

**ABORIGINAL EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIC PLANNING
SESSION—EDUCATION AND TRAINING NEEDS**

April 27/28, 2004

UBC House of Learning, Vancouver, BC

Session Notes

Theme: Filling the need for Aboriginal ECD professionals: the challenges and opportunities facing governments, educational institutions, Aboriginal communities and Aboriginal learners.

Host: The Aboriginal Early Childhood Development Roundtable

Workshop Facilitator: Chris Gay

Opening Prayer: Elder Rose Point, Musqueam First Nation

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Plenary Presentations

Current Programs: Successes and Challenges

Panelists:

- Verna Billy-Minnabarriet, Dean of Academics and Deborah Canada, Nicola Valley Institute of Technology.
- Kathleen Reynolds, Native Education Centre, Vancouver.
- Karen Hazelman, Sundance Daycare, Vancouver.
- Tammy Harkey, Aboriginal HIPPY Program.
- Dr. Jessica Ball and Onowa McIvor, University of Victoria, First Nation Partnership Program.
- Joan Turecki, Program Head, ECE, Northwest Community College.
- Kathy Handley, ECE Department Head and Bev Wice, Instructor, Community Based Programs, Northern Lights College.
- Margaret Patten, ECE Instructor, University College of the Cariboo
- Bonnie LaBounty, Honey Pot Daycare, Merrit.
- Lynn Trainor, ECE Instructor, Malaspina University College.
- Karen Collins, Education Coordinator, Cowichan Tribes.
- D'Anne Epp, University College of Fraser Valley.
- Candace Robothom, Seabird Island Band.

Format: Each panelist gave a brief overview of the major challenges and successes of their particular ECD programs from their unique perspectives. This was followed by an Open Session led by facilitator Chris Gay.

Summary of Challenges:

- Certain standard ECE regulations contradict traditional Aboriginal values.
- The smaller, remote Aboriginal communities cannot sustain the cost of programs and they often have trouble getting adequate numbers for a cohort.
- Partnering with Aboriginal communities and ensuring cultural relevance takes time and money.
- How to work with Aboriginal communities that aren't ready remains a significant question.
- There is such diversity of Aboriginal traditions and languages, how do you accommodate them all.
- FAE/FAS students require a whole different set of services.
- Many Aboriginal students have been out of school for many years and need help preparing to re-enter the academic world.
- Aboriginal learners who have to leave their remote communities to go to school sometimes have difficulty adjusting to a larger centre.
- Aboriginal ECD students participating in distance programs must deal with isolation.
- The family demands of Aboriginal learners with children can add significant stress to an already intense period of studies.
- Competition for ECD practicum space is intense and often funding runs out before students have their 500 hours' practicum.
- Aboriginal students may have trouble making the transition from school to work. They might not know how to network or write a resume. Or they might not have adequate daycare for their children.

- How do you integrate basic and post-basic ECE training, so as to start Aboriginal learners where the needs are, rather than according to academic distinctions.
- How do you involve Aboriginal families in ECD training.
- When it comes to distance ECD programs, access to technology is uneven so you're always dealing with the lowest common denominator.
- There are huge wait lists in mainstream ECD programs.
- ECD training programs have very few Aboriginal instructors.
- PLAR is worth promoting, but don't want to set students up for failure if, for example, their English language skills are not up to standard.

During the Plenary Session, the following points were cited as important to the success of Aboriginal ECD training programs:

- Never underestimate the value of partnering with Aboriginal communities or Native Societies and groups.
- Aboriginal training programs are best designed and delivered in Aboriginal communities. An emergent curriculum, which can respond to differences in each community, allows for cultural relevancy.
- The initial dialogue around the goals for a community's Aboriginal children should include a range of people, from leadership to parents to Elders.
- Identify champions within the community. They are critical to workable partnerships.
- Make Elders/grandparents part of the training program and pay them close mind. Perhaps create an Elder in Residence position or a First Nations Advisor. And really "hear" what they are saying.
- Make sure the ECD training advisory group is well rounded and regularly monitors cultural relevance.
- Incorporate in Aboriginal ECD training the idea of the parent as primary educator, and of focusing on the strengths of the home, rather than the weaknesses.
- Hire instructors who will teach ECD right in the communities; hire Aboriginal instructors wherever possible.
- Flexibility is key. The linear/sequential training of the past is not necessarily the ideal ECD training model for Aboriginal learners. Think of offering work-based or part-time ECD programs if these fit the particular needs of a community. Or use a distance model, taking advantage of teleconferencing technology and a local facilitator.
- Use real-life experiences/challenges to drive the Aboriginal ECD curriculum.
- Take care of the personal, as well as the academic needs of Aboriginal ECD students. Provide daycare, for example, for single moms with children and carefully manage the group dynamics of each cohort. Or have a psychologist or counselor come in twice a semester to discuss burn out or stress, or to address personal issues one on one.
- Have tutors available for Aboriginal ECD students who need additional academic help, Elders to offer cultural guidance.
- Hold summer ECD camps or workshops, in which various Aboriginal communities/training institutions come together to share resources and network.

