

Interaction

VOLUME 31, NUMBER 2, WINTER 2018

CCCCF Turns 30 Years (Part 2)

My Life in Early Childhood Education – How Did I Get Here?

Conversations with Canadian Child Care
Federation Founders and Leaders

Creating a Culturally Responsive Classroom: The
Early Childhood Educators' Reflective Process



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April Kalyniuk, Pat Wege and Sandra Griffin each offer a unique perspective over the 30 years that the Canadian Child Care Federation grew up, from beginning to today. (pg. 20)

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The photo on the cover of Sandra Griffin was captured from the video interview created by Storypark that appears in the Focus section.



INSIDE THE FEDERATION

CCCF Affiliates' Meeting in Ottawa – Taking New Collective Steps Forward

The CCCF had the opportunity and pleasure to host a meeting of its affiliates—Canada's provincial child care organizations—from across Canada in early November (thank you to the Lawson Foundation for the funding!). It was the second time in two years that the CCCF was able to host a face to face meeting like this with one more to go in 2018. Bringing together the CCCF affiliates in person solidifies our relationships.

Some of our guest speakers and workshop facilitators included, **Sandra Griffin** (CCCF founder and former Board member) who took us through a CCCF branding exercise, **Karen Isaac**, Executive Director from the BC Aboriginal Child Care Society, **Jennifer Howard**, former Manitoba Finance Minister, **Marie-Claude Lemieux**, Director, Public Affairs & Government Relations, Association québécoise des centres de la petite enfance (AQCPE), **Christopher Smith**, from Muttart Foundation, and Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, **Jean-Yves Duclos**. These personal connections and other positive developments are symbolic of the renewed optimism the child care sector is experiencing, due in part, to the federal government's recent investment and policy commitments for child care.



Welcome New CCCF Board Members

As a result of the board election held in summer 2017, the following individuals have been elected to the CCCF Board as of November 15, 2017: **Joan Arruda, Linda Cottes, Laura Fowler Massie, Christie Scarlett, Donna Stapleton and Taya Whitehead**.

It was encouraging to see so many individuals stand for election to the CCCF board. We thank everyone for their commitment to children and families in their respective provinces and in Canada.

Farewell...

Farewell to outgoing CCCF Board Members **Linda Skinner** and **Christine MacLeod** who have served on the CCCF Board for over a decade, helping our organization navigate the rough seas and giving direction to the organization's good work for child care in Canada. Your friendship, comradery and hard work will be missed. It won't be the same without you.





INSIDE THE FEDERATION



CCCF Presented to House Standing Committee on Finance and Members of Parliament in Ottawa – Pre Budget Submission for Child Care Investment in Canada

In September, the CCCF had the honour and the privilege to present to the House Standing Committee on Finance in Ottawa—presenting on the importance, value and urgency of investing further for high quality child care for all Canadians. It was the first time since 2007 that the CCCF had been asked to be an in-person contributor to this important piece of the democratic process.

As one of seven witnesses called for this session, the CCCF was asked several follow-up questions by the MP's who comprise the committee. It was important that Members of Parliament's and other organizations who were present, hear about child care and the need for enhanced investments and policy leadership from the federal government—and just as importantly, further proof that child care has returned to the federal stage and that we are being asked to contribute.



National Child Day November 20

This year CCCF is highlighting *Article 2 (Non-discrimination)*:

The Convention applies to all children, whatever their race, religion or abilities; whatever they think or say, whatever type of family they come from. It doesn't matter where children live, what language they speak, what their parents do, whether they are boys or girls, what their culture is, whether they have a disability or whether they are rich or poor. No child should be treated unfairly on any basis.

CCCF is proud to promote and support a world fit for children. Since 1999, we have been promoting children's rights and working in partnerships with leading children's rights organizations and individuals like the Honourable Senator Landon Pearson, to develop resources for practitioners and parents.

One way we promote children's rights awareness is by celebrating National Child Day. The day was proclaimed by the Government of Canada on March 19th, 1993 to commemorate two historic events for children: the adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of the Child in 1959, and the UN adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1989.

Specific Resources about Children's Rights

A helpful resource for practitioners working with children and families new to Canada is the Canadian Child Care Federation's online resource, *Partnerships in Support of Children's Social Well-Being*. It's available for free download by CCCF members at <http://www.cccf-fcsge.ca/professional-development/members-resource-library/tools-to-enhance-partnerships-in-support-of-childrens-social-well-being/>. The user-friendly accessible tools address key elements of social development, including learning positive behaviour, building self-esteem, enhancing problem-solving skills, strengthening communication skills and supporting cultural identity. The tools have been developed using an asset-based approach that recognizes and honours the strengths of families, while acknowledging the perspectives and experiences of practitioners.



FROM WHERE I SIT

What a Year Indeed for CCCF in 2017

by **Don Giesbrecht**
CEO CCCF

The CCCF had the opportunity and pleasure to host a meeting of its affiliates—Canada’s provincial child care organizations—from across Canada in early November (thank you to the Lawson Foundation for the funding!). It was the second time in two years that the CCCF was able to host a face to face meeting like this with one more to go in 2018. Bringing together the CCCF affiliates in person solidifies our relationships -- rather than having to rely on the use of conference calls and webinars, which have been the mainstay of CCCF operations in recent years. These personal connections and other positive developments are symbolic of the renewed optimism the child care sector is experiencing, due in part, to the federal government’s recent investment and policy commitments for child care.

The other key developments noted above include the Province of Ontario’s commitment to create a universal child care system --- including the ambitious goal of creating 100,000 spaces by 2021, as well as the province of BC’s commitment to also build a universal child care and early learning system over the next 10 years. These are truly ambitious and progressive policy and program goals that are long overdue in Canada. Of course, the work in both provinces will be buoyed by the federal government’s cross Canada) funding commitment of \$7B over the next 10 years (including Indigenous communities).

I had the distinct honor and pleasure of being included in meetings where both the Ontario and BC plans were discussed. A common theme connecting these two provincial plans to the

November CCCF meeting is that of ensuring that children—and quality—are at the heart of every decision and practice.

To some this may seem obvious, that of course, children are at the centre, but it is not an assumption that anyone should take for granted. There is abundant evidence why investing in children and the early years is important to the economy, the economic security of women (and families) and to brain development in the first five years of life. These are all valid and important pieces and most certainly, have been a part of the federal government’s sound bites on the importance of child care. However, in amongst it all and not to be lost is that children and the pursuit of high quality care are the most essential focus of what we do and how we have to move forward in both policy and practice.

It is imperative that we talk about quality with deep meaning and understanding. It is definable and is a mesh of nine interrelated elements, all of which must work together to build and ensure quality. They are:

1. Leadership at the program level
2. Collaborative partnerships with children’s families
3. Indoor and outdoor physical and learning environments
4. A purposeful program that promotes children’s development
5. An ELCC environment that promotes the Rights of the Child
6. A supported workforce
7. Knowledgeable, skilled practitioners
8. Professional administrative practices
9. Effective system infrastructure

Quality care, and our understanding of the same, cannot be left to chance. It is our professional and ethical responsibility to encourage it to be the best.

Finally, I have heard a lot of news and political sound bites as of late about child care being “for those who need it most”. This makes me wonder exactly who “those” are. Indigenous communities? Absolutely. Children with additional support needs? Yes. Single parent families? Check. Families and children at risk? You bet. Middle (and higher) income families? For sure. Rural and remote children and their families? Of course. New to Canada families? Yup. This narrative of “those who need it most” detracts from the reality that all children need and have the right for high quality child care. After all, the the Government of Canada ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child on December 12, 1991. As such, we like all other 193 States Parties are responsible for acting on its international commitments. High quality and accessible, affordable, inclusive care knows no boundaries.



Collaborative Leadership

Advancing the Vision for Universally Accessible Child Care and Professionalism in Canada

by Karolyn Hendra

Introduction

Early Childhood Education (ECE) training in 1989 was exciting. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child was front and centre and I looked forward to my new career (UNICEF, n.d.). In 1991 the Caring for a Living survey identified issues ECE struggled with including low wages, high turnover, recognition and insufficient government investment in young children. The report also highlighted reasons to hope moving forward (Doherty, Lero, Goleman, LaGrange & Tougas, 2000). More ECE's were completing one, two and three-year training programs (Doherty et al., 2000). 62.4% of respondents said they would choose a career in ECE again (Doherty et al., 2000). Ten years later the You Bet I Care follow-up report was released outlining setbacks. One-fifth of ECEs said they would not be working in the sector in the next five years. 44% now stated they would choose this career again and results showed that leaving an ECE job likely meant leaving the field (Doherty, et al., 2000). Key findings and implications from the report were

- The current method of funding child care
- The current low salary levels and poor benefits provided to child care staff
- Provincial/territorial regulations pertaining to staff education levels and the current



- limited accessibility and affordability of pre- and in-service ECCE education
- Staff and director perception of lack of respect from the public
- The lack of a coordinated policy approach to ensure that high-quality child care is available to all children in Canada, regardless of where they live or their family income (Doherty et al., 2000, p. xxvii).

Seventeen years later the list is strikingly similar. The struggle for a national framework similar to public education and nursing has experienced stunted growth. Foundational knowledge, ongoing research and current best practice have not resulted in a sustainable, national system.

Today federal and provincial promises to create universal child care are in the forefront again. What is required to ensure the next 28 years see the preferred future ECEs have long promoted? What is needed to realize a national commitment to universal child care, inclusive of ability and geographic, cultural and socioeconomic diversity? The ripple effect of ECEs in Canada doing their part to educate



themselves and others is a crucial step. Building the membership base, increasing knowledge and awareness of the immediate and long-term needs for ECE locally, provincially and nationally equips professionals to share success oriented solutions to the childcare crisis and promote awareness and alignment with the cause. Buy-in from those directly and indirectly impacted by proactive, preventative high-quality early years programs will move poverty reduction, social justice and national profitability strategies forward with positive long-term results (Khanna & Rothman, 2015). Working together informed ECEs can meet the goal of affordable, accessible and professional childcare. Sharing knowledge and experience enables us to build Canada's diverse child care program efficiently. Commitment to the vision of universal child care supports stakeholders across the country who collaborate in creating standards of practice, education, training and ongoing professional development under a national strategy.

