch up with friends, get your delegate package, sign in for conference, treat yourself to a massage, and cleanse your spirit with a brushing off.

Visit our website for more details. http://www.acc-society.bc.ca/files_2/annual-conference.php.

Breaking news:

We have confirmed our opening speaker on Saturday, October 28 will be Dr. Margo Greenwood.

You might recognize the name as the 2009 Perry Shawana Award Recipient and a recent BCACCS board member.

Dr. Margo Greenwood is the Academic Lead at the National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health (NCCA) in Prince George. She is an Indigenous scholar of Cree ancestry with more than 20 years' experience in the field of early childhood education. She is sure to inspire and motivate delegates.



Thanks to our sponsors: First Nations Health Authority, Bank of Montreal, Native Northwest, Provincial Health Services Authority, National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health, First Nations Technology Council, and Initial Print.

Namwayut (We Are All One) Walk With Us

Join the 2017 Walk for Reconciliation in Vancouver! This is a positive movement to build better relationships among Indigenous peoples and all Canadians. This bold vision calls on everyone: all ages, all backgrounds, all cultures and all faiths to come together as communities and as individuals. The act of walking and sharing our stories joins us in a commitment to create a new way forward for reconciliation.

How we build relationships today affects our next generations. The residential school impact is inter-generational with children born into this generation still dealing with the consequences of a legacy of abuse.

Walk on September 24, 2017! www.reconciliationcanada.ca

BCACCS 2016 Annual Report

Statistical Summary of Program Activities 2016-17

- 23,248 Hits received by the BCACCS website
- 1,499 Facebook Likes
- 267 Delegates attended the 19th Annual BCACCS Training Conference
- 4 Caring for Our Children newsletters published
- 53 E-newsletters circulated weekly to more than 350 contacts
- 36 Special e-bulletins published
- 1,617 Books, periodicals and videos in the BCACCS library
- 6,395 Users that accessed the BCACCS library and ECE curriculum boxes
- 31 Communities visited by BCACCS Child Care Advisors
- 132 Participants in the Moe the Mouse Theme Box Workshops
- 4,949 BCACCS staff telephone and email consults

The BCACCS 2016-17 Annual Report will be posted on our website in the fall of 2017.

Representation of our Stakeholders across BC from 2016 conference training: 18.81% Coastal 17.82% Island 28.71% Northern 23.76% Interior 10.89% Fraser 0.01% Out of province

UPCOMING EVENTS

Exploring the Early Years Caregiver's Conference

September 30, 2017

Prestige Hudson Bay Lodge, Smithers, BC

A focus on emotional, language and science workshop sessions for caregivers.

Connecting the Pieces: Pre-K and K Conference

October 20, 2017

Brookwood Secondary School, Langley, BC

An annual early childhood educators' and kindergarten teachers' conference! This year's catalog consists of over fifty workshops covering topics from outdoor education to reconciliation in the early years.

The Reflect & Recharge ECE Retreat

October 21 – 22, 2017

The Cammidge House, Tsawwassen, BC

A two day weekend gathering for professionals who work in the field of Early Childhood Education. This retreat, by ECE Workshops, will bring together up to 40 educators and related professionals who work in a variety of roles to support children and families.

Exploration and Discovery

October 21, 2017

Chatelech Secondary, Sunshine Coast, BC

This is a one-day training event for early childhood professionals, parents and community members. Join a day of workshops and a featured keynote presentation with Dr. Wendy Hall.



It Takes a Village: Coming together for children and families

Sheraton Vancouver Airport Hotel, Richmond, BC

October 27 – 29, 2017

The 20th BCACCS Annual Provincial Training Conference. At BCACCS, a primary focus of our training and professional development events is to translate our culturally rich traditions into effective early childhood education and care (ECEC) programs and services. We believe that community involvement, leadership, and support are central to the healthy, holistic development of Aboriginal children.

We seek to promote the capacity of ECE professionals to design and deliver programs and services that are immersed in our cultures and communities. Priority will be given to workshop proposals that reflect these values and relate to our conference theme.

This conference is also an opportunity to build effective relationships, work more collectively, and lift each other up as we create vibrant and responsive learning environments and resources that meet the needs of young Indigenous children and their families. By working together and learning from each other, we will be better prepared to respond to the needs, hopes and dreams of the communities we are privileged to work in and support. Workshops strive to encourage respectful connection, collaboration, and communication in our practice; honouring traditional ways of educating children; at the same time as being innovative in order to design quality, culturally relevant experiences and rich, nurturing environments for young children.

BC Aboriginal Child Care Society

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Caring for Our Children is published by the BC Aboriginal Child Care Society (BCACCS). It is distributed to BCACCS members, on and off reserve child care centres, Head Start programs, Bands and Tribal Councils in BC and individuals interested in early childhood education and care from a First Nations perspective.

Readers are invited to reprint articles provided proper credit is given. We welcome the submission of articles, book reviews, artwork, photos, letters and poetry.

We acknowledge current funding support from The BC Ministry of Children and Family Development. BCACCS is a proud affiliate of the Canadian Child Care Federation (CCCF). BCACCS membership also means membership with the CCCF, including automatic subscription to the CCCF *Interaction* magazine.

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We Value Children

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CANADIAN
CHILD CARE
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CANADIENNE DES
SERVICES DE GARDE
À L'ENFANCE

Nos enfants : notre richesse