Open Session:

Format: Grand Chief Edward John initiated the Open Session by thanking Elder Rose Point, Musqueam First Nation and Elder Mary Thomas, Neskonlith First Nation, for attending the event and acknowledging their wisdom and knowledge. He also thanked the

Honourable Minister Linda Reid for attending, as well as all the delegates for their role as champions of ECD. He ended his introduction by challenging everybody to take the ideas from the session back to the Tribal leaders in their communities. Facilitator Chris Gay led the Open Session by asking delegates to fill in the following sentence: To ensure skilled Aboriginal workers, we should pay special attention to...The answers became topics for 34 discussion groups of five to six people each, as follows:

Each group was asked to provide two examples of what's working within their topic or issue area, and what needs improving. They were then asked to determine key messages.

Discussion Group 1: Knowledge Transfer

What's working

- Increased accessibility of information through initiatives such as the ECD Roundtable.
- Increased space for indigenous ECD voice.
- Development of ECD best practices.

Areas for improvement

- Encourage grassroots groups to record their experiences.
- Use a range of strategies for disseminating information, such as web sites, inclusion of academic/community research in ECD workshops, and indigenous journals.
- Clarify how research results can be implemented in relevant ways.

Key messages

- Enhance ECD research capacity in universities and colleges.
- Increase consultation with Aboriginal communities about ECD research priorities.
- Use indigenous frameworks to convey knowledge.

Discussion Group 2: Strategies honoring everyone in the child's life

What's working

- N/A because nobody in the group works in the field.

Areas for improvement

- Include Aboriginal community members in any discussions having to do with changes to, or the development of, pre-schools or daycares.
- Emphasize in training curriculum the value of parent participation.

Key messages

- Emphasize the importance of open communication between practitioners and parents, and of building relationships with parents.

Discussion Group 3: Family child care providers

What's working

- Funding agencies such as the BCACCS, which provide Aboriginal-specific family child care training, are accessible through 1-800 numbers.
- CCRR in Williams Lake has developed a resource lending kit for remote communities.

Areas for improvement

- Train the trainers so they can go back and teach within their own Aboriginal communities.
- Update the 120-hour Family Day Care Training so that it is Aboriginal specific.
- Identify Aboriginal mentors in rural and remote communities.
- Raise awareness within Band Councils of the importance of ECD in all settings.

Key messages

- Family child care is critical. Most children are in family care and they deserve quality care too.

Discussion Group 4: Impact of FAS disorder

What's working

- There is more FASD training available today than in past years.

Areas for improvement

- Make FASD training part of the standard ECD curriculum, including raising awareness of prevention and concrete strategies for working with children and parents.

Key messages

- FASD is a big enough problem that it deserves to be part of the basic ECD curriculum.

Discussion Group 5: Traditional and western balance

What's working

- There is a heightened awareness of the importance of a cultural component in the standard ECD curriculum.
- There are Outreach programs that are doing a good job of training Aboriginal ECD professionals.

Areas for improvement

- Resolve the issue of cultural diversity and how it can be reflected in the ECD curriculum.
- Make Elders a more significant part of training programs.

Key messages

- Cultural relevance is critical to training programs serving Aboriginal communities.
- How to achieve a traditional and western balance is still being worked out, but one thing is clear: Aboriginal communities must be involved in the development of training programs that target them.

Discussion Group 6: Incorporating the real world in the training curriculum

What's working

- Increasingly, Elders are included in the education of ECD students.
- Real-life experiences are beginning to drive ECD curriculum development.

Areas for improvement

- Make real-world ECD training available throughout the province.
- Increase funding for such training in remote communities.

