



BC Aboriginal  
Child Care Society

# Caring for our Children newsletter

[www.acc-society.bc.ca](http://www.acc-society.bc.ca)

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*"It took time before I gained the self-confidence to assert myself and my beliefs in the non-Indigenous world. But when I came to understand that my voice had power and that others were looking to me to be their voice, I was able to let go of my fear,"* stated Mary Simon, Governor General of Canada.

## Making Connections to the Natural Environment in an Urban Setting

The Singing Frog Aboriginal Head Start (AHS) preschool is located near Commercial Drive in Vancouver, BC on the Southwest corner of the Grandview | /ɬUqinak'uuh Elementary property. Coordinator Leona Antoine feels extremely lucky that the program children, families, and staff have access to a safe natural outdoor space in an urban environment.

In 2018 the preschool secured funding from the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) to create the outdoor space. Over several months, Dirk's Natural Playgrounds prepped the location using the already existing ground formation and Indigenous plantings, then created the outdoor play space by introducing additional natural materials, and wood-built elements. Just this winter, with funding from the BC Ministry of Children and Family Development in partnership with Aboriginal Head Start Association, the landscapers came back to add in additional elements like the log cover and bike shed.

The revitalized play space has been designed to support Indigenous children and reflect some of the natural elements they might interact with as part of their culture. It inspires the educators, supports families, and helps the children to excel. All the staff at Singing Frog agree that the outdoor space is special. They have kindly shared their thoughts about the space with our readers.

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DIANA JOSEPH – Lead ECE SN

### How does having the outdoor space support the children at Singing Frog?

The outdoor space is all natural, which is really difficult to find in the city. We recently added wooden beams to cross the logs and the children are already balancing on them and developing their motor skills. The children get to experience interactions with wildlife. For example, they see birds calling, or find insects, and have even watched as a racoon explored the play space. We teach the children a song about cedar trees and then we can go visit one outside, so the children get to visit the tree and now they relate to all the trees differently, they really notice them and differences as the seasons change.

### What does it mean for you, as an educator, to have the outdoor space?

It lets me appreciate nature, the scents, and connecting with the land. It gives me more options to support gross motor skills and assess where children are at in a casual play-based environment. It lets us bring the outdoors inside when we challenge them to move some of the outdoor play elements into the class. We have moveable planters so children can bring them inside to take care of the plants. We also have a growing plot next door where the children have planted potatoes, tomatoes, strawberries, and raspberries. And we have special flowers planted so children can bring flowers home to their families. They learn to take care of nature and share with others. The outdoor space can be really calming for children and interacting with nature and nurturing something builds their confidence.

### What makes the outdoor space special?

Natural space in an urban area. Families can safely participate in the class during a pandemic because there is the outdoor space for them to adventure in. We've even seen parents play-

ing and balancing on the logs. It brings everyone joy!

CHEYENNE SEARY – ECE IT/SN

### How does having the outdoor space support the children at Singing Frog?

In lots of ways. They get to have unstructured play time, dive into things they are curious about, self-regulate, and be self-motivated. It supports inquiry, lets the children take the lead on what they want to learn, and supports educators to bring elements of what the children are interested in from playing outside into curriculum inside. The children really want to be outdoors and run and explore. They get to experience urban sounds and adjust to different noise levels.

### What does it mean for you, as an educator, to have the outdoor space?

So great to have a space on the land to create curriculum around. We learn about the cedar tree and about the medicine it provides. We have a safe outdoor space that allows them to explore how they want. It is located next to the community garden, so it allows us to experience a more formal planted and growing experience and compare to the natural space. They also get to connect with older students or past program participants, so they are learning how to maintain relationships, build on relationships and make connections. It really feels like a community when you get to say hello to a passerby. It allows for surprise wildlife experiences that are exciting and create points for discussion and exploration in the curriculum.

### What makes the space special?

It's a safe natural play space that changes with the seasons, supports collaboration of educators, brings opportunity for risky play, builds community, and self-confidence. They can eat berries directly from the local plants in the area.





