

IELCC in BC: 2020-21 Annual Report

*Prepared by BC Aboriginal Child Care Society (IELCC TI Agreement CRF: 016648065)
Prepared for First Nations Leadership Council & Employment Skills & Development
Canada*

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Background/Context

In British Columbia, the First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC), through political resolutions from the three leadership organizations, mandated BC Aboriginal Child Care Society (BCACCS) to lead the 2017 regional engagement work, and, ultimately to serve as the Regional First Nations IELCC Coordinating Structure for the development and implementation of the First Nations IELCC Framework in BC. As such, BCACCS's mandate includes regional coordination, community engagement, leadership, program, policy development support, research, partnership development, and accountability for key deliverables.

In November 2019, Employment Skills & Development Canada (ESDC) and BCACCS finalized the IELCC Transformation Initiative Agreement number CRF: 016648065 (and subsequent Amendment dated August 5, 2020), outlining key terms, activities, and deliverables. Included in this is the requirement (Section 10) for Annual Reports, including progress on key milestones/activities/expenditures, lessons learned, and partnering activities. In addition, a COVID19-specific funding agreement (COVID-BCACCS01) was signed in December 2020. This report serves to meet reporting requirements, for all agreements, for the 2020-21 fiscal year.

In addition to the formal annual report, BCACCS has provided the following updates on the work and progress of IELCC in BC:

- Interim Report to ESDC, dated July 4, 2021; and
- Reporting to the First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC), as the Regional Governance body:

Ongoing Status Updates/Reporting			
<i>First Nations Leadership Council</i>	<i>BC Assembly of First Nations - Chiefs in Assembly</i>	<i>Union of BC Indian Chiefs - Chiefs in Assembly</i>	<i>First Nations Summit - Chiefs in Assembly</i>
June 4, 2020 December 10, 2020	November 25, 2020	September 20, 2020 February 17, 2021	October 4, 2020 February 11, 2021

This Annual Report will provide an accounting of key activities and outputs, in relation to the implementation of the Annual Operating Plan (also known as the IELCC Investment Strategy in BC) and the three pillars of the IELCC Framework (2018):

- **CAPACITY:** Increasing the capacity of the IELCC sector, including leaders and practitioners:
 - **First Nations Wage Enhancement**
 - **Service Development & Enhancement**
 - **COVID-19 Emergency Funding (including Pandemic Pay)**
 - **Sector-Building & Leadership Development**
- **QUALITY:** Increasing the quality of IELCC services and supports (as outlined in *BCACCS Elements of Quality Child Care from the Perspectives of Aboriginal Peoples in British Columbia* [BCACCS, 2005]):
 - **First Nations Wage Enhancement**
 - **Service Development & Enhancement**

- **Minor Capital**
- **COVID-19 Emergency Funding (including Pandemic Pay)**
- **ACCESS:** Increasing access, for Indigenous families, to quality IELCC services and supports:
 - **Service Development & Enhancement**
 - **Minor Capital**
 - **COVID-19 Emergency Funding**

2020-21 was only the second full year of implementing the *IELCC Investment Strategy in BC* - as well as the first full year of implementing this work **during a global pandemic** - so investments with (and in) First Nations communities continued to be balanced with the ongoing need to developing relationships, policies, and systems - and responding to the constantly evolving nature of health and safety needs (both physical and emotional) in communities, programs, and families.

Progress on Annual Operating Plan

An initial step for all First Nations wanting to access the available IELCC investments is to register in the BCACCS's managed **IELCC database/portal**. In 2020-21, this process was expanded to include service agencies, Tribal Councils, and Urban Indigenous Organizations. This process starts with providing registrants key background information on IELCC in BC, clarified data management and privacy policies, offered regional contacts (IELCC Regional Community Facilitators). This process ensures that Nations are only asked once to provide key information:

- **Contact Information**
 - Chief or Council Member
 - Nation/Community Administrator
 - Signing Authority
 - Finance Contact
- **Community Information**
 - Demographics
 - Language Groups
 - IELCC Services Scope & Key Service Data (# children served; types of services; funding received; # staff; etc.)
 - Nations Served
 - Information Collection & Consent

Key Outputs

As of March 31, 2021, there were **163 Registrations completed**, making each eligible to apply to access the investments. This figure is an increase from 109 First Nations in 2019-20 - and, given the nature of a pandemic year, with so many other competing priorities - this increase is seen as significant.