- Increase partnerships with other agencies.

Key messages

- Real-world ECD training is a viable training option and it should be accessible to communities anywhere in the province.

Discussion Group 7: Recruiting Aboriginal learners

What's working

- It is generally accepted today that Aboriginal learners need training that is culturally relevant.
- Education programs exclusive to Aboriginal learners now exist.
- There are specialized support services in place.
- Some programs include Aboriginal student advisors and Resident Elders.

Areas for improvement

- Increase funding and flexibility, i.e.- get rid of the minimum number requirement.
- Make ECD wages competitive and appropriate.
- Recruit more Aboriginal instructors.
- Enhance ECD career growth opportunities.

Key messages

- Attract Aboriginal learners by enhancing comfort levels of training programs and by promoting ECD as a valued, rewarding career for both men and women.

Discussion Group 8: Community needs

What's working

- The trend toward ECD training programs that target larger audiences within communities, such as non-credit courses like HIPPY and Train the Trainer.
- The trend toward ECD training programs that are a response to a community's specific needs, such as work-based or real life programs.

Areas for improvement

- Promote flexible funding models.
- Promote the idea to institutions of varying ECD training curriculae according to community needs.

Key messages

- Re-think traditional ECD training models.
- Include Aboriginal communities.

Discussion Group 9: Sharing curriculum

What's working

- Camosun College is currently sharing with Malaspina.
- Some institutions are sharing their ECD curriculum through on-line learning.

Areas for improvement

- Share on-line curriculum with Aboriginal learning support workers and Mobile Resource Vans.
- Identify the barriers to sharing, review articulation process and then explore ways to facilitate sharing.
- Form an Aboriginal Early Childhood Development Committee and invite the institutions to come and share their ECD curriculum.

Key Messages

- There are ECD programs in place that are already working.
- Why re-invent the wheel. Sharing saves time and resources.

Discussion Group 10: Sustainable funding

What's working

- Trend toward partnering across Aboriginal communities and with government.
- Trend toward sharing of ECD resources.
- Community-based delivery of ECD training programs is happening.

Areas for improvement

- Review and revise the rules for ECD funding (on reserve/off-reserve, federal/provincial).
- Increase funding for ECD training programs and for individual Aboriginal students.

Key messages

- More ECD training funding is necessary, but so is access to information on the funding currently available.

Discussion Group 11: Recruiting Aboriginal instructors

What's working

- The issue is young and there are no recruitment initiatives in place to date.

Areas for improvement

- Encourage the ECD career path early on to ensure all the course requirements are met.
- Create incentives to career ladder from ECE to post-basic ECE to instructing (scholarships/bursaries/appropriate wages/paid practicums).

Key messages

- The issue is just starting to get explored. There's a long way to go. Just keep plugging away.

Discussion Group 12: Self health and wellness

What's working

- Identifying role models for personal wellness.
- Including "wellness" in the ECD curriculum.
- Designating a wellness day each month.
- Setting aside one day each month for team building.

Areas for improvement

- Make attention to wellness a criteria for hiring.
- Create time once each week for staff and students to check in and share what's going on for them.
- Make humour and laughter a part of the culture.

Key messages

- There are many beneficiaries of wellness—children, parents, practitioners, students and teachers.
- Wellness needs to be encouraged in each group.

Discussion Group 13: Support services for ECD educators

What's working

- Monthly meetings with ECD educators and staff from other centres to discuss issues and find solutions.
- Networking of ECD resources, including curriculum and policies.

Areas for improvement

- Promote the idea of providing workshops or ECD professional development in remote Aboriginal communities.
- Create a confidential ECD crisis phone or e-mail line for staff/educators dealing with difficult issues.

Key messages

- In order to be effective, ECD educators need to be supported and nurtured.

Discussion Group 14: Certification criteria: cultural analysis and revision

What's working

- Discussions on this issue are still in their infancy.

Areas for improvement

- Include a cultural component for institutional ECD certification.
- Promote the idea that every ECD graduate should have at least one course in Aboriginal learning.
- Ensure ECD training programs respond to Aboriginal community needs, including certification.

Key messages

- Include Aboriginal communities in the process, from developing ECD curriculum to delivery of programs to certification.

Discussion Group 15: Getting governments to listen

What's working

- Governments are now talking about integration, rather than silos.