HAYLEY ZACKS – ECEA

### How does having the outdoor space support the children at Singing Frog?

I really love the natural aspect of the space. Lots of cedar wood and undetermined space for free play means that the children get to figure out what kind of play they want to take part in and it supports dramatic, imaginary play. They play space-ships, pirates, and move the materials around to use them for different things depending on their own wants. Climbing, jumping, crawling, and running are what they like to do most.

They get to see the land and be part of the natural world, which is really important as an AHS. Cedar trees, berries, ferns, and all the plantings are local, so the children get to understand what grows here and is from here. They also get to pick and eat directly from the plants and have access to traditional foods right in their own backyard.

### What does it mean for you, as an educator, to have the outdoor space?

It is a beautiful space to work with and allows educators to build outdoor curriculum based on what the children's interests are. For instance, the children are really into climbing and running right now so we take point from their interests. Having access to Indigenous plants in the space means we can create curriculum that supports interaction with the natural world and lets us weave in lessons both inside and outside that can incorporate the inside conversations to the outdoor spaces.

### What makes the space special?

It has really been designed with Indigenous children in mind. Built to have natural materials, has plants that are Indigenous, and they get to have access to the natural world in an urban centre.

SHYANNA PELLETIER – ECEA

### How does having the outdoor space support the children at Singing Frog?

I am a huge fan of the outdoor space, the Indigenous plants, and the way it has been designed. It gives children more of an idea of natural habitat and supports Indigenous roots by being nature based and lets them use their imaginations more.

### What does it mean for you, as an educator, to have the outdoor space?

It gives educators a lot more opportunities to interact with the kids and support their creativity and share more information that is nature based, like counting rings on the tree and watching insects feed on plants. The children get to talk, and we get to be more interactive with them. All the wood and greenery can be used as learning tools for the preschoolers. It helps pique their curiosity. They get to interact with wildlife: following the tracks on the sand, finding the holes from woodpeckers, following a worm path, or doing a bark rubbing.

### What makes the space special?

It is special because it is different than any other outdoor space. It doesn't have any plastic or usual playscape equipment. It feels peaceful and you get to experience it in all seasons, and in all weather.



Photo credits: All images courtesy of Singing Frog AHS preschool

# An Update on the Moe The Mouse® Speech and Language Development Program National Adaptation Project

**Author Klara Schoenfeld.**



Moe was born in 2003 out of an effort to create a culturally relevant Speech and Language program for young Indigenous children. Little did the BC Aboriginal Child Care Society (BCACCS) know that this small mouse would grow to make such a huge impact. Moe has not only won the hearts of children and Early Childhood Educators across BC but across Canada. Moe is a national star!

The popularity of Moe led to the realization that this program was special and deserved to be shared across Canada. With funding from Unifor Social Justice Fund and CN Rail, BCACCS was able to engage a project coordinator to support the adaptation of the Moe the Mouse® program in six regions across the country - Alberta, Yukon, Saskatchewan, Ontario, Quebec, and the Atlantic provinces.

So far Moe has been adapted in the Atlantic, Alberta, and Saskatchewan. It has been amazing to see all the ideas, creativity, and the journey of each region. Every region is at a different stage of development in their adaptation. While each region is unique, the process has been similar starting with the formation of an advisory group that works together to ensure that, like the BC Moe, the adapted Moe versions will be culturally

relevant to each region and at the same time general enough to be inclusive of the cultural diversity within each region.

The first thing each advisory member did was adapt the animals so that they reflect the wildlife in their regions. For example, both Saskatchewan and the Atlantic changed the crab to a turtle and Alberta changed it to a horse. They have all also included additional animals and sounds, including speech sounds from local languages.

There are so many amazing examples, but here are a few highlights from the adaptations so far:

## **Saskatchewan**

This region will be adding Elders, Grandma and Grandpa mice (Kokum and Moshum) to share the Seven Sacred Teachings. Each teaching comes with a sacred animal. They will also be consulting with language speakers from the many languages and dialects in the region, to decide which sounds to give each of the sacred animals. The advisors from Saskatchewan are collecting photos of Moe to use within the adaptation and they are writing a Saskatchewan Meet Moe book.