“Be The Change You Want to See in the World” (Mahatma Ghandi)

Christine Mason Miller (n.d.) emphasizes the important role we all play. “When one person follows a dream, tries something new or takes a daring leap, everyone nearby feels that energy and before too long they are making their own daring leaps and inspiring yet another circle.” The ripple of transformation in ECE starts with us. Self-aware, professional practice is our pebble in the pond. Transformation is needed to lead the way to health, well-being, productivity and

We must learn, advocate, educate and build the understanding of what foundational and existing knowledge and literature have been saying for thousands of years. The early years of a child's life are of paramount importance to society.

sustainability. Momentum grows as we build on our collective strengths and join with others creating a ripple of change and innovation in our sector.

Engaging individual and collective knowledge are foundational to understanding where we need to go and how to get there. It is easy to feel isolated in the field or not engage with the larger profession. Work hours are long, weekends are sacred and participation is costly.

The realities of being overworked and undervalued

were considered very real barriers for ECE professionals to engage in the extra work that it takes to be an informed and confident advocate. While this may be true, we know there are many ECEs who are eager to engage in changing the current challenges they face and value the opportunity to work towards better outcomes for everyone (Halfon & McDonald, n.d., para 5).

Block (2003) states “when we act on our own deeper purpose, we pay a higher price, for it often demands that we swim against the tide of the dominant culture” (p. 14). Aligning our values with our professional practice enables us to analyze the cost/benefit of swimming against the current.

We must learn, advocate, educate and build the understanding of what foundational and existing knowledge and literature have been saying for thousands of years. The early years of a child's life are of paramount importance to society.





Plato and Aristotle believed educating boys and girls from a young age was crucial to deal with societal problems in the 400's B.C. (D'Angour, 2013, Historical Foundations of ECE, n.d.). In the 1600's John Amos Comenius emphasized the education of children began at the earliest age and continued throughout their lifetime (Sadler, n.d.). In the mid-1700's the great nature vs. nurture debate began between Rousseau and Locke (Gianoutsos, n.d.). Robert Owen who created a novel work site child care for his employees in 1816 believed young children were entitled to quality child care (Infed.org, n.d.). For thousands of years Indigenous cultures have actively preserved a holistic approach to learning and community life. Family and community members encircle the young, teaching them and preparing them to become part of the outer circle. (TRU, 2011).

Today studies continue to show the benefits of early childhood care and education. Children who participate in these programs perform better in school, have a greater chance of graduating (Barnett, 2008) and are less likely to engage in high-risk behaviours (Yoshikawa, Weiland, Brooks-Gunn, Burchinal, Espinosa, Gormely & Zaslow, 2013). Research shows equalizing benefits to all children in quality programs including higher levels of learning and increased confidence and social skill development (Barnett & Frede, 2010). Khanna & Rotham (2015) emphasize : universal, accessible child care is an essential component of a broader plan to end child and family poverty... If the costs of poverty are ignored, this constitutes nothing less than mismanagement of the economy for which we will all continue to pay in financial and other costs (p. 65).

Canada's diversity ensures more learning opportunities from many other perspectives as well. Collectively we all benefit when we share knowledge, experience and skills. It shapes our national system reflecting our values, vision and mission for universal childcare.

Commitment to education and purposeful professional development is well known to ECEs who promote life-long learning in children every day. Are we practicing what we teach? The self-aware practitioner is more effective, able to evaluate strengths, weaknesses, abilities and areas needing improvement (Kramer, 2011). "Organizations learn only through individuals who learn. Individual learning does

not guarantee organizational learning. But without it, no organizational learning occurs" (Senge, 2006, p. 129). "Kramer (2011) believes that living out one's values requires true confidence. This confidence grows, in part, as we understand our core values and increasingly align our actions with those values" (Peregrym & Wollf, 2013, p. 33).

It is crucial for ECEs to participate in our profession in a meaningful way. Many organizations provide a wealth of information and inspiration.

It is crucial for ECEs to participate in our profession in a meaningful way. Many organizations provide a wealth of information and inspiration. Local resource and referral programs, provincial and national associations, conferences and research organizations highlight the important work and advocacy happening across the country. Connection with these groups eliminates isolation, builds knowledge and encourages our individual and corporate purpose. Engagement moves the

cause forward. Knowing our story helps educate others and challenges negative assumptions that form the currents we swim against. A common belief is that cost and complexity make universal child care unfeasible. As professionals we influence others sharing knowledge and research in an inspiring way to remove the long-term benefits of quality ECE from the shadow of current structural and economic constraints (Block, 2003).

Forward Faster with Collaboration

Collaborative strategies are required if universal childcare is to become a reality. Issues facing the sector are complicated and cannot be left to government alone (Kahane, 2012). Self-aware, knowledgeable, all-level leadership is needed to move forward faster. Stories shared across the nation serve to inspire and connect professionals in the ongoing discussion. They are the call to action needed to keep us on the road to transformation. Stories used to teach, inspire and challenge become a successful vehicle for those who advocate for child care in their communities. The recent commitment to universal child care in Ontario is a testament to how shared stories inspire and support research, driving initiatives forward (AECEO).

Thankfully leadership can be learned over time and fit each person's comfort level, personality, style and ability. As leaders and followers we transform each other and the collective whole. New leaders blossom, influenced by others. We do our best work when we pool knowledge, skills, experience and resources. We accomplish far more than we ever could on



our own (Northouse, 2016). Leadership at all levels whether frontline staff, parents, organizational or political is necessary to proceed. It is how the ripple will spread across the whole pond and effect sustainable change.

Conclusion

Over the last 28 years, change has been less than we had hoped. There have been encouraging moments but overall the issues of the last 30 years remain. Today the research base continues to outline the positive, preventative benefits of a universal childcare system. A working knowledge of traditional, cultural and historical theories and perspectives in ECE strengthens our interpretation of current research. Engaging stories empower the message. Federal and provincial governments are starting to take notice. Now it is time to lead collaboratively, competently and assertively. It is time to advocate uniting on our national vision and strategy. It is time to hold ourselves and those in positions of power to account until we achieve the goal. It is time to learn from others who have gone before us around the world in ECE and other professions and achieved their goals.

With self-awareness, knowledge and a shared vision for ECE in Canada comes the responsibility we all have to act. Small and large acts together move change forward faster. Waiting for the government to fulfill promises made or relying on organizations we don't support or engage with is to continue on the hamster wheel ECE experiences year after year (Giesbrecht, 2016). Membership and personal commitment to learn, grow and participate is the way forward. I am a member of my provincial association. I am committed to life-long learning and self-aware professional practice. I am engaging with my profession, sharing my story and participating in the movement toward universal childcare and decent work for my sector. I look forward to a Canada that reaps the benefits of our collective efforts socially and economically. So if you haven't already, it is time to throw your pebble into the pond and join the movement.

Karolyn has served as an ECE professional in Southern BC for 25 years. She earned her ECE Diploma from Mount Royal University in 1991, her BA in Child and Youth Care from the University of Victoria in 1997 and is currently pursuing a Master of Arts in Leadership Degree from Trinity Western University. She has worked in frontline and administrative positions in a variety of child care settings over her career.

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Advocating for International Field Experiences in Early Childhood Postsecondary Programs

Benefits for postsecondary students who engaged in fieldwork abroad

by Fanshawe College, School of Community Studies ECL Degree Students

Jessica Bosazzi, ECL Degree Student

Cassandra Haggarty, ECL Degree Student

Ellen Livingstone, ECL Degree Student

Foreword by Tina Bonnett, ECL Degree Faculty

Foreword

International field experiences are being increasingly offered by postsecondary institutions across Canada. An emerging body of research suggests that numerous benefits can unfold for postsecondary students who have opportunities to engage in fieldwork abroad. Across varying professions, such as teaching and nursing, personal and professional transformations have been found to unfold for students who partake in international service learning. Personal transformations, such as acceptance of others, a broader outlook on life (Willard-Holt, 2001) and patience and empathy (Pence & Macgillivray, 2008) have been noted to be linked to international field experiences. A sounder understanding of cultures, world issues, and global dynamics

(Willard-Holt, 2001) and confidence (Pence & MacGillivray, 2008) have also been associated with postsecondary education and overseas fieldwork. It is important to note that although research documents international field experiences as advantageous for the postsecondary student, challenges have also been identified and include a narrower view of child development, and inflated confidence and understanding of culture (Willard-Holt, 2001). In a study specific to Canadian early childhood education and care diploma (ECE), and early leadership degree students (ECL), who embarked on an international field placement, an appreciation for family, health and the resources of the student's domestic country, and solidification of personal values were themes uncovered. Capacity of ECE and ECL students to articulate their role as professionals, and confidence in translating pedagogy into practice, were also unearthed in this study. Findings of this research also included a more comprehensive understanding relationship-based practice, and a movement from viewing the Costa Rican culture and philosophy of childhood from deficit lens to a strength-based lens (Bonnett, 2015). As such, three Canadian ECL degree students share their international field experience to Costa Rica in 2017, in the following narratives.

An Overview of the 2017 International Field Placement

The international learning experience in Costa Rica was an intensive commitment. Prior to our February departure, training was required. Faculty dedicated many hours preparing the students to ensure that everyone was truly prepared to take on this life altering experience. Areas of focus in the preparatory training included culture shock, reverse culture shock, vicarious trauma, cultural norms and differences, diverse pedagogical and childhood philosophies, and strategies to work within interprofessional (IPE) teams. We additionally explored our colleges Code of Conduct, reviewed learning outcomes for the field experience and learned some foundational Spanish words and phrases. Preparatory training also included opportunities for students to familiarize themselves with their roles and responsibilities in Costa Rican school. The students, and professors who acted in the role of mentor, were encouraged to get to know each and build rapport and respect. A main component of this experience was for us to work in IPE teams with students from other programs within our college including, early childhood education and care, practical nursing, and child and youth care services. Working in IPE teams throughout the duration of the international experience encouraged students to share their knowledge and expertise from each program. The IPE model fostered the development of dynamic teams, and encouraged flexibility and fostering of different vocational perspectives and knowledge. Taking into account the different knowledge and skills from these complementary professions, we strived to provide a unique learning environment and positive interactions with the Costa Rican children and their team of educators. While at the school in Costa Rica, we worked



alongside the Grade one to six English teacher, created interactive experiences to engage the children in learning English, and fostered positive relationships using mostly social cues and gestures. We additionally worked collaboratively with the education team at the school to create and adapt learning environments that were reflective of the strengths, and areas requiring strengthening, of the children. One of the most challenging yet rewarding barriers we faced was adjusting

to the diverse cultures and ways of living of the Costa Rican children and education team. We worked diligently to respectfully integrate our emergent play-based pedagogical knowledge and expertise, while striving to ensure Costa Rican cultural integrity.