Areas for improvement

- Promote the idea of an ECD training suggestion box.

- Promote regular ECD regional gatherings, with policy makers in attendance.
- Emphasize the importance of a rural and remote ECD strategy.

Key messages

- In the past there has been too much change and too much fragmentation. Integration is an absolute necessity.
- Change for its own sake loses ground.

Discussion Group 16: Mobile programs

What's working

- There are successful mobile programs in basic ECE.

Areas for improvement

- Promote incorporation of Aboriginal curriculum in post-basic ECD.
- Take SN Certificate programs on the road.
- Promote the use of existing ECD training/workshops as credit towards units of study.
- Create training that includes ECD practitioners and parents.

Key messages

- ECD workshops/training provided in communities needs to be recognized through PLA.

Discussion Group 17: Promoting ECD as a career choice for Aboriginal learners

What's working

- ECD is being promoted at health career fairs.

Areas for improvement

- Promote ECD within the school system through the Aboriginal Teacher Education Consortium.
- Promote ECD within Band Councils.
- Promote ECD as a profession, not just a job.
- Ask the question: Do we need a degree level program to make ECD a profession?

Key messages

- Promote ECD as a worthwhile profession.
- Expand ECD promotion efforts to include schools and elsewhere.

Discussion Group 18: Establishing an Advisory Council with Aboriginal and college reps

What's working

- Some universities and colleges have existing Aboriginal advisory committees.
- Partnerships exist between Aboriginal communities and institutions.

Areas for improvement

- Promote the creation of articulation committees with an Aboriginal focus.
- Promote Advisory Councils as part of a coordinated approach involving Aboriginal communities, funding agencies and academic institutions.
- Emphasize the need for planning funding.

Key messages

- Partnerships and two-way communication are critical.
- Advisory Councils are one way to achieve collaboration.

Discussion Group 19: Incorporating disability training into ECD curriculum

What's working

- There are partnership training programs in place, but they need reviewing and revising.
- The SCC/IDP consortium has identified as a priority working with Aboriginal practitioners.

Areas for improvement

- There is no post-basic Aboriginal program in special needs.
- Advocate for a sharing of curriculum and working with partners such as FASD, hearing and vision.

Discussion Group 20: Traditional ways of learning

What's working

- Including Elders in ECD teacher training.
- Including Elders in ECD programs.

Areas for improvement

- Promote the idea of community-wide input into ECD training programs, ensuring a balance of formalized and incidental learning.

Key messages

- Restore traditions that give rise to the development of Aboriginal identity.

Discussion Group 21: Building capacity in Aboriginal organizations

What's working

- Communities such as Fort Nelson are investing in individuals to work in childcare centres, before they are actually trained.
- Aboriginal communities themselves are being allowed to define capacity.

Areas for improvement

- Does mentoring need to be institutionalized?
- Recognize, and emphasize, that a facility or building is not essential to learning. "It is better to have a learning environment under a tree, than to have no learning."

Key messages

- Meaningful consultation and good faith collaboration around Aboriginal community capacity are essential.

Discussion Group 22: Maintaining existing programs to ensure adequate practicum space

What's working

- Money is going towards childcare and helping to achieve results.

- ECD funding policies are being adjusted so as to be less prohibitive.

Areas for improvement

- Maximize ECD funding sources by accessing both provincial and federal resources.
- Develop a formal process allowing a regular sharing of information, including information on what ECD dollars are available and how best to access them.

Key messages

- Maximize available ECD funding.
- Share ECD funding information.

Discussion Group 23: Funding criteria

What's working

- There are models of integrated services for youth, which integrate funding as well (from health, education, human resources and income assistance).

Areas for improvement

- Enhance flexibility of ECD funding to allow for development of customized programs.

Key messages

- The culture of bureaucracy needs overcoming.
- Checks and balances end up wasting time and money.

Discussion Group 24: Raising wage levels

What's working

- There are many ECD programs and many funding sources for programs geared to 0-6 years of age.
- The availability of ECD training and training opportunities is on the rise, as is the availability of trained professionals.

Areas for improvement

- Advocate for the organization of all 0-6 services under one umbrella or ministry.
- Communicate the importance of each role, to each other and to the public, enhancing the value of ECD generally.

Key messages

- Value all ECD providers.
- Communicate that value as often as possible.

Discussion Group 25: Promoting the value of ECE

What's working

- Awareness of the importance of ECD is on the rise due to recent research.

