



MOVING FORWARD WITH FULL HEARTS

Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care
Leadership Forum Report

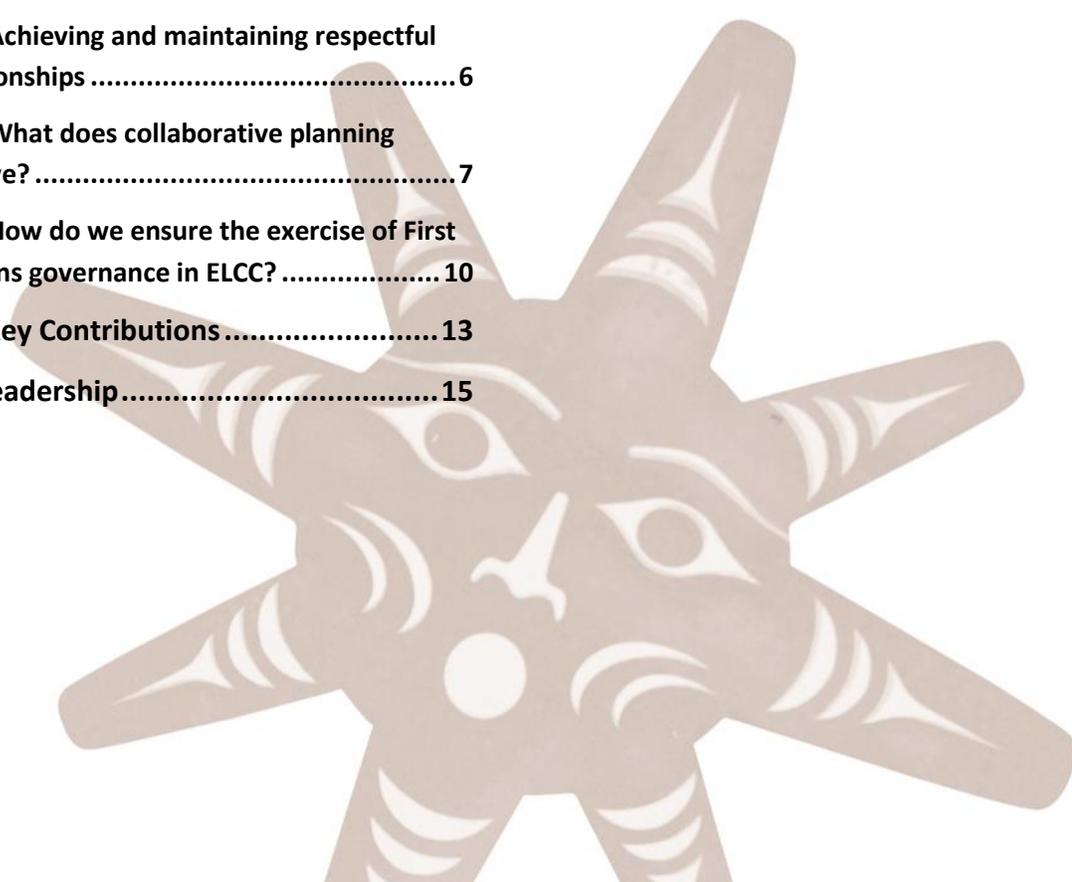


BC **Aboriginal**
Child Care Society



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*“All your words are in the wind now.
We’re going to see where it goes now.
We’re going to see who grabs on.”*

Elder Lekeyten



INTRODUCTION

This is a report about the ongoing engagement on the Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care (IELCC) Framework regional implementation.

On May 23, 2019, BCACCS hosted the first IELCC Leadership Forum at the Sheraton Vancouver Airport hotel on Coast Salish Territory, Richmond, BC. This forum was part of the ongoing engagement specified by the National First Nations Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) Framework—the First Nations component of the National IELCC framework.

First Nations’ regional framework engagement was first mandated by the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) in 2016.¹ As the National First Nations framework was developed and endorsed by First Nations (2017)² and the Federal government (2018), ongoing engagement among many groups has supported First Nations leadership in continuing framework development and regional implementation.

These groups have included First Nations community members, First Nations Elders, First Nations ELCC practitioners, First Nations ELCC administrative and managerial personnel, First Nations sectoral leaders, Indigenous and non-Indigenous political and administrative leadership, as well as other

institutional stakeholders, including sectoral and inter-sectoral partners.