One of the most critical aspects of the international placement was the reflective practice that we engaged in daily. Using a reflective practice model helped us to process the many challenges and successes that we faced daily. In our IPE teams, and within a large group, we reflected on our experiences and were able to support one another to process what we learned about the Costa Rican culture, as well as educational practices and beliefs surrounding pedagogy. We also independently journaled about our experiences and feelings throughout the placement. The specific questions that mentoring faculty developed to support us in our journaling process truly enriched our capacity to work through the experience in a meaningful way. Engaging in debriefing sessions upon our return to Canada, facilitated by mentoring faculty using a reflective practice model, also proved to be key to our processing of this life altering experience.

Professional Transformations

The Costa Rica experience proved to be a professionally rewarding experience. As emerging early childhood practitioners our growth was not easily measured by success. We were challenged by many obstacles, however, we grew as pedagogical leaders. During our experience in the school setting, we used our creativity and skills to develop pedagogical experiences that were fun, educational, and sustainable- despite the scarce amount of curriculum materials available. Working together gave us the



opportunity to get to know each program of study more in depth, and supported us to recognize that we have complementing skills that can be utilized in our work with children. In reflecting on our professional growth we came to realize that similar to Canadian children, Costa Rican children have different developmental pathways. As evolving professionals we made it our priority to connect with the children regardless of the differences in language. We realized that language barriers can be overcome by developing trusting and engaging relationships with the children. We practiced

our leadership skills, and emerged from the experience more adaptable and more ready to face challenges and give our best to the children each day. As professionals in the field of education and care, critical skills such as time management, and organization were strengthened while abroad. In all interactions we strived to advocate for play-based pedagogy, while maintaining integrity of pedagogical guidelines governed by the Ministry of Education in Costa Rica. Our professional growth also unfolded as we were immersed in opportunities to critically analyse theory we had learned in our Canadian college relating to child abuse, health promotion, risk taking, special education and professionalism. Engaging in a placement overseas also broadened our visions of future career goals and we are more than ever committed to working to strengthen the early education and care sector. Returning home to Canada, we carry with us new professional perspectives relating to our work as early childhood leaders.

Personal Transformations

Partaking in this international internship experience has allowed us to grow personally. In IPE teams we worked with children from very diverse backgrounds, with varying strengths and needs. This prompted us to become more open minded and understanding of the Costa Rican children and educator's values and beliefs. It also offered us opportunities to reflect on our own values and beliefs and how they impact our work and daily lives. By participating in this experience we were able to gain a lot of self- confidence as we stepped into leadership roles both in the school setting with the children and staff, and in the reflective discussion periods where we shared our opinions, thoughts, values and feelings with other students and faculty from our Canadian college. By



immersing ourselves in these leadership roles, we quickly learned how to become more adaptable, independent, and to problem solve. By engaging in this international field experience in Costa Rica we have learned about and experienced a different culture, way of living, and educational philosophy. Although the Costa Rican perspectives of education and childhood in some ways differ from our Canadian approaches, being exposed to the children and families within the Costa Rican community and schools allowed us find similarities and strengths in both. We feel that we are more open and inclusive in our approach to life. As individuals, we further developed compassion and patience, traits we anticipate that will translate fluidly into both our personal lives, and in our practice as future leaders in early childhood education and care environments. Although intense and trying at times, we have emerged from this experience with a clear vision and ability to articulate our personal views and beliefs. The learnings and the memories of this international field practicum have undoubtedly impacted who we are as people today, and who we will be as people in years to come.

Advocating for Fieldwork Abroad

It may be fitting for us to say that we have left this experience transformed in both professional and personal contexts. We believe

however, that we continue to be entrenched in and learning from our international placement. As Honours Bachelor of Early Childhood Leadership degree students in our terminal year of study, this experience has broadened and deepened our pedagogical philosophy, our ability to work within an interprofessional team, and our leadership capacity. We have grown more confident, reflective and adaptable, and anticipate that these tenets will serve us well in our future professional and personal lives. As early childhood specialists, who will soon enter the workforce, we trust that our experiences in Costa Rica has widened our understanding of cultural and global awareness. Granted the rich learning that has unfolded for each of us, in both professional and personal contexts, we advocate for both early childhood-based secondary programs and students, to consider how an international field experience can support preparedness to work in the increasingly diverse early childhood education and care sector.

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Creating a Culturally Responsive Classroom: The Early Childhood Educators' Reflective Process

by Oi Ling Helen Kwok, Michael Davis,
Jennifer Carr, and Dr. Sharon Quan-McGimpsey

"Being aware to me is so important because it influences the way I think, the way I feel, it will influence the way I plan, work, relate, and build relationship[s] with those families". This assertion illustrates the importance of self-awareness to an early childhood educator (ECE), as she reflects on her competence for creating a culturally responsive classroom. Due to the substantial immigration of families into Canada, ECEs are playing an instrumental role in facilitating children's integration and learning in the new classroom environment (Tsung, Freeman, & White, 2007; Vuckovic, 2008). To support ECEs in working with children and families of culturally diverse backgrounds, a body of research focuses on offering educators effective strategies for their pedagogical practices (Beyer, 2010; Johnson & Larke, 2012; Keat, Strickland, & Marinak, 2009), while others emphasize the essence of self-reflection (Delano-Oriarian & Meidl, 2012; Han & Thomas, 2010; Ponciano & Shabazian, 2012). Meier and Stremmel (2010) suggest that ECEs' personal experiences should be valued in the reflective process, because it is influential in informing who they

are, and subsequently guides their pedagogy for working with immigrant children and their families.

This article presents the results of a study, which examines the reflective process of the ECEs and explores the effects of their knowledge and awareness to create a culturally responsive classroom. Four ECEs shed light on the interconnection between their personal characteristics cultivated through experiences, internal reflections, and how these elements subsequently affected their pedagogical practices when challenges arose within the classroom.

Culturally Sensitive Characteristics of ECEs

The ECEs identified three characteristics as strengths in developing a culturally responsive classroom. These qualities include 1) pursuing knowledge of an individual's needs and experiences 2) respecting children and families of diverse cultural backgrounds and 3) striving to self-educate about cultural diversity. *Pursuing knowledge of an individual's needs and experiences* was one of the ECE's characteristics that fostered a better understanding of the family's culturally diverse background and history. One ECE expressed the importance of acquiring a holistic view of the family by "knowing where they are at, knowing their interest, knowing their background, knowing what they like to do, knowing what they were used to do[ing]...knowing how they are at home". This characteristic emphasizes the importance that the ECEs place on understanding families from a global perspective.

While exploring this global perspective, ECEs found strength in *respecting children and families of diverse cultural backgrounds* as this characteristic enhanced their comprehension of families' cultural perspectives. The ECEs emphasized patience as an





integral component of respecting families as it allowed families to acclimatize at their own pace (e.g. “...you just need to give them time”). Another ECE shared, “Respecting everyone’s culture and background and their way of learning and doing things. Understanding why they see things in a certain way.” This statement demonstrates the ECEs’ recognition of the importance of respecting each family’s cultural background and perspective as the ECEs work toward an understanding of alternative viewpoints. Subero, Vila, and Esteban-Guitart (2015) identify this emergent cultivation of history and culture as a catalogue of skills in the development of “funds of knowledge” (p. 38).

Striving to self-educate about cultural diversity by incorporating informational and institutional resources into the ECEs’ repertoires, allows them to create a culturally responsive classroom. An ECE noted that “... I wish I knew more about specific cultures and I think we do our best to try to educate [ourselves]”. This characteristic promotes self-improvement and a drive to learn that facilitates a further refinement of “funds of knowledge”, which enables ECEs to strengthen their pedagogy through experiences within their classroom communities. Challenges with the expectations and desires of children and family members, however, required adjustments and adaptations of ECEs as they applied themselves in culturally responsive classrooms.

Challenges Within a Culturally Responsive Classroom

The ECEs identified three major challenges in culturally responsive classrooms 1) insufficient time for program planning 2) language barriers with children and families and 3) a mismatch between professional expectations between the ECEs and the families. These challenges were seen as external barriers and influenced the ECEs’ confidence and ability to perform in a culturally responsive classroom.

Insufficient time for program planning was identified as the “biggest obstacle” in creating a culturally responsive classroom. As one ECE expressed, “Because I have limited time, I have some ideas, but I cannot really make this thing happen.” Thus, creating a culturally responsive classroom requires time to incorporate and implement concepts of respect, knowledge, awareness, and sensitivity (Han & Thomas, 2010). In this study, the ECEs found time to be inadequate when trying to meet challenges such as language barriers with family members or meeting the professional expectations of families.



When ECEs were confronted with *language barriers with children and families*, the educators reported feeling demoralized when children experienced emotional crises and they were unable to communicate directly with them (Adair, 2011; Buchori & Dobinson, 2015). In this study, demoralization also occurred within communication between ECEs and families. As one ECE explained, “They get nervous, the parents do. They want to tell me something, but they don’t know how to say it and they don’t want to be disrespectful. And they are nervous and feel embarrassed that they don’t speak English. And I feel totally embarrassed that I don’t speak what it is that they are speaking.” This two-way impedance and passive communication potentially deteriorates both the ECEs’ and families’ self-esteem.