Areas for improvement

- Make children more “visible” within communities.
- Support existing ECD programs
- Promote the importance of ECD in the media.

- Promote the importance of ECD to business and economic interests.

Key messages

- Putting kids first is in the best interests of everyone in society.

Discussion Group 26: Community readiness

What's working

- There are Aboriginal community champions who are promoting the Putting Children First programs.
- There are Aboriginal community resource coordinators who are promoting Supported Childcare.

Areas for improvement

- Promote networking among ECD services providers to build capacity.
- Build relationships, not bureaucracies.
- Promote the value of Aboriginal community input; give Aboriginal communities a voice.

Key messages

- Honor Aboriginal community voices.
- Build on Aboriginal community successes.

Discussion Group 27: Strategies that support parents in their roles

What's working

- Increasingly, families are at the centre of ECD programs.
- There are AIDP home-based programs.

Areas for improvement

- Promote more coordination between federal and provincial ECD programs and between ECD programs and Aboriginal communities.
- Ensure cultural appropriateness, providing comfort to families.
- Define families by their strengths, not their problems.

Key messages

- Listen to and honor families; help them to help themselves.

Discussion Group 28: Meeting personal as well as academic needs of students

What's working

- Some ECD instructors provide personal support as well as academic information.

Areas for improvement

- Promote education for ECD instructors around the differences between empowering and enabling.
- ECD Instructors need more information on FASD.

Key messages

- Aboriginal students have unique educational needs and sensibilities.

- These need to be recognized in ECD training programs.

Discussion Group 29: Indigenous criterion for accreditation of ECD

What's working

- N/A (nothing so far)

Areas for improvement

- Facilitate capacity development in families and communities.
- Explore international models, i.e. – DQ Indian College in the U.S.

Discussion Group 30: Parent participation in child care programs

What's working

- There are home-based ECD programs in existence that recognize the importance of family.
- One of the principles of Head Start is mandatory parent involvement.

Areas for improvement

- ECD Training should recognize the importance of parent participation.
- Current ECD programs should immerse parents in the daily activities of the centre.

Key messages

- Early childhood development educators are partners with the parents and families.

Discussion Group 31: Mentoring

What's working

- Elders are mentors.
- ECEs in the field are mentoring students.
- Full-time ECD mentors are starting IDP, supported child care, then as Aboriginal staff are ready, the mentors are pulling back.

Areas for improvement

- Tap into retiring ECD faculty/staff to link up with Aboriginal communities as mentors.
- Need more mentoring models to support learning in non-traditional ways.

Key messages

- Mentoring is valuable.
- Attract more mentors through wage subsidy programs.

Discussion Group 32: Small communities

What's working

- ECD experts do visit small communities.

Areas for improvement

- Promote hands-on ECD training on the part of institutions, not just distance education.
- Enhance Elder involvement.

- Promote the generative curriculum model.

Key messages

- ECD training must be done by people who can award the appropriate credentials.

Discussion Group 33: Prior learning assessment and recognition

What's working

- The ECE certificate is competency-based and it is easier to assess PLA based on these competencies.
- Momentum and interest exist. There are provincial standards.

Areas for improvement

- Explore standardized training in PLA, as in Manitoba.
- Locate and compile existing information on PLA.
- Provide funds to instructors to do PLA right now.

Key messages

- PLA is a positive trend.
- It should be recognized, funded and promoted.

Discussion Group 34: Continuum of certificate, diploma and degree programs

What's working

- The opportunity exists to start in ECE and go to Phd in CYC.
- There are established or reserved seats in degree programs for Aboriginal students.
- There is a diploma in First Nations Studies.

Areas for improvement

- GPA needs to be 70 per cent to get full transfer of ECE Certificate into the Degree programs at UVic, UCFC and Malaspina.
- There is an inconsistent GPA requirement among institutions.
- Promote recognition of ECE credits as credits toward BSW or B.Ed.

Key messages

- Support seamless transfers from ECE programs to a variety of degrees: Education, Social Work and First Nations Studies.

Courtyard Cafes:

Format: After the Discussion Groups, participants identified eight central themes or issues for in-depth discussion the next day. These were named Courtyard Cafes and the following morning delegates visited six Cafés each, five or six individuals at a time, to answer the questions: “What are the key issues and priorities?” and “What are the next steps for success?” A Server at each Café kept the groups on topic. The Courtyard Cafes were as follows:

Café 1: Aboriginal ECD Training Curriculum

What are the key issues/priorities?