## **The Atlantic**

This region is also including an Elder Mouse and has elements that reflect the Mi'kmaq language throughout the kit such as animal names on the word cards. Their advisors decided to develop a fully outlined 16-week curriculum and started a "resource bank" for educators to share resources and ideas for activities.

## **Alberta**

In this region they have added to Moe's

story. Moe is still from the West Coast, but he has a Métis cousin, Joe, who is from Alberta, who plays the fiddle, and who wears a sash. They have also written a new Moe song that shares the adventures he will have as he travels each of the four directions visiting children. The Cree language is also being included throughout their kit.

## **Other Adaptations**

There have been several adaptations that have happened outside the scope of the Moe National Project but were inspired by it. Whitecap Dakota in Saskatchewan has adapted Moe specifically as part of a language revitalization project, translating the kit into the Dakota language. Another adaptation is Mushkegowuk Cree in Ontario. Local to BC, the Okanagan Nations Alliance is in the process of making their adaptation official.

Moe's popularity has inspired many educators to adapt the Moe Kit to reflect the many cultures, nations, languages and regions across Canada and BCACCS continues to receive many requests from communities and individual programs wanting to make Moe their own.

To support this, BCACCS is developing an adaptation manual that will outline what adaptations are possible under the "User License" and when to consider an "Adaptation Licensing Agreement." If you would like to learn more about adapting your Moe kit for your culture or region





## Decade of Indigenous Languages 2022-2032

March 31 is National Indigenous Languages Day and an opportunity for Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in Canada to recognize and celebrate the very rich and diverse heritage of Indigenous languages.

Indigenous languages embody Indigenous cultures and histories. Languages are deeply personal and they connect individuals, families and communities across generations, distances and differences. They are integral to Indigenous cultures, self-identity and well-being. Languages carry stories, the memory of those who came before us, and the promise that we hold for those who come after us. They convey wisdom and traditions from Elders to children, from one generation to the next.

In February 2020 First Nations representatives from BC joined more than 500 participants from 50 countries in Mexico City to discuss a roadmap for the Decade of Indigenous Languages (2022-2032).

The roadmap, called the Los Pinos Declaration, calls for the implementation of the internationally recognized rights of Indigenous peoples. It emphasizes Indigenous peoples' rights to freedom of expression, to an education in their mother tongue, and to participate in public life using their languages, as prerequisites for the survival of Indigenous languages. You can read more about it here: <https://en.unesco.org/news/upcoming-decade-indigenous-languages-2022-2032-focus-indigenous-language-users-human-rights>.

When the UN General Assembly declared the International Decade of Indigenous Languages, they invited Indigenous peoples to initiate ideas. Find out more about the First Peoples' Cultural Council 10 Goals For The Decade Of Indigenous Languages by visiting this link: [https://fpcc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Goals-for-UNESCO-Decade-of-Indigenous-Languages\\_FPCC\\_Feb2020.pdf](https://fpcc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Goals-for-UNESCO-Decade-of-Indigenous-Languages_FPCC_Feb2020.pdf).

Let us know how your program is supporting Indigenous language learning in your community. Connect with us to share your story and inspire others. If you are interested in having your early learning language programming highlighted in the next newsletter email [communications@acc-society.bc.ca](mailto:communications@acc-society.bc.ca).

## Bear Witness Day May 10!

May 10 is Spirit Bear's birthday and an important date in the history of Jordan's Principle at the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal.



Jordan's Principle is a legal rule that ensures that all First Nations children living in Canada can access the products, services and supports they need, when they need them.

Show your support and "Bear Witness" to ensure Jordan's Principle is fully implemented.

Spread the word and post photos on social media using the hashtags #JordansPrinciple and #BearWitnessDay.

Learn more about what you can do by visiting the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society website. <https://fncaringsociety.com/BearWitness>

BCACCS is the proud host of two Jordan's Principle Service Coordinators (Metro Vancouver and Fraser Salish regions) and the Jordan's Principle Enhance Service Coordination Hub which provides support, consultation, and training for Service Coordinators across BC.

## April is Autism Awareness Month in BC

Autism Spectrum Disorders affect about one in every 110 children and their families in BC. There are highly effective research-based treatment and intervention methods available that can help children and their families address the characteristics of this disorder, particularly in the early years.