This was further emphasized when one ECE shared how she “guesses” the way parents want them to care for their children, which outlines the challenge of a *mismatch between professional expectations between the ECEs and the families*. An ECE revealed, “They don’t understand what school readiness is about; they expect me to do more of the academics. They expect me to teach their children how to write and this is not what school readiness is.” Although Buschori and Dobinson (2015) and Adair (2011) conclude that the pressure of meeting professional standards causes educator anxiety, this study found the ECEs experienced additional stress from attempting to meet parent’s academic expectations.

In order to respond to these challenges, time is needed for the ECEs to reflect on circumstances and gain insight into their actions and experiences, as well as explore strategies that would enhance culturally responsive practices (Amulya, 2004). For the ECEs in this study, time was required, to integrate their internal examination and reflection-based strategies, both concurrently



and consecutively, in order to generate new approaches in overcoming challenges faced in their culturally responsive classrooms.

Internal Examination of ECEs

The idea of internal examination is drawn upon the definition of introspection, which is the process of critically analyzing personal experiences and state of mind (Wooffitt & Holt, 2011). In this study, each of the ECEs engaged in internal examination while creating a culturally responsive classroom. Within this process, three themes emerged 1) the transformation of awareness 2) the discovery of oneself and 3) the enhancement of inner strengths.

Transformation of awareness of cultural diversity within the ECEs was noted, which involves being aware of others and how this knowledge influences themselves. This in turn, impacts their pedagogical practices and self-awareness. As one ECE stated, “Being aware to me is so important because it influences the way I think, the way I feel, it will influence the way I plan, work, relate, and build the relationship[s] with those families”. Building on this process, Adair (2011) suggests that educators should be mindful of their own behaviours and confront their self-awareness. The ECEs also shared how working with children and families from various cultural backgrounds helped them *discover more about oneself*. An ECE reflected, “I need to check myself. I need to kind of rewind what I am doing and thinking inside my head and modify that thought.” Self discovery also helped them become more cognizant of addressing their personal biases (e.g. “...take the way I was raised and put it on the back burner”) by modifying both their thoughts and actions. The ECEs also expressed that their experiences working with children and families from diverse cultural backgrounds *enhanced their inner strength*. As an ECE shared, “They are like giving me some feedback and it’s really



Figure 1. The Journey of Creating a Culturally Responsive Classroom

boosting my confidence.” The ECEs increased their level of confidence through working with families and addressing challenges. Similarly, other educators have noted that their level of confidence when working with different cultural groups is related to their familiarity with that culture (Thomas & Kearney, 2008). Thus, the ECEs’ internal examination involved a rethinking of their general perspective on cultural diversity as well as two deeper levels of internal review: one level of conscious critical re-examination of ones’ experiences with the children and families and one level of review of ones’ own unconscious biases.

Reflection-based Strategies

During the process of or after internal examination, the ECEs formulated action strategies to help mitigate the challenges they have faced in the classroom. The ECEs indicated the importance of 1) building reciprocal relationships with families 2) engaging families in the classroom 3) adjusting the physical classroom environment and learning curriculum and 4) the concept of teamwork. When reflecting on the *building of reciprocal relationships with families*, the ECEs emphasized the importance of strategically engaging in dialogue and forming personal connections.





One ECE expressed, “I think that I have created very positive relationship[s] with the families that they can come to me and [they] express how they are feeling.” The ECEs also stated that the strategy of *engaging families in the classroom* helped foster communication between the families and ECEs as well as helping to increase the ECEs’ cultural awareness. For example, an ECE said, “I try to get the parents more engaged and [let] them know what’s been happening in the class. Giving them the opportunity to come in the class to see what their child is engaging [in].” Many educators share this common vision regarding the importance of family involvement and partnership within the school environment while supporting children of diverse cultural backgrounds (Buchori & Dobinson, 2015; Tsung, Freeman & White, 2007; Vuckovic, 2008). Another strategy that the ECEs used within their culturally responsive classrooms was *adjusting the physical classroom environment and learning curriculum*. One ECE shared, “I decorated a classroom that would represent everyone and include materials of different backgrounds... Of course the activities that will represent everyone too.” The ECEs also adjusted the curriculum to include various cultural celebrations and to better suit the parents’ academic expectations. Lastly, they noted the importance of teamwork among colleagues. One of the ECEs expressed, “Being able to have supportive people around you, your co-workers and what not, it’s key”. Overall, when the ECEs engaged in internal examination they were able to implement reflection-based strategies to address the challenges within their culturally responsive classrooms.

In summary, the components discussed in this paper contribute to the ECEs’ competence in creating culturally responsive classrooms. They are depicted in Figure 1 as the cogs in a wheel. The components in the model are interconnected such that as one of the elements begins to shift, the others respond. In this study, the ECEs described their characteristics as the primary activators in the model, which are cultivated through their experiences. With cumulative experiences, these strengths can guide and support the ECEs while they are working with immigrant children and their families. When challenges transpire, the ECEs are immediately engaged in the process of self-reflection. This process allows them to be actively involved in examining their own awareness, inner strengths, biases, and simultaneously connecting their internal examinations to their reflection on their pedagogical strategies. If ECEs honor their experiences and trust their internal reflections, their personal and professional abilities become more available and fluid like the motion of the cogs.

Self-reflection is a life-long journey that encompasses the discovery of oneself. It is a valuable tool that helps us recognize our personal backgrounds, implicit thoughts, feelings, and knowledge. By invoking our reflective voices, not only can we gain insights into ourselves, but we are also able to develop a better understanding of others who may have opposing views, lived experiences, and cultural values. As Martin Buber (1970), an influential philosopher, points out, the true way of entering

into authentic life is to set us apart from the I-It relationship and embrace the I-Thou relationship with others. He suggests that we treat others as living beings and be prepared to take the risk of entering into the “terrain of dialogue” rather than treating others as objects and being “anchored in a monologue” (Yaron, 1993, p.2).

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Cultivating Creativity

Letting children be the captains of their learning ships

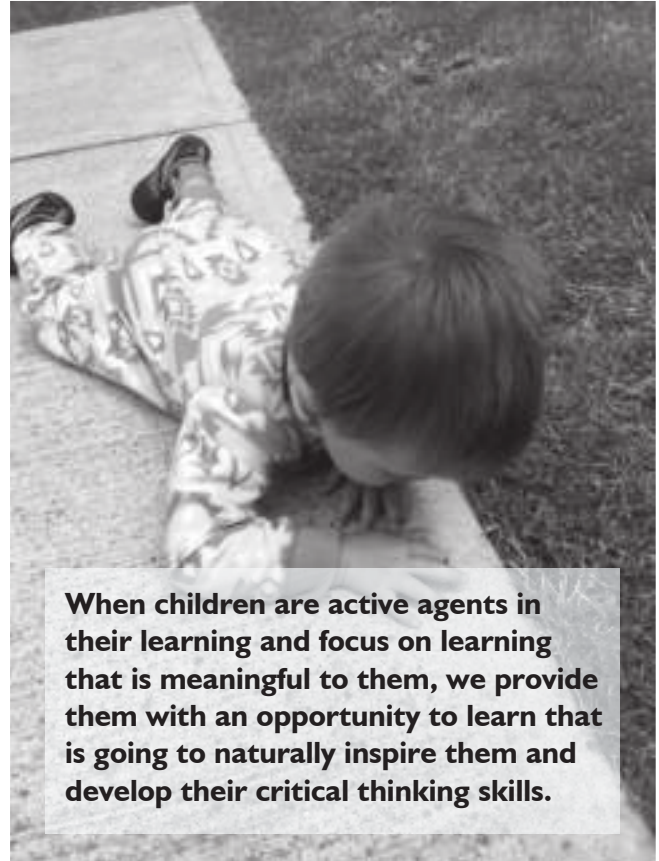
by Marie Poss

Creativity is an essential skill needed in our ever-changing society, yet it is a skill that is continually underdeveloped in our current education model. Education author Jill Jesson (2012) describes the support for creative cultivation in young minds when she states, “The All Our Futures report argued that to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century, pupils’ creativity needed to be developed. They acknowledged the need to nurture a curriculum which would develop young people’s capacities for original ideas and action” (p. 126). Yet the question remains, how do we provide children with an opportunity to create these original ideas and actions? The answer lies not in how to incorporate more engaging lesson plans, but instead in how we must reinvent the very idea of teaching to include opportunities for children to be catalysts in their personalized education.

When children are active agents in their learning and focus on learning that is meaningful to them, we provide them with an opportunity to learn that is going to naturally inspire them and develop their critical thinking skills.

Inquiry Learning

The idea of play-based learning has created an explosion of rich educational discourse on the benefits of learning through inquiry (Barblett et al, 2016), yet educators are still not recognizing the importance of everyday learning opportunities in developing creative and critical minds. Learning needs to move away from prescribed timetables, and focus on allowing children to find out the answer to their own personal questions about the world, and the learning process that is involved in this. When children are



When children are active agents in their learning and focus on learning that is meaningful to them, we provide them with an opportunity to learn that is going to naturally inspire them and develop their critical thinking skills.

given an opportunity to explore, research, and represent their own questioning and are naturally involved in the process, they are more apt to develop strong critical thinking skills that will remain, as they learn fundamental twenty first century skills. By engaging children in a personalized learning plan and making their learning contextual to their interests we are setting them up for creative enrichment and driving them to further pursue their intellectual pursuits by recognizing their natural learning.

The value in every day *learning moments* can be seen in the following average North American kindergarten scenario, and clearly illustrates the lost learning in a structured setting:

A child stops on a school walk to the library and peers at a hole in the sidewalk where he spies a worm poking through. The child stops, peers down at the worm, and begins to ask questions about how he got there. However, this child is immediately reprimanded and told to hurry up, without a single reservation about what the child was doing, or inquiring, or learning. The educator in this example was not in tune with the natural learning opportunity that unfolded during the walk to the library, and a contextual



learning moment was lost. When a child stops, even for a moment, and starts to question the world around them, or watches and analyzes something that has provoked their interest, critical thinking and creativity skills start to appear. And with a single “hurry up” and lack of acknowledgement, an educator has single handedly blocked those higher-level skills we desperately work to achieve in our students.