- There is not enough access to formal ECD training in northern and remote Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities.
- There is a high turnover rate among Aboriginal students when it comes to basic training.
- Not enough attention is paid to traditional Aboriginal ways of learning.
- In the past, it has been difficult to get input on training from Advisory Committees.
- There is a lot of discrepancy when it comes to *how* ECD skills are taught.
- There are not enough Aboriginal people involved in ECD curriculum development.
- There are not enough Aboriginal trainers or educators.
- There are not enough Aboriginal Supported Child Care consultants.
- Special needs training is lacking.
- How do you reflect in an ECD training curriculum the differences between reserve and urban Aboriginal communities?
- There is a danger of pan-Indianism. While the core values of Aboriginal communities are the same, there are lots of differences when it comes to traditions. How do you decide whose traditions are reflected?
- Developing a culturally relevant curriculum, not its delivery, is the problem.
- It's not about developing curriculum; it's more about delivery supports.
- There is a whole pool of learning in terms of how to create a functional ECD training curriculum. A community-based training model has been around for 15 years. People just don't know about it. There's too much re-inventing.
- It's ineffective to merely integrate an Aboriginal component into the standard ECD training model.
- The ECD curriculum is squeezed into a nine-month period. It's asking a lot of students, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, to endure such a condensed learning period. Some students have said they end the course feeling like failures.

What are the next steps for success?

- Organize an Aboriginal Committee or Advisory Group for each geographic area, with Elders, men and women, parents. etc., and form a steering committee that focuses on training.
- Agree on a standard curriculum that meets basic ECE requirements that can be applied to different communities/cultures.
- In mainstream and Aboriginal programs, bring in Aboriginal people to talk about values and traditions.
- The BC Aboriginal Child Care Society recently created a curriculum around FASD in response to need; take advantage of it.
- When developing a training curriculum, start with several principles or big ideas, which can then be shaped to fit individual communities.
- ECD educators have to work on training the trainers so they can work in an indeterminate environment, without a prescribed syllabus.
- Move toward an Aboriginal defined curriculum, built on a few, core principles from standard ECD training curriculum. The result may be quite different from the mainstream curriculum, but that's okay.
- Partnering with Aboriginal people in the development and delivery of training programs is a necessity; it's the only way to ensure credibility.
- Share ECD models in a larger social development context, involving families in the training. Eg.- Students could provide parenting workshops to families.

- When developing ECD training programs, start with the Aboriginal culture, then say, “How can we fit the ECD training into it?” instead of beginning with the ECD training and looking at how to fit the Aboriginal culture into it.
- Use an outcome-based training curriculum, which leaves how you get to the outcome entirely up to the discretion of individual communities.
- Use the book, “The Sacred Tree” as a reference. It incorporates Aboriginal philosophy.
- All ECD programs depend on community development therefore it should be incorporated into ECD training.
- Make training expectations clear to all students right from the start, so as to avoid setting them up for failure.

Café 2: Defining and Developing ECD Community Capacity

What are the key issues/priorities?

- The standards/criteria for formal ECD training are not inclusive of Aboriginal values/traditions.
- Current ECD programs and training don’t always reflect involvement of parents/families.
- The role of family child care providers is not clear.
- The community’s vision and goals for child development are often not reflected in current ECD training programs.
- The standard ECE curriculum should not drive ECD services.
- ECD services/training programs are often not supported by the organizational structure in Aboriginal communities.
- Community readiness varies; many Aboriginal communities already have the capacity, but it’s not recognized formally. Often, learning opportunities already exist in a community, but they are discounted.
- The role of technology in building capacity is not yet clear.
- Community involvement in networks/coalitions is inconsistent.
- Men are not included in ECD programs. Current training programs don’t provide ways to support men who have been through intergenerational trauma.
- Some Aboriginal communities are not interested in ECD; there are no champions.
- Off-reserve information and on-reserve information is not shared.
- Building capacity takes money. Need a strategy to leverage dollars.
- Perception is that ECD means babysitting, or daycare.

What are the next steps for success?