Here are some websites to visit with supports specific to BC.

Aboriginal Supported Child Development's (ASCD) purpose is to enable children who require extra supports to be included in child care settings, preschool, before/after school and community care settings. Visit <https://www.ascdp.bc.ca/> to learn more.

The Aboriginal Infant Development Programs (AIDP) can help address and identify the needs and gaps of children birth to age six to increase program capacity and support early intervention. To learn more visit <https://www.aidp.bc.ca/aidp-programs>.

Autism Community Training (ACT)  
<https://www.actcommunity.ca/bcresources/>

Pacific Autism Family Network (PAFN)  
<https://pacificautismfamily.com/overview/>

Autism spectrum disorder BC government website [click here](#).

# Learning Outside Together: Incorporating Traditional Wisdom and Promising Practices to Futureproof Child Care Programs

Reprinted with permission from the ECEBC winter 2022 edition of the *The Early Childhood Educator* journal.

**Author Enid Elliott.**

Enid Elliot has been working with children for many years and teaches ELC at Camosun College in Victoria.

The green, living and breathing world has gifts for all of us. Meeting outside with friends and family in the open air has become a familiar scene. Many child cares moved their programs outside during the pandemic. Research shows that there are other positive effects (mental, physical, emotional) to being outside, particularly in natural settings with trees, rocks, earth. Just seeing a picture of a tree or green meadow can provide many people with a sense of calm. But that is only one layer to the value of being outside—there are multiple lessons to be learned from and with the land.

ECEBC and the BC Aboriginal Child Care Society (BCACCS) are working to offer an online course to educators across the province. The course is called Learning Outside Together, and the idea is to encourage educators to get outdoors. For some people this may mean reflecting on their outdoor space and for others it may mean thinking about the green spaces within their community that could host children or how children learn from the land.

“Online?” you may ask, just as I did. Isn’t it a contradiction to sit at your computer and talk about the benefits of the outdoors? But the interesting idea about this program is the online activities will encourage educators to explore their outdoor space to observe,

reflect, and to share their experiences at weekly meetings with a small group of participants and a peer mentor.

British Columbia is a vast and varied province with a wide range of landscapes and geographies. This course will take place all over BC. Participants will be in different territories; they will be in rural areas, large cities, and smaller cities; they will work in Aboriginal Head Start programs, child care programs, and preschools. By sharing experiences, stories, and locales, participants will share ideas and strengthen their commitment to children, families, and their early childhood communities. Online peer meeting will help place the discussions and ideas in a local context.

Working with an excellent team from ECEBC and BC Aboriginal Child Care Society (BCACCS), as well as the research group Social Research and Demonstration Corporation Canada, I found the course emerged from team input, as well as the steering committee of Elders and experts. It was clear we needed to hear from the many voices within our province. I had the privilege of interviewing local knowledge keepers, Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators, and licensing officers to understand the diversity within our province. Braiding together Western and Indigenous insights provided a more holistic approach to appreciating the world beyond four walls.

There are 198 distinct First Nations, as well as Métis and Inuit, who have been on this land, which we now call BC, for thousands of years. Each of these communities has accumulated vast knowledge about the land on which they live. Settlers arrived and added

their layer of history and narrative, foreign plants, and animals, and many to their shame and ignorance tried to eradicate the knowledge, languages, and cultures of the First Peoples.

Complex discussions will arise as we think of outdoor play and connection to nature; land as teacher; and land as holding knowledge, language, and culture. There are no simple explanations, answers, or solutions to some of the questions we may share. Each participant will bring different experiences and reflections as they journey through the material.

The 12-week course will make its debut in spring 2022 and will be open to Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators. If you don’t make it into the first cohort there will be at least two others. The exciting part will be the discussions and reflections of the mentor groups.

Read the article from Karolyn and Liz on page 23 to learn more about becoming a mentor for this project and the mentorship course!

There was an amazing response to the call for participants for the LOT program.

The Spring 2022 cohort is now underway.

The LOT program has a commitment to support a minimum of 30 % of Indigenous participation.

BCACCS will share updates as the course progresses.