The registrations (*138 First Nations; 7 Service Organizations; 1 Tribal Council; and 17 Urban Indigenous Organizations*) covered the entire province, with the following figures for each of the five regions within British Columbia:

- **Fraser Region:** 24 registrations
- **Interior Region:** 40 registrations
- **Northern Region:** 43 registrations
- **Vancouver Coastal Region:** 14 registrations
- **Vancouver Island Region:** 42 registrations

First Nations Wage Enhancement (2020-21)

This area of investment was a continuation of the work began in 2018-19 and 2019-20, investing to enhance the wages of Early Childhood Educators in First Nations communities and organizations, as a means of increasing quality and building the capacity of the sector and First Nations communities. These investments are also working to achieve equitability and non-discrimination in access to supports and services for First Nations children and families, as articulated in several rulings of the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal.

The retroactive nature of the application process (it is paid in semi-annual installments [P1 & P2], for work already completed) means that some applications received and paid out in the 2020-21 fiscal year, would be for work completed in the 2019-20 fiscal year. What we are reporting here is a record of the outputs-to-date, and will include data previously reported; the financial report will only include payments made in 2020-21.

Key Outputs

	# Applications Received	# Educators Supported	# ELCC spaces Supported	# Children Enrolled	# Children on Waitlist
2019-20 (P1)	102	496	4116	3202	916
2019-20 (P2)	71	390	3130	2474	705
2020-21 (P1)	35	239	1952	1317	514
2020-21 (P2)	<i>*applications will begin in 2021-22 fiscal year</i>				

Please note that the steady decline of applications, while concerning, is clearly linked to the rise of the COVID-19 pandemic and the complexities and burdens that this brought families, communities, and all IELCC programs and services. BCACCS staff continue to work with eligible communities and organizations to ensure they are supported to access the resources available, and we anticipate that these numbers will again increase.

As indicated in the 2019-20 Annual Report, BCACCS was committed to researching a strategy to expand the FNWE initiative to include urban programs/services. As will be reported later in this document, an initial element of this was to extend the COVID-19 funding to Urban Indigenous Organizations. This expansion helped BCACCS to work through key policy considerations (e.g. Indigenous organizations, or any urban organization serving Indigenous families?) and test out implementation processes. Further costing research was interrupted by the need to pivot/focus energies and resources on COVID responses - but remains a priority for 2021-22.

As BC continues to evolve their broader Early Learning & Care sector, including governance and policy work, BCACCS continues to participate in consultations regarding the development of a province wide wage grid, and consider potential considerations for the FNWE work.

Community-Led Planning & Development (2020-21)

This investment supports First Nations in BC in a process of local engagement, dialogue, exploration of opportunities and needs related to quality IELCC, and the determination of priorities (which can then serve to support the application for Service Development & Enhancement).

While much of these investments were technically made in the 2018-29 fiscal year, there is a clear and ongoing need for some form of this investment to be ongoing, as planning itself is an ongoing process. While COVID-19 significantly hampered this kind of work in 2020-21, it is anticipated that it may be an emerging need, as communities and programs begin to identify how they re-imagine life and business in a post-pandemic world.

Service Development & Enhancement and Minor Capital (2020-21)

First Nations that have completed the registration and - in most cases - an earlier community-led planning process, are able to access the Service Enhancement & Development (e.g. language and cultural teachers, IELCC training, etc.) and/or Minor Capital funding (e.g. playgrounds, kitchen/bathroom renovations, appliance updates, etc.), in order to action the local priorities identified. What we are reporting here is a record of the outputs-to-date, and will include data previously reported; the financial report will only include payments made in 2020-21.

Key Outputs - Service Development & Enhancement

Service Development & Enhancement applications: **25** (19 approved; 6 pending)

- **Fraser Region: 2**
- **Interior Region: 8**
- **Northern Region: 5**
- **Vancouver Coastal Region: 0**
- **Vancouver Island Region: 10**

Service Development & Enhancement initiatives that include focus on Language &/or Culture: **25**

Service Development & Enhancement initiatives that focus on Increasing Quality: **25**

Service Development & Enhancement initiatives that focus on Increasing Capacity: **25**

Service Development & Enhancement initiatives that focus on Increasing Access: **25**

Key Outputs - Minor Capital

Minor Capital applications: **27** (17 approved; 10 pending)

- **Fraser Region: 4**
- **Interior Region: 11**
- **Northern Region: 5**
- **Vancouver Coastal Region: 2**
- **Vancouver Island Region: 5**

While these figures (Service & Minor Capital) have more than doubled since 2019-20, it is slower than we would have hoped, given the immense needs and opportunities available. We recognize that COVID-19 has significantly impacted the pace of this work, given the more pressing realities that have faced communities and programs/services, as well as serious delays with the materials and tradespeople needed for some capital work. It will remain an area of focus for 2021-22.

