

# The Importance of Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care



BC Aboriginal  
Child Care Society

In Indigenous terms, early learning and child care programs, services and supports are holistic, inclusive, flexible and accessible to all children birth to six years and their families. They put each Indigenous child's needs and best interests first; ensure equitable and culturally grounded teaching; and reflect Indigenous knowledge in caring for and educating our children, and supporting our communities.



Physical  
development



Spiritual  
development



Cognitive  
development



Language  
revitalization



Social/Emotional  
development

*Children's experiences during the first few years of their life have a profound impact on their lifetime health and success.*

Through IELCC programs, our children learn:

- A non-competitive approach to life based on cooperation, respect, and sharing
- Special respect for Elders as they share knowledge, wisdom, and traditional teachings
- Culturally grounded, holistic curricula
- Their own languages whenever possible
- Respectful relationships with family
- Preparation for future responsibilities in their communities
- Inclusion, by which every child is valued
- A multi-age approach to child care that involves everyone around a child

## Investing in Our Children

Indigenous peoples have always known that children are a gift from the Creator. Children embody the past, live the present, and promise the future, and each child is born with gifts to be realized and nurtured. Children are the highest priority of parents, family, and the community, and parents, families and communities have a sacred and shared responsibility to care for their children.

Indigenous early learning and child care (ELCC) reflects Indigenous knowledge in ways of caring for and educating children, including:

- Appreciation for the sacredness of life
- Awareness of the continuity of life and our connections to past and future generations
- Love for our families
- Respect for nature
- A commitment to positive relationships and equality
- The pursuit of spiritual well-being



## How Early Learning and Child Care Changes Lives

When our children receive quality IELCC, it changes their lives, their families, and their communities in the following ways:

- Language revitalization can take place in innovative and culturally grounded ways.
- Providing children and families a chance to heal from the effects of colonization, particularly as they develop a sense of belonging and cultural identity
- Access to traditional foods
- Support so that parents can advance their own education and employment opportunities, and participate in their cultures and languages
- Families are encouraged and given opportunities to be involved in their children's learning and education, which honours traditional Indigenous societies' recognition and valuing of families as caregivers.
- Giving children a foundation for future success, with help to improve children's health and wellness, and to build their self-confidence, interest in learning, and successful parenting and social skills
- Building a foundation for communities' wellbeing by preserving and revitalizing their languages, knowledges, and cultures

## Investing in our Early Childhood Educators

First Nations ELCC personnel (e.g early childhood educators [ECEs]) provide exceptional care when:

- All personnel receive proper training, support, respect, and recognition for their work
- All personnel receive appropriate wages, good working conditions, opportunities for career advancement, access to professional development, and comfortable work spaces and off-duty areas
- They have the resources to act as research practitioners and contribute to the development of knowledge focused on First Nations child care and the pursuit of excellence in child care
- Networks of mutual support exist to connect them with other members of their profession, and technology, time, and support are provided so personnel can attend meetings and conferences and participate in initiatives that build links between programs

*IELCC programs are a “powerful equalizer” for children and offer long-term benefits for children, families, and society as a whole.*

The following resources were used to build this info sheet and can be referred to for more detailed information:

### Early learning and child care (ELCC)

<https://www.acc-society.bc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/BestPracticesHandbook-2008.pdf>

<https://www.canada.ca/en/indigenous-services-canada/services/jordans-principle.html>

<https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/indigenous-early-learning.html>

<https://www.acc-society.bc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/QualityStatement-short-final.pdf>

[https://fnigc.ca/sites/default/files/docs/fnigc\\_research\\_series\\_child\\_care\\_en\\_final.pdf](https://fnigc.ca/sites/default/files/docs/fnigc_research_series_child_care_en_final.pdf)

### The IELCC Framework

<https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/indigenous-early-learning/2018-framework.html#h2.6>

### ELCC and Culture

<https://www.childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/18/09/indigenous-languages-must-be-nurtured-early-childhood-education-sett>

[https://www.acc-society.bc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Increasing-Indigenous-childrens-access-to-traditional-foods\\_exec-summary.pdf](https://www.acc-society.bc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Increasing-Indigenous-childrens-access-to-traditional-foods_exec-summary.pdf)

[https://www.afn.ca/uploads/Social\\_Development/Jordan%27s%20Principle%20Handbook%202019\\_en.pdf](https://www.afn.ca/uploads/Social_Development/Jordan%27s%20Principle%20Handbook%202019_en.pdf)