- Work to secure support from Aboriginal leadership for ECD training.
- Develop baseline data to drive the development of ECD services and training.
- Decide what the community’s goals are, then who can best advance those goals. Identify community champions.
- Decide who in the community should be the voice in networks and coalitions.
- Incorporate into the ECD training curriculum a segment on facilitating readiness.
- Work toward the development of an Aboriginal authority which can help build capacity.
- Conduct needs assessments/community plans and identify assets already existing in the community to help determine ECD training needs.
- Tailor ECD training programs to the people closest to children. Can parents, for example, be mentored?
- Develop a strategy for leveraging ECD training dollars.
- Help raise the profile of ECD by changing the title of practitioners to ECD specialists.

- Develop a promotional campaign for ECD.
- Share ECD successes on the web.
- ECD practitioners can be advocates for the profession.
- Coordinate funding bodies.
- Build a business case for ECD services and training.
- Identify someone from the community to sit on articulation committees.

Café 3: Funding and Sustainability of ECD Training Programs

What are the key issues and priorities?

- Future funding is uncertain and the uncertainty leads to an inability to plan long-term ECD training programs
- There's a lack of predictable long-term funding, which leads to ECD training programs that are there one year and gone the next.
- The proposal process is onerous and unwieldy, taking up valuable time and resources.
- Educational institutions are focused on bottom line/FTEs, not on needs.
- There's a lack of communication among institutions, government and Aboriginal organizations.

What are the next steps for success?

- Create a one-stop resource (a newsletter or website) for accessing funding information.
- Celebrate ECD training successes and best practices with everyone.
- Increase communication about funding sources among institutions and Aboriginal organizations and coordination of funding between different levels of government.
- Develop partnerships between institutions and Aboriginal communities/organizations to pool resources.
- Build a business case to convince leaders and communities that ECD and ECD training is a priority.
- Encourage sustainable home-based, community-driven ECD training initiatives.
- Work toward a strong, unified voice advocating ECD initiatives, perhaps via the training consortium or ECD secretariat.
- Earmark some funds specifically for ECD training.

Café 4: Community-Based ECD Training Delivery Models

Key Issues and Priorities

- Specialists' training model does not work in smaller Aboriginal communities.
- Current funding does not fit work-based training.
- Traditional ECD curriculum does not work at community level.
- Community champions/practitioners are not prepared for "fight" necessary for ECD training funding, resources.
- Current ECD certification is inflexible and the inflexibility needs to be addressed at the Ministry level.
- A lot of time is spent re-inventing the wheel, but sharing is difficult.
- Distance delivery of ECD training has not worked so far.
- ECE focus is too narrow. Focus needs to be broader, incorporating ECD.
- Is it realistic to expect 15 people in an ECD training cohort in a small community?

Next Steps for Success

- Develop strategies for being proactive; assume funding will be there when deciding on community ECD training needs.
- Be clear about ECD training outcomes and flexible about program delivery.
- Use local resources/staffing as much as possible. Develop capacity at the community level as a precursor to training, then train community facilitators.
- Network with other communities with a common vision.
- Make ECD training a key component of the community's strategic plan.
- Aboriginal communities need to define ECD training needs, then work with institutions to define plans.
- Organize more dialogues around the issue of ECD training and include Aboriginal communities.
- Focus on building on community assets, rather than on needs.
- Offer transition-to-work training as a non-accredited workshop.
- Involve broad community, including youth, Elders, leadership and parents, in the development of ECD training programs.

Café 5: Increasing Networking and Partnership Possibilities

Key Issues and Priorities

- Current ECD funding strategies create winners and losers. Accessing funding has become very competitive and, as such, is a barrier to networking.
- There is no overall structure for building partnerships/networking.
- Funding for building ECD partnerships is inadequate.
- There is no partnership/networking component in the current ECD curriculum.

Next Steps for Success

- Leadership needs to provide structure for building ECD partnerships/networking.
- Create a mobile bus that travels from community to community to provide professional development training, paid for by ECE centres.
- Create a provincial/federal ECD training resource package targeting Aboriginal communities.
- Schedule regular regional ECD training conferences for Aboriginal communities, involving all stakeholders, including colleges, ECE workers and different agencies.
- Funding agencies need to partner to ensure adequate resources for joint ECD training and networking.
- Develop partnerships between Aboriginal communities and for-profit organizations to develop scholarships, etc.
- Create a Secretariat to coordinate partnership effort.
- Create joint newsletter, paper and web-based, with all the training related news from the broad range of stakeholders.