COVID-19 Emergency Funding

This funding was new in 2020-21, as a result of an early decision by BCACCS - in May 2020 - and then later funding from the Government of Canada in November 2020. Communities were invited to apply, based on their unique IELCC contexts and needs, to support their response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

COVID-19 Emergency Applications received: **110** (all approved)

- **Fraser Region:** 18
- **Interior Region:** 26
- **Northern Region:** 28
- **Vancouver Coastal Region:** 9
- **Vancouver Island Region:** 29

The introduction of this funding was critically important and has served to support a full range of responses, including purchase of PPE, outreach strategies to safely support isolated families, increased custodial staff, outdoor equipment, food security, mental health supports, etc. As 2021-22 progresses, we continue to see the needs evolve and change to mirror the various stages of BC's Restart Plan.

IELCC Sector-Building & Leadership Development

While much of this work was placed on hold, while COVID-19 responses took necessary priority, it remains a priority within the broader IELCC Investment Strategy. There were two key highlights for this work in 2020-21:

- **IELCC Training Investments**

While not directly connected to the broader ELCC Entry to Practice strategy, there were two IELCC Service Development & Enhancement investments made in community-based IELCC training initiatives, one of which was highly innovative but had to shut down due to the pandemic.

- **IELCC Regional Planning Strategy in BC**

This work, in 2020-21, involved three key elements of work:

1. **June 30, 2020 Funding & Policy Leaders meeting** of First Nations Leadership Council representatives and Government of Canada representatives. The focus of this meeting was to review the IELCC Regional Planning Strategy approach and to secure commitment for the first stage of data gathering and mapping (including the identification of representatives for a Technical Working Group).
 - a. First Nations representatives: **11** (*FNLC, FNHA, BCACCS*)
 - b. Government of Canada representatives: **18** (*ESDC, SC, ISC & FNIHB, PHAC*)
2. **IELCC data gathering and mapping** was a five-month process of the Technical Working Group, identifying and sharing (where possible) IELCC data. The data that was able to be shared was then used to frame maps and an infographic, to highlight some of what was known about IELCC investments in BC. The work was complex, presented challenges related to privacy and access, and did not result in a substantial scan of current investment or outcome data. However, it did identify opportunities for further exploration and it did serve as a foundation for dialogue.
 - a. Data documents produced & reviewed: **20** (19 maps; 1 infographic)
3. **December 4, 2020 Funding & Policy Leaders meeting** of First Nations Leadership Council representatives and Government of Canada representatives. The focus of this meeting was the review the work of the Technical Working Group (maps, infographic), discuss the key learning from the process to date, and identify next steps.
 - a. First Nations representatives: **9** (*FNLC, FNHA, BCACCS*)
 - b. Government of Canada representatives: **18** (*ESDC, SC, ISC & FNIHB, PHAC*)

Moving Forward in 2021-22

Key priorities in moving forward in 2020-21:

- Engaging First Nations leaders to ensure they are supported with processes that see IELCC funds invested in their communities.
 - This includes, but is not limited to, implementing the FNICCI Engagement Process to identify and explore direction from leaders on the administration of that funding program.
- IELCC Regional Planning Strategy in BC: continuing the roll-out of that strategy and look for intersections with Early Care & Learning work underway in BC, including new governance and policy structures.
- Supporting First Nations communities and organizations to access funding to support their COVID-19 responses; ensuring the same level of responsiveness and flexibility is available to support locally-determined responses to keeping members safe and healthy.
- Development and initial implementation of IELCC in BC Evaluation/Impact Framework, including the co-development of “..reporting and performance measures...” as outlined in section 35.1 of contract.
- Growth of existing investment streams (FNWE, planning, services, COVID, etc.)
 - *Research & costing of expansion of some investments to include Urban Indigenous IELCC*
- Capacity Building - internal (BCACCS) and external (communities, sector)

Distribution of IELCC in BC Annual Report for 2020-21

A copy of this report (accompanied by a covering briefing note) will be shared with the First Nations Leadership Council, including

- Union of BC Indian Chiefs
- First Nations Summit
- BC Assembly of First Nations

In addition, the report will be posted to the BCACCS website and will be shared through the established communication channels (e.g. social media, e-Newsletter)