Participants in this forum were leaders and stakeholders in IELCC in BC and included: First Nations leadership, First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC), First Nations health directors, First Nations Elders, federal, provincial and municipal government officials, First Nations ELCC directors/supervisors/administrators, First Nations ELCC researchers and educators, ISETS program directors, First Nations child and family services leadership and planners, Aboriginal Head Start (AHS) leadership, First Nations education directors, managers and policy staff, Aboriginal Infant Development Program (AIDP) leadership, First Nations ELCC consultants, early childhood advocacy group representatives, First Nations employment organization leadership, urban Aboriginal organization leadership and early

*“My heart is full
because I believe
our children are
in good hands.”*

Elder Lekeyten

¹ AFN Chiefs in Assembly Resolution 39-2016

² AFN Chiefs in Assembly by Resolution 83-2017 & regionally as an engagement and then implementation process: UBCIC Resolutions 2016-48

& 2017-39, First Nations Summit Resolutions 1016.03 & 1017.03 and BC Assembly of First Nations Resolutions 12-2016 & 14-2017



childhood education professional organization representatives.

The focus of this engagement was to come together around First Nations ELCC framework opportunities, to share and discuss its investment strategy in BC for years 1-3 of framework implementation (2018-2021), and to collectively develop strategies for years 4-10 (2021-2028).

Federal partners and provincial government supporters also reported on their plans and contributions to IELCC.

METHOD

This forum engaged participants to discuss and share their wisdom about three specific questions, following framework principles and strategic actions.

Following from principle 1 of the First Nations ELCC framework (5.1 Indigenous knowledges, languages and cultures),¹ *respect* was the first engagement issue. Participants were asked to consider:

How to achieve and maintain respectful relationships?

Following from principles 3 (Quality programs and services), 4 (Inclusivity, accessibility and flexibility) and 6 (Collaborations and partnerships), *collaboration* was the second engagement theme. Participants were asked to consider:

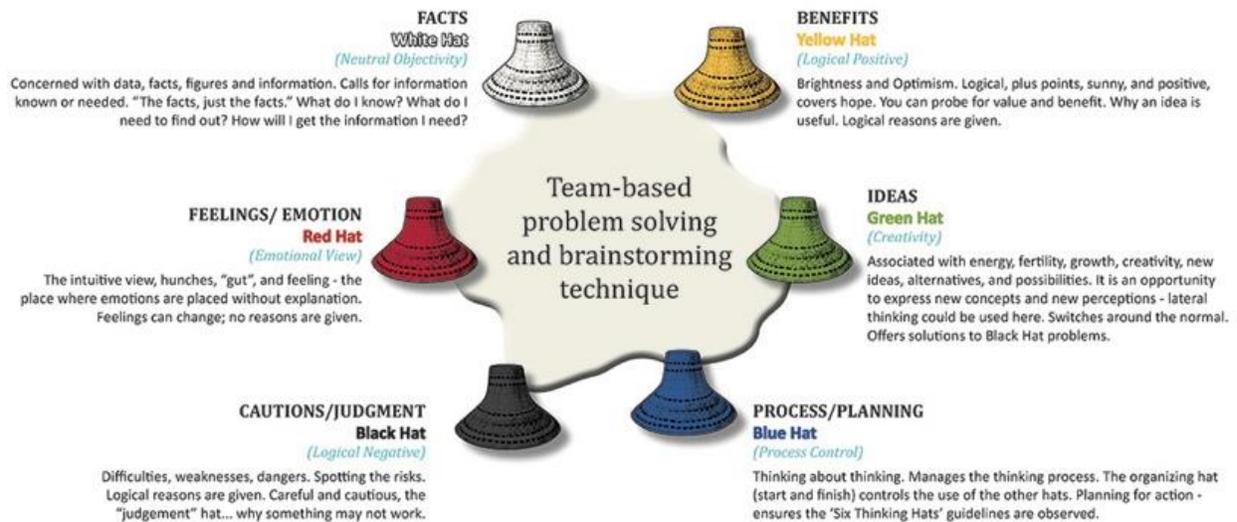
What does collaborative planning involve?

Following from principle 2 (First Nations governance), governance was the third engagement theme. Participants were asked to consider:

How do we ensure the exercise of First Nations governance in ELCC?



Six Thinking Hats



To explore the issues developed for First Nations ELCC engagement in a diversity of approaches and ways of thinking, the 'Six Thinking Hats' method was introduced and led by facilitator Harold Tarbell.