Café 6: Recruitment and Retention of Aboriginal Students

Key Issues and Priorities

- Aboriginal students, who are working and have families, face intense academic and emotional challenges.
- There are different ways of knowing beyond the theoretical. Experiential knowledge is currently not acknowledged in standard ECD training.

- ECD is not currently highly valued as a profession.
- Among many Aboriginal people, education is viewed as a battle field, due to traditional experience of school.
- Finding work is a problem because there are not enough sustained programs in home communities to hire graduates.

Next Steps for Success

- Pay attention to student wellness, including emotional, social and psychological wellbeing. Provide coping skills and self-awareness training using community resources for support.
- Promote the value of ECD as a career choice through the high schools and career counselors and career fairs.
- Strengthen the linkages between academic institutions and Aboriginal communities. Consider creating community advisory committees.
- Develop culturally relevant mentoring and support strategies for Aboriginal students.
- Develop a strategy for getting information out to the Aboriginal communities about ECD training programs.

Café 7: Making Aboriginal ECD a Priority

Key Issues and Priorities

- Currently, political will does not match community and family ECD needs.
- Some families are not ready to access what is already available; families are sometimes hard to reach.
- Universality is a measure of importance and currently access to daycare centres is not universal.
- Lack of ECD promotion funding is a huge barrier.
- Male leadership in Aboriginal communities is focused outside the community, meaning that funding priorities are outside the community as well.
- There is a pervading view that Aboriginal communities are taken care of by targeting funding, resulting in a lack of perceived need by potential business partners.
- Per capita, there are fewer day care spaces for Aboriginal children than for non-Aboriginal children.
- It's difficult for Aboriginal educators to get together to discuss common issues when they are competing for resources.
- Currently, INAC underfunds under-three-year-olds; the investment in school-age kids is much higher.

Next Steps for Success

- Work to put children higher on the list of political priorities.
- Urge the relevant Ministries to communicate regularly so that people know who the players are.
- Call for Aboriginal leadership to refocus on what's going on in their own backyard. Make clear to leadership that adequate ECD programs would have an impact on the FASD problem.
- Educate businesses as to partnership possibilities.
- Share successful ECD programs.

- Reach highschool students (AHS video is good for this); they are tomorrow's leaders.
- Make ECD awareness part of prenatal care.
- Raise the profile of children generally by creating healthy, safe public spaces targeting children.
- Showcase successful ECD/business partnerships.
- Make a business case for ECD.
- Celebrate ECD successes; involve leaders and Elders and follow up with newsletter coverage.
- Highlight the treaty process to children, demonstrating that leadership is working on their behalf.
- Showcase research that demonstrates the importance of ECD.
- Promote ECD as early education, and as though children are entitled to it, much like public school.
- Work to raise awareness of all the ECD funding sources. Perhaps create a clearing house of funding agencies and organizations.
- Create a provincial ECD advisor position.
- Create an informal ECD steering committee.
- Tap into the resources of the BC Aboriginal Child Care Society.
- Call for the government to act in a coordinating role, bringing the right people together.
- Create an Aboriginal component to federal ECD advocacy groups.

Café 8: ECD Training Consortium

Issues and Priorities

- How do various ECD institutions/agencies share resources? Who owns the intellectual property?
- How do you ensure inclusion of small, remote communities when traveling is such a significant expense.
- Who decides who should be part of the Consortium? Communities need to be the drivers of the Consortium.
- What should its scope be? Should it be local, regional, provincial?

Next Steps for Success

- Develop a Terms of Reference, values and principles and purpose for the Consortium.
- Involve First Nations Education Coordinators.
- Make transferability, career laddering and articulation part of the Consortium's mandate.
- Make raising awareness of ECD part of its mandate as well.
- Make one of the goals of the Consortium to build a business case for ECD. The consortium could lead reallocation.
- Ensure the Consortium has a community focus and a community voice.
- Make the scope as broad as possible; ECD is not just about ECE centres.
- Make the Consortium's membership as broad as possible, including: Elders, community-based programs, MOH certificate programs, family child care providers, provincial and federal funding agencies.
- Identify the Consortium as representing trainers, as opposed to academic professional development.
- Build on what's already in place, such as the ECD Roundtable, ECE articulation, etc.
- Create a provincial ECD advisor, or Secretariat as a paid position to organize the Consortium.