Our teaching should not be structured around prescribed lessons, achievements, or targets, but instead developed daily through a continuum of children’s deep innate inquiry and thought. Let children ponder, think, ask questions, explore, touch, and challenge. Let them have a great idea, create it, and find out if it fails on their own. The process of failure is a learning process that is critical to all disciplines, and one that is not fulfilled in the current indoctrinated rote teaching style.

When a child comes to an educator with a big idea, such as, “I want to build a spaceship to fly to mars.” We are quick to explain that you can not fly to Mars in cardboard boxes. But what if we gave this child the chance? What if we supported them in learning about current spaceships, the requirements of astronauts, and the technologies involved in the take off. What if we encouraged them to self- explore and think about *how* they could fly to Mars? What if we let them *try*? What if we let them *fail*? What if they became engaged in what they were doing, and learned in the process? This style of daily inquiry leads children to develop critical thinking skills as they learn *how* to think, and not just *what* to think. Every educational discipline (Math, Science, English, Arts, etc) could easily be incorporated into the process of spaceship building; including writing letters to NASA, researching the requirements of astronauts, determining the amount of materials and measurements needed, creative representation of a spaceship, and finally implementation. Beyond the standards that would be fundamentally integrated in this inquiry based child led initiative, the value comes from developing an innate passion, an entrepreneurial spirit, empowerment, and a lasting memory.

Worksheets and standard lessons never get remembered, but what does get remembered are ideas that were acknowledged, developed, and tried. It is easy to stop a child’s question with why it would never work- but if Bill Gates, Steve Jobs, or Mark

Our teaching should not be structured around prescribed lessons, achievements, or targets, but instead developed daily through a continuum of children’s deep innate inquiry and thought. Let children ponder, think, ask questions, explore, touch, and challenge. Let them have a great idea, create it, and find out if it fails on their own. The process of failure is a learning process that is critical to all disciplines, and one that is not fulfilled in the current indoctrinated rote teaching style.

Zuckerburg, had listened to those that pushed their ideas down? Without their innate creativity we wouldn’t have some of the finest man-made achievements we have today.

Jill Jesson (2012) writes about the struggles educators feel when she states, “As professionals, we are all so afraid of standards appearing to fall, or not getting through the right number of tick boxes, that we are tempted to keep feeding our classes with information, rather than help them develop ideas, imagination and creative thinking skills” (p.14). But what if the power to develop these skills was easier than we imagined, what if the power to develop these important and yet overlooked

educational skills was simply to stop and follow the child’s lead - and let them ask questions, and make mistakes, and learn in the process?

We Are Naturally Creative

Creativity is routinely one of the most noted characteristics to write on a resume, and one of the most highly sought attributes from employers, yet the one skill most lacking in the education system. George Land’s famous 1968 study demonstrated the early innate creativity children demonstrate, and the way in which they lose that very same creativity as they age. As Larry Vint (2005) describes, “In Land’s research of 1600 five year olds tested, 98% of the children scored in the ‘highly creative’ range. When re-testing these same children five years later, only 30% of these 10 year olds were still rated ‘highly creative’. By the age of 15, just 12% of them ranked in this category, while a mere 2% of 280,000 adults over the age of 25 who had taken the same tests were still on this level” (p. 20). From this research, we can attest that creativity is not learned, but unlearned through the method of testing, rote learning, and dictated structure that leaves little to no problem-solving challenges for children.

Sternberg (1999) describes the prevalence of creativity in young children, and states that creativity, “...may be harder to find in older children and adults because their creative potential has been suppressed by a society that encourages intellectual conformity” (p. 93). If we know that creativity is already a skill set employers are seeking, then why are we not teaching it? Dr. Ken Robinson (2016) describes the need for a creatively progressive education model when he states, “...progressive teaching is based on learning by discovery, self-expression, and small group activities” (p. 103). We must use the inherent



ordinary moments of discovery when children ask questions, or are in awe about something, as the perfect starting point for creative discovery and a chance for children to find out their own answers, research something they are passionate about, and develop strong critical thinking skills in the process.

We know the literature surrounding the importance and fundamental necessity of critical thinkers who think creatively and challenge the current societal ideal in order to progress our world, and yet we fail to develop these minds in our current educational model. Livingston (2010) describes the importance of developing creative skills in our current society:

“Interaction and collaboration are now important in most workplaces, and are expected to be even more important in the future. Higher education needs to use its natural resources in ways that develop content knowledge and skills in a culture infused at new levels by investigation, cooperation, connection, integration, and synthesis. Creativity is necessary to accomplish this goal. When central and culturally pervasive, creativity becomes exemplified and enhanced for

every student. Problem solving becomes the driving pedagogy” (p. 59).

Making Learning Personal

We need to throw away our institutionalized structured learning and focus on everyday sporadic inquiry to lead our students to their own personalized learning, and support them along the journey by piecing standard academic disciplines into their own personalized learning plan, yet letting them focus on an innate investigation of their own agenda. Through recognizing the importance of everyday questions and inspiring moments we can start to develop the creativity, problem solving, and critical thinking skills, that are more and more necessary in both post secondary education and workplaces. We must recognize these learning opportunities for what they are, instead of focusing on the standards we already have planned. This requires educators to become co-learners and facilitate rather than teach in the traditional sense. Instead of educators seeing themselves as experts, they must start to see themselves as facilitators giving students the opportunities, and resources to find their passion and develop and refine this passion.

Albert Einstein once wrote, “It is the supreme art of the teacher to awaken joy in creative expression and knowledge.” We need to challenge the current educational pedagogy of rote learning and reawaken the capacity to think deeply and critically, to pose questions, challenge current ideas, and experiment within the classroom. The only way we can begin to educate our students for the changing world we live in, is by recognizing that our society has already changed, and so too must our teaching styles. We need to recognize daily learning opportunities for the value they are, and toss aside our structured educational lessons for a more inquiry, child-led education system based on the everyday questions our children ask.

Marie is a professor at Fashawe College Simcoe/Norfolk campus in the accelerated ECE/DSW program. Her central focus is on curriculum and documentation and she has a strong interest in cultivating creativity and critical thinking skills both within children and her adult students. ECE/BA/B.Ed/M.Ed

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My Life in Early Childhood Education – How Did I Get Here?

Conversations with Canadian Child Care Federation Founders and Leaders

In May 2017 at the Annual Manitoba Child Care Association child care conference, Don Giesbrecht, CEO of the CCCF, interviewed three of our long-standing all-stars, April Kalyniuk, Pat Wege and Sandra Griffin. Thanks to our friends and partners at **Storypark**, the conversations were video interviewed and are available online on our CCCF Website and **Interaction Online**.

They each offer a unique perspective over the 30 years that the Canadian Child Care Federation grew up, from beginning to today. We also get some insight into how child care in Canada has grown up. Here's what they had to say.





MY LIFE IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION



April Kalyniuk

Watch video interview:
<https://youtu.be/J9sozc-xTeM>

Don Giesbrecht: So proud and happy to be at the Manitoba Child Care Association's 4th annual conference here in Winnipeg, Manitoba. And further extra proud and happy to be speaking with April Kalyniuk, who has been the Canadian Child Care Federation Chair up until just last year and is the current Manitoba Child Care Association president. And as somebody who has worked a lot behind the scenes in both the Manitoba Child Care Association and the Canadian Child Care Federation I think for 13 years, April, is that right?

April Kalyniuk: Thirteen years, yeah.

Don Giesbrecht: Yeah, we've known each other a lot longer than that, and it's always been my pleasure to work with you in – you know, off-camera you were just saying about wisdom. And I have just learned through my years so much from you and been so grateful that I've had the chance to work with you.

And so I thought this is a great time for you to come out front and centre and talk a little bit about yourself, your career and the

sector. So let's start with that. So your career, when did you start? What brought you to early childhood and did you ever see yourself being where you are today?

April Kalyniuk: So let me think about this, where did it start? I think I always knew I wanted to work with children. I think when I was young I babysat and did all those normal things, and early childhood when I graduated from high school was just coming into its own. There was a program at the college here and I thought, "Yeah, that sounds like a good career. That sounds like something I would like to do."

You know, sometimes you go in thinking, "Well, I'm young, I'm a little bit introverted and maybe that's a great place to start." But once you got into it, it was, "That's where I want to be," you know? And I've never looked back. I did work by the way for the government of Manitoba for a year in between when I graduated and when I got into the program at Red River because there was a wait list then. And I worked for the Department of Agriculture and went, "This is definitely not what I want to do



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with my life,” so took the Red River course and have been in the field ever since.

Don Giesbrecht: So you started working, what program did you start in and how did you rise up to become executive director? When we first met you were at Carter Day Care here in Winnipeg, and maybe just talk a little bit too about how you got involved with MCCA.

April Kalyniuk: So my first job we won’t talk about because it was six months; it was not in a great place. But I was fortunate enough to get hired at – it was Cobourg Day Nursery way back then – and actually two minutes ago I just saw the director there wandering around here. She’s an amazing lady, and I won’t tell you how old she is because I’ve been in the field almost 40 years and she was the director then.

So I worked at Elmwood, or Cobourg, for I don’t know, six years? No, no, four years I guess, and went to Carter Day Care after that. And I was hired as the supervisor there, or the assistant director. Small centre, 32 spaces – I’d always wanted to work at Carter because it was just a small program, really intimate, really nice relationship with families.

And so when I went there, the director at the time was hired by the College to teach, and lo and behold I was made the director. So I was there for 21 years. During that time, even when I was at Elmwood, I was active with MCCA, and it was back in the day where if you were a part of an organization you didn’t get time off work to go, you didn’t get paid for meetings.

So that was way back in 1982? And MCCA was this little tiny organization and my job there was to fundraise. And they wanted me to raise like \$20,000 in fundraising. Uh, no. You know, I was like – I don’t know. How old was I? Nineteen, twenty years old going, “No, this I can’t do. I can be on this board but I can’t do that.” But I had been involved with MCCA since that time.

And I was at Carter for 21 years, and then as you know I moved to Lord Roberts in 2005 when you left and I’ve been there ever since. And my term as president MCCA was 2000 to 2002, which means I joined the Federation in the fall of 2002, and was there until I guess 2015, right?

Don Giesbrecht: Mm-hmm, 2016.