In very different modes (neutral objective; emotional; logical positive; logical negative; creative; and process control), this approach permitted the three engagement topics to be approached in diverse ways by participants in small groups.

While some felt it required more time, many appreciated the diversity of approaches

permitted by this engagement methodology, including finding it "well rounded," generating "real" conversation, "very respectful and cultural," and promoting "conversation with insight and perspective."³ Some group discussions developed their own approaches to the engagement questions.

ENGAGEMENT CONTRIBUTIONS

What follows is inclusive of *all documented contributions*, organized according to the Six Thinking Hats method, where applicable, and with some additional consolidation. Where repetition occurs, it is not summarized but rather repeated, so that the

³ IELCC Leadership Forum Evaluation Form Summary



force of the issue brought forward is made clear.

How to achieve and maintain respectful relationships?

Engagement concerning respectful relationships proceeded as developed by table groups. It reflects the cultural, historical and administrative complexity of the landscapes of contemporary IELCC. It may be gathered within the three clusters of *values, strategies and processes*:

Values

- Honesty - Desire to explore options, honestly
- Being brave to share
- Treat others the way you want to be treated
- Fairness (who is allocating funding dollars and how much?)
- Keeping traditions alive
- Being respectful of difference within what we have in common
- Maintaining relationships is hard going

Strategies

- Focus on similarities – common goals - make sure everyone has same end goal & a plan
- Strength in advocating for the same things and being on the same page
- Careful planning
- Working together and having all the parties involved
- Communication is key

- Clear communication (esp. w daycares/leads)
- Licensing to cultural needs
- Local delivery -> going to provincial (gatherings) doesn't make sense
- Interior forum – getting people together
- Measurable and sustainable goals
- Structures in place for framework when people change jobs
- Know what we're doing
- Knowing barriers

Processes

- Reporting out locally and collectively
- Have the right people in the room
- See everyone's included – sharing information so everyone's in the loop
- Focus on the task, and stay on the task
- Everyone gets to speak in engagement - letting everyone speak without interruptions
- Where we started & where we're going
- Knowing needs and wants of frontline workers - Keep communication open with front line workers
- More feedback from community members/grassroots peoples
- We need to hear from quiet people. They will have great ideas
- BC to talk to Feds
- Get communication out to everyone – remembering not everyone knows how to use phone, computer, etc.
- Food



What does collaborative planning involve?

This topic saw the most engagement at the forum, through both group-developed processes and the Six Thinking Hats method.

Contributions are shared here according to the method that table groups chose to use, with Six Thinking Hats contributions first:

White (neutral objective – facts)

- First Nations support
- Participation
- Equity and acknowledgment of barriers of inequity
- Commitment
- Trust
- Indigenous Knowledges
- Holistic process
- Multiple levels of government
- Multiple levels of IELCC professionals, families, and advocates
- Cross-department inclusion
- Responsiveness
- Being present
- Inclusion
- Leave grievances behind
- Meeting regularly
- Consider participants as family
- Accountability
- Clarity
- Consistency
- Sustainability
- Jurisdiction reflecting Indigenous ways
- Expanded mandates
- Community reflective criteria
- Integration
- Variety
- Missing people
- Regulations need to be community driven
- Support cultures and Languages
- Why would a childcare facility not be licensed?
- Give credit for Indigenous knowledge
- Remove the need to compete for funding
- Improve resources
- Sharing impact of current projects, etc.
- Understand funding steps and cycles
- Indigenous child centred
- Consistent and correct information sharing
- Using language that everyone understands
- Narrow scope
- Understanding past initiatives in the field
- Speak the tensions

“We can’t forget how important parent voices are.”

Forum Contributor

Red (emotion)

- Enjoy collaboration
- Fear of confrontation



“Building relationships and trust takes time.”