## Don't Miss Out on Exciting Job Opportunities at BCACCS

BCACCS is looking for a few amazing people to fill job positions in some of our teams. Is this you? Find out more about the career opportunities available by visiting our job posting webpage <https://www.acc-society.bc.ca/services/job-postings/>

### Jordan's Principle Service Coordination Hub Resource

Coordinator

Lower Mainland, BC

Open until a suitable candidate is found

### IELCC Contract Administrator

Lower Mainland, BC

Open until a suitable candidate is found

## May is Child Care Month in BC

Child Care Month is an opportunity to acknowledge the valuable essential service child care providers and early childhood educators deliver, including the significant contributions they make to children's, family's, and communities' well-being.

This year Child Care Provider Appreciation Day falls on May 19 (the third Thursday in May). This is a chance for everyone to show how much they appreciate the dedication and care that early learning professionals provide throughout the year.

BCACCS will be sharing more information as May gets closer. To stay connected follow us on Facebook and Twitter and sign up to receive weekly informational e-blasts.



## Highlights from the BCACCS Online Spring Conference na mi k'anátsut kwis cheńtway "New Beginnings"

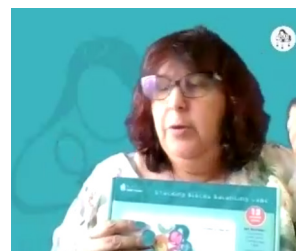
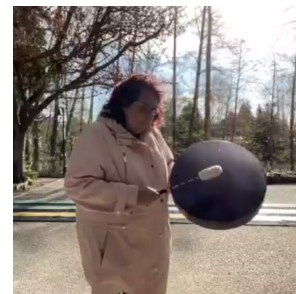
DATE & TIME: April 9, 2022 (9:00 AM – 5:00 PM)

We are grateful to the presenters and XiQuelem (Eugene Harry) for sharing their wisdom with us and inspiring us when, after many challenges in the last several years and coping through the pandemic, we are feeling ready for #NewBeginnings.

Coming together reminds us of the critical role we play in nurturing the next generation of leaders. Thank you for joining us for the day as we explored emerging and prominent teachings related to Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care (IELCC).

Our next conference will be a hybrid event format and will take place in the Fall. Check the webpage for more details. <https://www.acc-society.bc.ca/education-training/bcaccs-annual-provincial-training-conference/>

To find out what new professional development opportunities are planned for May and June email [coordinator@acc-society.bc.ca](mailto:coordinator@acc-society.bc.ca).





*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 Indigenous early childhood education and care.

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 (CCCCF). BCACCS membership also means membership with the CCCC, including automatic subscription to the CCCC *Interaction* magazine.

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Our provincial office is located on the unceded ancestral lands of the (Xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and səliłwətaʔ/sełilwitulh (Tsleil-Waututh).



Funded by the Province  
of British Columbia

## BECOME A MEMBER

Membership at BCACCS provides a provincial forum to network and share ideas regarding Aboriginal child care and child development issues. Direct benefits and privileges of membership include:

- Free annual subscription to the Society's quarterly newsletter "Caring for Our Children"
- Resource Library borrowing privileges, with access to more than 1400 child-focused books, articles and videos, as well as BCACCS ECE curriculum boxes (including Moe the Mouse®)
- Discounted rate on BCACCS publications
- Discounted rate on registration for the BCACCS Annual Provincial Training Conference
- The ability to participate and vote on the business of the Society
- Membership with the Canadian Child Care Federation which includes receipt of their quarterly magazine, "Interaction"
- A voice in a professional Aboriginal organization dedicated to quality child care
- Opportunity to support, shape and influence Aboriginal child care policy, research and practice, both provincially and nationally

To learn more visit our website <https://www.acc-society.bc.ca/about/become-a-member/> or contact [library@acc-society.bc.ca](mailto:library@acc-society.bc.ca) 604-913-9128 ext. 229.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

To keep informed about upcoming events sign up for our weekly e-news and informational e-blasts. <https://us4.list-manage.com/subscribe?u=a74eafbc72d669859e6453b&id=0bdd35ef3a>

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We Value Children

Proud to be  
an Affiliate  
Fière d'être affiliée



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

Nos enfants : notre richesse