April Kalyniuk: Well we did the award – or you gave me a farewell. I think it was 2015.

Don Giesbrecht: You’re right.

April Kalyniuk: Yeah, so that’s my career in a nutshell, and here I am. I’m president of MCCA. I’ll be back at the Federation next year.

Don Giesbrecht: Were you ever or did you ever contemplate – because you’ve been in a lot of really amazing meetings. You’ve met a lot of politicians, a Premier or two, a lot of Ministers. You’ve met a Prime Minister.

April Kalyniuk: Met Ken Dryden.

Don Giesbrecht: Met Ken Dryden, and you’ve sat in on these and contributed to – not just sitting – and contributing to these meetings. Did you ever at any point in your life say, “This is where I want to go and I’m really involved in the politics and the policy of early childhood and child care?”

April Kalyniuk: Did I ever consciously think that? No, I think there’s some times in life you just end up in a place, and whether it’s because you’re a certain kind of person or what, but I tend to end up in charge of things lots of times. I’m not always – like you said, I like to be behind the scenes. I don’t like to be in front very often but I do like to be involved. I like to know – I always told my staff I’m a need-to-know person, and treat me like that because I want to know what’s going on and I want to know how it’s happening.

I want to know what I can do to make things better, you know, or change things, so that’s kind of where that comes from. Did I think I was going to do that? No, I think there’s still people that go, “I can’t believe she’s actually doing that,” you know, that kind of thing.

Don Giesbrecht: So through your career what do you think? And it can be several things. What would’ve been the biggest changes from when you started to where you are today? Good and maybe if not so good.

April Kalyniuk: Well, I think the biggest change in my career would’ve been when the regulations came in in Manitoba. So that was recognition that we weren’t babysitters, that there was more to taking care of large groups of children, or children period, than just having no knowledge. And that’s not to say that parents don’t do a good job and grandparents don’t do a – but there’s more to it.

And so I think that was the biggest change for me in the sector, was like – I remember going to a directors’ meeting once and



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there were people who'd been in the field longer than I that were going, "Well we don't like these regulations and da, da, da, da, da," and I said, "Well I didn't like it when we didn't have them," you know. And I think we're protecting children, protecting ourselves and building a career path.

So that was the biggest change. The converse of that is what Sandy alluded to this morning, was that things haven't changed. You know, we're still fighting those same battles. We're still trying to make working conditions and wages a priority for our field. There's still waiting lists, there's still horror stories that you're hearing from places where there shouldn't be that anymore, you know.

And I know anyone in social services would say, "It's the same in our field." You know, there's good people and there's things that go wrong all the time. But you would think for children, who are so vulnerable, that we would've come farther. So that disappoints me and I think it's too bad we just don't have an endless pot of money to just make it happen. Because I think no matter what government it is, they really will do their best but they also have to be fiscally responsible.

And that I think is the saddest thing, is that after 30 years of doing this – or actually almost 40 – that things have come, but they haven't, you know? And I try and be positive. Someone sent me a little message yesterday and it said, "Oh, I remember meeting you at Carter and you were the first person I talked to about early learning and child care, and you were so excited about your staff and so excited about the field."

And sometimes I think I've lost a little bit of that because I'm becoming more skeptical that things haven't moved, right? And so that worries me, that we give up trying because things take so long. But every system takes time, so.

Don Giesbrecht: So this is the Canadian Child Care Federation's 30th anniversary, and you have been there for half of those years as member council chair, as chair of the board and as Manitoba's rep to the organization. What has the Federation meant to you in terms of your career? And just even in terms of opening up your views and your vision to it's bigger than just Manitoba or just bigger than the small community that I'm working in or the part of the community I'm working in?

April Kalyniuk: So I'm just going to go back; I think I was involved with the Federation before that time because I was on the MCCA board when the Federation was born. And I

remember Sandy Griffin, Karen Chandler and doing their around-the-country tour and saying – and Dorothy Dudek was executive director at that time at MCCA – and saying, "Is this something that Manitoba folks would be interested in being part of? And just going, "Of course, why wouldn't we, you know, to have a national voice and to get a national perspective on something we're working so hard at at home? Of course we want to be part of that."

And we were very lucky in Manitoba to always have a strong association. It started small but it was always dedicated and moved, and when I got to the Federation table I was amazed at how little people like at that time in New Brunswick were running with, or in the north part of our country how they have no support for the work they do. Not just at the level of the centres but just for their professional development and things like that. It opened my eyes quite a bit and made me think that we can do better, we can do better.

And so part of what the Federation has always done is to support those small little organizations that had no one there and – well you and I know how the membership fees work and how people say, "Well how come they're not doing this?" Well because they need our support. They're never going to get anywhere if they don't have something, you know?

And I think a national voice that's sending out the same message from province to province is so much better for us, you know? I was listening again to Sandy this morning, and I don't know if you'll talk about that in this, but the children, the heart of the matter, I was at that conference. And it just opened my world to you know what? We are a profession and we do need this, and families in Canada need us to do those fact sheets. Our workforce needs us to do those studies, because if we don't, who will? Little organizations that have two staff or one staff?

You know, some of them are still struggling like that, so I think the Federation plays such an important role. And I don't know how you get that out to all the people, how important it is, but I mean we just keep on plugging, right? Keep on plugging.

Don Giesbrecht: It's fair to say then, as you talked a little bit already about what Sandra Griffin said this morning just about children at the heart of the matter, and then you were on the Federation board when we expanded or refined that a little bit, and we just used the tagline and still do – "We value children." Having known you for these many years I think that

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that is – and you just spoke about it – really is the core of your being too, that one of the reasons you do the work you do, and you’re still involved and you know, getting frustrated. I understand that; I hear that a lot from not just you but others, that we need to move further. But at the end of the day, yes, this is political but it’s about children. I mean that resonates with you.

April Kalyniuk:

Absolutely, of course it does. It is only about children, right? It’s

about making – well is it about children? It’s about families. I think I need to broaden that because it’s about making things happen for families, children being the most important people in those families, right? I don’t know any parent that wouldn’t say, “My children are the most important thing in my life, right, my kids.”

So for families to be able to go to work, for families to be able to succeed, that’s all part of it, you know? And so yes, it’s about the children but it’s about families, it’s about the kind of place I want to live in. It’s like where families are supported whether they choose to stay home, whether they choose to go to work or they have no choice, whether they’re students – whatever that looks like I want those children to be safe and well cared for. And people in our society to go out there and say, “I know my kids are safe today. I don’t have to worry about that.”

And I don’t know how anything could be less important than that.

Don Giesbrecht: So what is your vision for down the road, for child care or for children, families, for the sector?

April Kalyniuk: That’s a really hard question. I’m not the most visionary person. I do know that I would like to see a space for every child, you know, things we talk about all the time, that



wants it. I’d like to see quality programs and quality programs being funded properly, so that when you have 25 year-old equipment centres are not going, “Well we’ll just have to make do a little longer with that.”

I think children deserve beautiful spaces, I think children deserve well-educated staff. So I see roles for child care assistants and early childhood educators and anyone that’s there, but there’s a part of me that would like to know that everyone at least has really good training at even the lowest – that’s not the right word, lowest – even the CCAs have more than 40 hours. I’d like to see everyone understand the importance of brain development and things like that, but most of all I’d like to see a system where we’re respected for our work and that families are respected for their choices.

And I think having waiting lists of 15,000 kids for waiting lists is not respecting parental choice, right? That’s saying, “Understood you might want a space but we’re not going to do much to make that better.” So my vision would be space for every child that wants it, a workforce that’s compensated and recognized and I don’t know, lovely environments, lovely environments for kids.

Don Giesbrecht: That was awesome, thank you.



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Pat Wege

Don Giesbrecht: It's my pleasure to be attending the Manitoba Child Care Association's 40th annual conference in Winnipeg, Manitoba, and even further my pleasure to be speaking with Pat Wege, Executive Director of the Manitoba Child Care Association in her how many years of being at the MCCA, Pat?

Pat Wege: This is my 20th as the executive director and I was on the board of directors for 10 years before that.

Don Giesbrecht: So that's the perfect springboard to start talking about how you got to this position, when you started working with children and early childhood. Talk to us a little bit about your career and how you got to where you are today.

Pat Wege: Well thanks Don. So someone once said that sometimes God has bigger plans for you than you have for yourself and when I think back over the last 40 years, now that I've been working in child care since 1976, actually it is like that for me. So I never planned on working in child care, I was going to be a kindergarten teacher.

Watch video interview:
<https://youtu.be/uPskkYhZwtQ>

So in 19 – I guess it was 1976, I completed what was then at the University of Manitoba they had an early childhood education program, and I left that program with my shiny new teaching certificate in hand and set out looking for a job in the public school system, which really wasn't available unless I was willing to work outside of Winnipeg and as a newlywed at that time and my husband was still in school himself.

So what happened was I had a cousin who was working at Champlain School teaching Grade 1 and the principal of that school, whose name was David Buckingham, was working with a group of parents to set up a daycare centre in a church down the street. So she, my cousin, knew that I was job hunting for something that related to children and suggested I meet with him because I might be interested in working with this group to set up a daycare centre.

I'm going to admit, I didn't know much about a daycare centre at the time and it took me a few years to realize that, once I had gotten out into the field and met a few other people, not many



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others knew much about what running a daycare centre was about. Anyway, so that's how it happened, that I decided that I would volunteer to help this group set up this daycare centre and then I was eventually hired to be the director, that was in 1976 and I was with that daycare centre for probably 20 years after that.

And so, you know, did the path of starting it up and getting it launched and the grants and the funding, and you know just making it all happen, and so that's how I got involved in child care.

Don Giesbrecht: So what about the segue then to being involved with the association, and by extension did you know at that time how political this would become for you?

Pat Wege: No to any of the questions. You know, becoming involved with MCCA was actually quite an accident and I recall, and I can't tell you when it was, but somebody inviting me to come to a meeting of a public policy committee that I agreed to go to, and I sat in on one meeting and never went back. I never told anybody this, so I never went back, like this is not for me, these people all are nuts, it's not what I can see myself doing, I'm out of here. And so I didn't go back.