Forum Contributor

- Canada has one of the worst OECD systems in the world
- Hard to organize and mobilize large number of players
- Building relationships and trust takes time
- Lost trust is hard to gain back
- Siloed approach presents barriers
- Funding cycles create barriers
- Inconsistency of leadership
- How do supports transfer with families?
- Not enough varied regional engagement

Black (logical negative - caution)

- Lack of understanding of governance
- Inequity between stakeholders
- Clarity about what ‘support’ means
- Slow to change
- Demands to know how Indigenous communities function
- Not flexible enough to adjust as needed
- Policy and practice need to reflect support
- Not considering big picture
- Only treating symptoms
- Child care not seen as a service
- Wrong paradigm
- No space where children live
- Telling educators what to do rather than listen to them
- Western perspective reflected in licensing, health, safety
- Relying on stats/numbers vs relationships

Yellow (logical positive - optimism)

- Mutual respect can lead to good outcomes
- Lead with gifts, not authority
- Honour, respect, holism & reciprocity
- Open minds
- Shared vision
- Giving money and land back
- Community voices heard
- Consistent collaboration in all areas
- Transparency

Green (creativity)

- Collaborative licensing forum
- Invite people and not organizations to discuss the plan
- Indigenous peoples come together
- Governments reconfigure programs they provide
- Programs reflecting self-determination are needed in all types of communities



- Community, parent, child, educator voices need to drive direction
- Need true impact stories
- Look at other collaboration initiatives

Blue (process)

- Indigenous people should set standards and organize, monitor and evaluate implementation
- Define the meaning of ‘respect’
- Eliminate systemic racism
- Generate ideas in an Indigenous framework and translate them into language of authority
- Clarify who the Indigenous peoples are so assumptions aren’t made
- First Nations lead
- Mutual/reciprocal accountability
- Commit to face-to-face meetings
- Clarify information sharing
- Consider respectful culturally generated ways to measure impact and success
- Adapt early and inclusive indicators
- Qualitative measures are key
- Share outcomes
- BCACCS support gathering of information
- Transparency
- Clarify what is available
- Community, parents, child, educators have their voices heard
- Sustainability
- Consistency in laws
- Jurisdiction

“It’s a long process but this is what capacity building is.”

Forum Contributor

Additional direction on collaborative planning was organized under **suggestions** and **challenges**:

Suggestions

- Conflict resolution and communication training
- All voices heard
- Leverage dollars and share costs to encourage living wage and benefits
- Staff training specific to First Nations families
- Give BC administration for proposal grant dollars

Challenges

- Work with community to design together
- Less proposals and more work together
- BCACCS bring residents from communities



“We need to hear from quiet people too. They will have great ideas.”

Forum Contributor

How do we ensure the exercise of First Nations governance in ELCC?

A key principle in the IELCC and First Nations ELCC frameworks and an issue consistently brought forward in First Nations-led framework engagements, *governance* was the third matter in discussion at this Forum. Responses and direction were concerned with:

- How governance should be exercised;
- By whom;
- What its scope, authorities, mandates, structures and processes should be; and
- How it may be transformed with respect to, and for, First Nations jurisdiction.

Matters of legitimate authority, process and priority recur in this forum’s governance discussions and contribute to the continuing

development of a First Nations ELCC governance model in BC.

White (neutral objective – facts)

- Leadership stuck in mentality of accepting what we get
- ELCC is not a priority
- Sustainable funding
- Consistent championing
- Establish ELCC plan for communities
- Cross collaborate with education, health, social development
- Educate leadership

Red (emotion)

- Funds not used for ELCC

Black (logical negative - caution)

- New leadership every two years

Yellow (logical positive - optimism)

- Leadership invests in child care
- Equality of services

Green (creativity)

- Equality of all services for all children
- ELCC part of all band/council portfolios
- Capped funding
- Leadership and mentorship to take ownership and responsibility for ELCC
- Mission statement for ELCC leadership
- Self-determined ELCC



Blue (process)

- Accountability
- Commitment
- Build into the leadership level
- Indigenous and mainstream collaboration
- Accountability
- Transparent reporting
- Each community/nation have an 8-10 year long-term plan so changing leadership does not matter
- Holistic processes
- Inform and educate leadership to advocate
- Support front line staff to be champions
- Ensure funds go to where they are needed
- Be inclusive of urban programs/agencies

“My job is to inform them about what’s happening in the province, nudge them when needed or say something or ask for more information if that is what’s necessary.”

Forum Contributor



Additional direction on First Nations ELCC governance was organized under **suggestions** and **challenges**:

Suggestions

- Who is required in governance conversations?
- Self-determination requires capacity: not all communities have the same resources
- Support communities to share the voices of their families
- Hold government accountable
- Full jurisdiction, authority over teacher certification, school standards, etc.
- Self-determined licensing model
- Guide and define IELCC model in terms of program, service delivery, and needs-based supports
- Include community leadership
- Differences need to be highlighted in terms of education, training, licensing
- Don't ignore interface with child welfare
- First Nations in BC are diverse, but not when talking about values and children, there are lots of commonalities
- "I am the conduit to ensure that my leadership (...) and the councillors that have been assigned a portfolio are there"

Challenges

- Not a priority for most chiefs
- Educating leadership and community
- Building capacity

- Principles of governance need to be included in this model
- Skills development
- Collaboration between urban and rural
- Taking care of our own people while working with others
- There's a willingness to be respectful but also the challenge of how to be respectful to all
- Ensuring decision-making is led by community
- Stop trying to fix a broken non-system
- Tracking where the money comes from for each program
- Can we agree on key stages for children so that we can work to get them there
- Can we learn from other systems that do work
- Special needs need to be represented
- Assess and evaluate what government is doing at all levels
- Decisions based on data
- Understand impacts and long term progression





OTHER KEY CONTRIBUTIONS

Framework engagement at this forum was preceded by contributions from federal and provincial government officials, as well as officials from BCACCS, the First Nations Leadership Council, and First Nations Elders.

BCACCS outlined framework opportunities and developing strategies and contexts of First Nations ELCC. This included reference to the IELCC framework implementation, First Nations investment strategy, and some identified priorities like: community

planning support, ECE sectoral wage enhancement, training, access, capacity, First Nations mandates, intersectoral linkages, new partnerships and remembering “our most marginalized people...our children” (M. Teegee).

Federal representation from Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) described the IELCC framework as “our bible” in a ten-year transformative initiative, while acknowledging that it is “still not enough.” First Nations autonomy was





respected in a number of contributions: “our intent is not to cramp your style” and “our job is to line up the federal system to support your plans and priorities” where “opportunities to aggregate models” exist to de-silo First Nations ELCC through self-determination. The unprecedented nature of the work was acknowledged: “this is a first for the federal government...we’re used to designing the process, it’s a different role for us” in IELCC framework implementation, which the federal ESDC minister (J. Duclos) called “an historic accomplishment.”

Provincial contributions from the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) for new opportunities arising for First Nations ELCC were centred around the provincial child care strategy. As with the federal partners, provincial supporters recognized their own systems’ limitations toward transformative commitments. “...what we learned is that we didn’t even come close to learning what we needed to know (for IELCC).” The province is “excited to develop an MOU with the First Nations Leadership Council and BCACCS” to support First Nations ELCC framework implementation in BC. Provincial officials were interested to know if the Province’s principles of *affordability, accessibility and quality* are held by First Nations as well.⁴

First Nations Leadership Council political support for First Nations ELCC and First Nations ELCC framework implementation

was affirmed: “the IELCC framework has the full support of the First Nations political executive,” with the further observation— from First Nations leadership organizations’ experience—that **“working together allows much more to be accomplished.”** First Nations leadership resolutions may continue to be sought to formalize First Nations authority in continuing regional First Nations ELCC framework implementation.

A number of pressing concerns and recent challenges were brought up:

- Consider inevitable growing pains
- Continue to attend to wage inequalities
- Provide wages for Elders
- Support whole families’ contributions
- The degree to which the government “still controls the process”
- Inequities for BC First Nations of national First Nations ELCC investments allocations formula
- Lack of First Nations involvement in determining overall federal IELCC investments
- Need to develop “our own plans” which governments then invest in, so process reflects self-determination
- Support for urban First Nations children and families

⁴ From regional First Nations ELCC engagements, First Nations ELCC principles may be found in the National First Nations ELCC framework, along with supporting regional First Nations ELCC engagement reports.



ELDER LEADERSHIP

Selections of quotes from Elder leadership provided by Cheryl Gabriel and Lekeyten at the Forum.

"What we started today was ceremony - we don't do enough ceremony - a long time ago we used to do ceremony every day - it is good to see that here ceremony comes first."

"The framework is bringing back culture and language."

"Take your time, be patient with yourself – learn from the land."

"People are starting to find themselves...you are helping them."

"I missed something...maybe this time I'll hear it."

"We're stepping away from the department of Indian affairs - they were holding us down - they were holding us hostage - and now we're on our own."

"We have children that don't understand and listen yet, but we keep trying."

"It's hard to follow, because there's so much wisdom in every word."

"Respect, love, honour, dignity & grace."

"It is in your hands now."

"My heart is full because I believe our children are in good hands."

"We need more time to understand and listen hard."

"Everything you have been working for you so much deserve."