At some point later, and I can't even tell you how much later, but I was friends with [Lorraine Maske 00:03:48], who at that time was the Executive Director at Care-A-Lot Day Nursery. She was on the MCCA board and so Lorraine and I would often have these long, long conversations about child care in Manitoba and where it was going or where it shouldn't be, like all the woes that directors talk about when they get together, and she said, "Look, you should come on MCCA board because that is the place to share your ideas and opinions about things".

So I agreed and was welcomed to that board in-between AGMs, so I never went through that whole election thing. They had a seat on the board and I was invited to attend and it stuck, and 10 years later I was still there. So I think I was on the board for probably two, maybe three years as just a board member, and then I was quickly asked to be on their executive committee which they had at the time. And then I probably within about four years I found myself elected as chair of the board and that's how that happened.

Don Giesbrecht: I don't think we've ever talked about some of those things Pat, that's great. That's great. So 20 years as executive director now, how many as chair then?

Pat Wege: Well at that time a chair of the board – now it's two years, at that time it was three. And so I did my three years as

chairperson of the board and then I was just finishing up as past chairperson of the board, which was one year, and thought well I'm close to being done I guess.

And then Dorothy Dubeck, who was the executive director at the time, was invited by at that time the Children and Youth Secretariat to come and work for them for a year on school age child care, and so the board asked if I would be interested in being acting executive director for the year.

And I thought about it, I thought I probably knew about as much of that position as I knew when I was starting off as the director at Machray, but had a fairly long history with the organization at the time so I thought I'll give it a whirl, it's only a year. And she never came back and I never left.

Don Giesbrecht: Yeah, wow. Here we are, so 20 years later and interesting then that the Canadian Child Care Federation is celebrating its 30th year here. So let's go back to, you know if you recall it, what was happening 30 years ago, but certainly 20 years what was the environment like in terms of political relationships in terms of policy compared with today, and maybe with that, some of the biggest changes you've seen, biggest challenges and biggest successes? So lots of different pieces in there.

Pat Wege: Yeah, you're going to have to break those questions up. So, you know, so federally or provincially because I think they're both very different and I'm far more familiar with provincial politics than federal, but you know listening to Sandy Griffin this morning, the keynote talking about how little has actually changed in 30 years, all of those core issues are still there.

The lack of spaces across the country, certainly here in Manitoba more than 16,000 names now on the online registry, that's huge. Wages for child care centre employees and family child care providers continue to be below market. Sandy talked about how fees are high right across the country, you know Manitoba still has the second lowest fees outside of Quebec but for families it can still be a financial burden even though our fees are deemed to be lower than most other provinces.

So, you know, there's a lot of core issues that have stuck, that have not changed over time and yet sometimes it feels like we are light-years away from where we were 30 years ago. I think a couple of big differences, and we found this out in the MCCA Probe Research Survey, is public opinion has really come a long way, that as a long time advocate I no longer feel like we need to spend time trying to convince the public that this is important.



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When we did that survey we found out that the public definitely gets it, you know a large percentage are in favour of a universal child care program, they see the value to families, to the economy, to children. And so, you know, that for me is probably the biggest shift, and I'm going to say I think to some degree I've seen a change in the opinions of political leaders.

And so at this point I've worked with two government changes, so the NDP – I started off with a Conservative government, then we shifted to an NDP for quite a number of years, now we're back to a Conservative government. But the support for child care seems to be there and that too is different.

You know, Sandy had given an anecdote about one of the provincial works going to talk to their minister and going on and on, and the minister concluding by saying, "Well I don't believe you", that has never been my experience actually.

You know, I think maybe things are different here in Manitoba, but to some degree every single provincial party has continued to fund child care. Even at our lowest point, probably in the eighties, we didn't do any growing but we also didn't do much shrinking, and then you know throughout the nineties and early 2000s, you know, child care really moved forward under that government and you know we're seeing good signs now from our newly elected PC government.

So political will has definitely grown, which makes the job of an advocate much easier. I've always believed that that's the number one ingredient, most important factor in building a child care system is going to be political will. If you don't have the support of your parties you're not going to go anywhere.

So, you know, I've seen the workforce evolve, of course compensation still is a problem like I said. People seem to be really engaged in their work, I've long admired the loyalty of the workforce. Often times when I go to grand openings of new facilities, you know the politicians are there taking credit for a very small part of what was actually their role because it's the community that's built the child care system.

You know, that's the way it started for me in 1974, you know I had to figure it out without much help and that's the way it often still is in 2017, that you have a group of people come together and say we need a daycare centre and then they get to do the work to make it happen. So whether it's staff of an existing facility or you know a group of community members likeminded who want to establish a child care program, they figure it out. It can take years, but they definitely – and that's how our system has evolved is with the blood, sweat and

tears often times of volunteers or poorly paid early childhood educators.

So, you know, I would like to see a day when the provincial government takes a larger role in the establishment of new facilities in the same way they do for, for example, [auto pack 00:11:45] outlets that just seem to pop up or, you know, liquor stores. You know, a new community equals a liquor store pretty darn quick but there's no child care program. So I think I've forgotten half of what you asked me, but yeah.

So, you know, I mean we are moving on and, you know, I've never felt – I've never felt discouraged. We've had a few low points certainly with the termination of the federal-provincial funding agreements in 2006 that we worked so hard for. I mean we as a community worked so hard for that, we worked hard here in Manitoba and I know our colleagues across the country also worked on that.

We thought we had turned a corner, I was so proud that day when our agreement was signed. We had the Prime Minister, the Premier at the time, provincial politicians signed on the dotted line our bilateral agreement, it came with a lot of money, we had such big plans and then I mean the ink was barely dry when we went into a federal election and those agreements were terminated. That was heartbreaking.

But, you know, we moved on and I think Canadian child care has continued to move forward. So, you know, maybe some felt that that was the end of it for them, but provinces continued to develop their systems as best they could without the federal funds and, you know, I think it was a pretty good testimony to the strength and endurance and commitment of Canadian child care that the system continued to grow.

So where we are now, it's 2017, we're on the cusp now of the resigning of new multilateral agreements, new bilaterals, more federal money coming to provinces, not as much but you know we'll take what they're going to offer and as advocates we'll work on our own constituencies to make sure it's spent in the best way that we need.

Don Giesbrecht: So you mentioned the word advocacy a few times and advocates, lessons after these years that you can impart on people?

Pat Wege: Yeah, well you know I have been part of MCCA through some pretty bold advocacy campaigns launched with noise and vigor. You know, I'm recalling you know our infamous now Peanut Day where we wanted to make the point



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that, you know, child care workers earn peanuts and so the campaign that MCCA launched was to encourage child care centres and individuals to send peanuts to the minister at the time and, you know, make the point about peanuts.

And I think it got great media attention, but it didn't really help move the issue forward because the government got mad. And when I had said before about political will being key, well I think that day we lost any political will because as it turns out if you embarrass a politician or a party, they're not going to talk to you anymore.



But at the time, you know, we thought we were doing something marvellous, we got in the news and our members were engaged, happy to participate, you know I think they looked to the organization for leadership and this was something that they could all do. But I will also say that I think that that backfired, even though at the time I too was sending peanuts.

But we also did a day of demonstration, you know, to try and make a point where child care programs throughout the province were encouraged to close for the day and we marched on the leg, and I think we did get a little bit more money out of that one but the following year it was taken away. So it didn't have any long-lasting impact.

So the organization did lead a number of very public, very strong advocacy events to try and get government's attention for this cause but again I'm going to emphasize, there was no long-lasting change that came of it.

And then, I'm trying to remember the year – it was probably mid-nineties, we actually hired a consultant to work with us on a government relations plan and we learned a few things from that consultant about the importance of relationships, even with our political leaders. And so we as early childhood educators talk a lot about relationships with children and we talk about relationships with families, but we don't often talk about

relationships with political leaders.

And for me the takeaway from that is that political leaders are people too, they take on the job because they hope to make a difference, they don't like to be embarrassed in public, they do their best based on what they know and what the position of their party is and so if you want to make some headway as an advocate, you better have a good relationship with those political leaders.

That you need to understand their priorities and see if there are ways that you can help them move forward on what they are, even though

you might not like them and you're going to get a lot further that way because it will ensure you have a seat at a table, a foot in the door and an opportunity then to have dialogue about perhaps different ways of doing things.

And so the organization decided after that time that it was going to change its approach to government relations and endeavour to have a collaborative and positive working relationship with government, and so that includes elected officials, it included the bureaucrats as well. And so that made sense to us, we changed our approach, it seemed to go better and it's a policy now actually of MCCA's that we've continued to use and it's in place to this day.

And I like to think that we do have a close working relationship with government, we are consulted most of the time, not always, we are asked for our opinions. Different ministers have different ways that they approach our organization, some are more interested in our opinion than others but you know we're able to get meetings, we're able to ask questions, we're able to sit down at a table and have a conversation. So that's what I've learned, I think that those relationships are important.

And, you know, we've also taken the approach of you know when we ask for something, we try and make the ask one that government could say yes to. Because if you put something on



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the table that's like way out of reach, either economically or too far away from their philosophy or what they believe, you're not going to get any mileage out of that one and then you end up both being angry because they're not doing what we want and they say, you know, "They're crazy to ask for that at this particular time because we just can't".

So I think those are the most important lessons certainly that have worked for us as advocates.

Don Giesbrecht: So MCCA is 4,000 members strong, Canada's largest provincial child care organization, that has to be a point of pride. What else, what else when you look back as real shining lights, real points of pride for you as the executive director and along with the many boards you've worked with through the years as well?

Pat Wege: I feel like crying. You know, when I listened to Sandy this morning, she really spoke from the heart and you know for me this sector has always been – it always comes from the heart. I think it is just like that for lots of people who work in child care, and so I've always been really proud of our workforce for their dedication. You know people have come and stayed, you know I've made a lot of good friends in this sector. You know I think we're pretty good at working together, so I'm proud of that too.

But, you know, although many of the core issues in our field, the struggles, you know when I look around I see so many improvements. So, you know, for example a couple of weeks ago I was at the opening of Building Blocks, the new YMCA/YWCA child care facility opened in partnership with Great-West Life.

It's a beautiful facility, purpose built, sunny, bright, plenty of space, state of the art, beautifully furnished, children should have beautiful spaces and you know for many, many, many years, too many years it was you know subterranean children in you know spaces in church basements, and you know make do classrooms in a corner of a church somewhere or community centre.

And so now we're seeing more and more purposely built and designed spaces for children that are beautiful, and so that makes me proud when I stand there because I like to think that we've put so many issues on the table and one of them has certainly been the need for capital funding for community based projects, you know we have a policy now that all new schools will include a child care program as they're being built, like that's huge.

A pension plan, you know MCCA put the need for a pension plan on the government's agenda probably 25 to 30 years ago and

we have that now. You know, Sandy talked about how in many provinces the workforce doesn't have many benefits but our workforce has access to a group benefits plan, we have access to a pension plan, professional development that we offer through MCCA. So, you know, lots of improvements in the workforce, even though wages aren't great at least they are better.

You know, our work in partnership with other organizations, I know we have a very strong relationship with People First HR Services that provide HR expertise to child care centres that are MCCA members and, you know, we've just moved forward on so many initiatives. We have our human resource management guide that I'm really proud of, our work with pedagogical cohorts now that's happening and moving forward, and I'm proud of our members for supporting MCCA.

You know we are – I am always very grateful that so many in the workforce do – are MCCA members because without that we wouldn't have the credibility, we wouldn't have the capacity, we wouldn't have the reputation that we have so there's just a lot to be proud of.

You know, our board has always worked hard as you know, lots of loyal members who have stood beside the association through good time and bad, and you know talk about the organization with pride and see it as their organization and really embrace that sense of belonging and importance of being part of something. And, you know, I mean we are respected, you know I see it from the political leaders, I see it from our members, I see it from the colleges, community colleges, the instructors. So, you know, we've got a lot of good things happening here in Manitoba.

Don Giesbrecht: So Sandra Griffin in her keynote this morning talked about children at the heart of the matter, and you've mentioned that here too. So let's look forward, let's look forward to what do you envision, what would you love to see and I'm not going to put a timeline on it, but at some point in the future with children at the heart of the matter and families along with them, what do we want to see, not just for Manitoba's children but for Canada's children?

Pat Wege: Well I mean I would like to see a time where early learning and child care is recognized as the first tier of education. I think we talk about it a lot, but we're not there yet. We – here in Manitoba child care is not part of the education system yet, I think that that may be part of our future. It is a model that many other provinces have adopted, although I hear that just putting child care into education does not necessarily mean the systems are integrated.



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So, you know, I will say that first that as the first tier of education I think child care should be part of an integrated child care system where we're recognized and valued as partners in children's learning.

So, you know, I think along with that, that that would provide the infrastructure to address some of the governance issues that we have. We have so many parent boards that are struggling, that you know their responsibilities are beyond their ability, they may have the knowledge but they don't have the time, it's just a real problem in terms of governance. So, you know, I think we definitely need a different kind of model.

I think we have the political support now. You know, again I'm going to refer to our Probe Research Survey, that really uncovered public support, parent support, business leader support that child care needs to be a priority of a provincial government and I don't think we're – that's not going to go back in time, it can only help in years going forward. So I think we have a real good foundation on which to build.

You know, I wish that the workforce could be a priority. I know with more than 16,000 names on our online waiting list it's spaces that are the priority, and we have to keep reminding government that there's lots of moving parts to building a child care system. And so when you talk about spaces you also need to make sure that there's a trained, skilled, experienced, well-compensated workforce and you need to plan for that at the same time that you're planning for spaces. So, you know, I hope that that is in our very near future too.

So, you know, and I would like a time where parents can access a child care space when they need it, on a timely basis. The same way there's a seat in the kindergarten classroom when your child turns five, if you as a parent choose an early learning and child care experience whether you're employed or as a child development approach, I would like for there to be a space, full time, part time, extended hour, evening.

So we've got a lot of building to do on our system and I don't think – like you know I start off by saying okay 1976, we didn't really have a clue what we needed, we weren't really sure about how to do it and we certainly didn't know where we were going. But in 2017 I think we've learned a lot and, you know, I think the model is there. You know, we – the former government left us with the report of the commission on early learning and child care that provides a very good roadmap for moving forward. So, you know, we know where we need to go and we have some support coming from the federal government again.

Hopefully we can hang on to the support shown so far from our provincial government and working together, you know, I think we can continue to take steps forward. I don't think it's going to be fast, you know I think we move forward slowly, sometimes so slowly you can't even see it, but I think it takes people who have been around for a while to be able to look back and go you know, "It may look like we haven't made headway, but man, we're light-years ahead from where we were".

Don Giesbrecht: That's great. Anything else you would like to add, anything that we didn't cover? I mean we could talk for a long time, but any personal highlights or anything personally that you'd really like to have communicated?

Pat Wege: You know, I just wanted to acknowledge the federation because what I didn't mention in term of a highlight is back in the days when, you know, the federation was in a better spot and there was project funds available, there were lots of projects that needed steering committees and I was on several of them. So from Recognition to Remuneration, Our Child Care Workforce I think was the first one, and Partners in Quality of course.

And I remember as part of – being part of those projects, the opportunity to come together and meet people from across the country and, you know, hear what's happening in other provinces and listen to other perspectives, and to be talking to each other and learning at the same table, and having the opportunity to meet people that, you know, I've sat in rooms with prime ministers and you know high level policy wonks.

And, you know, for someone who never intended to be an advocate, it was never on – my radar, you know that, all that was definitely a highlight and hearing Sandy this morning just brought some of that back, that some of those tables that we were at and listening to her and you know I had always considered her a mentor and I remember more than once thinking, man, when I grow up – I'm grown up now, but at that time I wasn't, you know I would like to be just like her. You know, I would like to have her way with words and know what she knows. I don't know if that's ever going to happen, probably not now, it's too late. But –

Don Giesbrecht: I think it has, but anyways –

Pat Wege: Yeah. So you know it's been a wonderful, wonderful sector to be part of and, you know, I am not one bit sorry that as each of these opportunities came my way that I did jump in, even though sometimes it felt like I was ill-equipped and didn't know what I was doing.

Don Giesbrecht: Thank you Pat, that's been great. Thank you.



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Sandra Griffin

Watch video interview:
https://youtu.be/9U_n-U3L0eM

Don Giesbrecht: It's my sincere pleasure today to talk with Sandra Griffin, who is a former Executive Director of the Canadian Child Care Federation, founder of the Canadian Child Care Federation, former Chief of Staff of then Minister Ken Dryden, and so much more, on day two of the Manitoba Child Care Association's 40th anniversary – or 40th annual conference.

So Sandy, thank you for this time, thank you for sitting down with us. Talk to me just a little bit about your career, where you started, why early childhood and some of the highs and perhaps even lows of the years you've been in this sector.

Sandra Griffin: Well I think my story actually is such a typical one from 40 plus years ago of people that came into the field at the time. I was a young mom, new mom, new baby, I was needing to go back to work and didn't like the idea of leaving Meg and I saw an ad to work in a daycare centre.

And I hadn't known anything about daycare or daycare centres before then and so I phoned them thinking, well that would be

good, maybe I could put my daughter in a daycare centre and work there, and they asked me if I had my qualifications which was just a, "What, my what". So it was a whole new discovery for me, and instead of going back to work I decided to go to college instead.

And this is, you know, the fascination of a young mom with a first baby then picked up the books and read about early childhood development and everybody's baby as it were, and recognizing just this extraordinary, extraordinary rich time in child development in those early years and just literally became fascinated, both with the topic, the subject, the work and just didn't look back.

I joke – that little baby is now 44 and mother of my grandchildren, but you know I joke with my kids that in coming across early childhood education and then just finding it really the most interesting area I've ever studied in my life, that my own kids then grew up with me going to school and writing papers and going to meetings, and dragging them here and there and



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everywhere. So they still didn't get that mom staying home and giving all the attention but I think it was a richer, richer life for them as well.

And I just found myself with every level that I went and studying about early childhood education and children and child development, I really just came to the conclusion that if ever the world is going to be a better place, it's going to be through what we do with our children and just stayed dedicated to that and just it made a fascinating career, an absolutely fascinating career.

Don Giesbrecht: So at some point then you got really involved from not just a service delivery perspective but clearly then up to the more organizational, the association and quite frankly the political level. How did that happen?

Sandra Griffin: I became a single parent actually and had a look at my paycheque and two young daughters to raise, and although I was – I think I was the highest paid director in child care in Okanagan Valley at the time, I still qualified for a full subsidy for both of my children.

And I had at a – we called ourselves Preschool Teachers' Association at the time, I'd gotten very involved with the provincial organization and at a conference I met Dr. Alan Pence who was embarking on a national daycare study and was with the School of Child and Youth Care and I could see where – what I was interested in and my work could really transition well into a degree in child and youth care, and Alan offered me a job as a research assistant and I packed up the girls in the car and off we drove to Victoria and made a life there.

But you know again, I did then an undergraduate and a graduate degree while I was there and it was just the more I studied in the area the richer it became. I was having a look at the profession at the time because it was why was it so difficult to professionalize in this field, what were the – and why did people push back against it, what kind of models did people even want to look at because caring for a living is very different from most other professions.

And so I picked that up in my graduate work and started studying professions, and it was through that work that I really came to my own conclusion that honestly, caring for a living, early childhood education and care is a unique profession and it needed to respond to a unique model. And in doing so, and by that point I was working with people right across Canada and what we all said, we looked around and we said, "You know, there's really we've got small local organization but there's nothing for us as a nation of practitioners".

Many of us were members of the NAYC in the States and would look to the States for resources, but there was really not very much Canadian and that was the drive. You know, that was five people sitting around a table one day saying, we really need an organization for the practitioner in Canada so that Monday morning when you show up for work you feel like you have colleagues all across Canada that are working with you on the common issues, on the common concerns, on the exciting part of the work, on the challenging part of the work.

And that was really the founding of the Canadian Child Care Federation, was to come up with a practitioner based organization of people who work and care for young children.

Don Giesbrecht: It still resonates today, it still resonates today. So 30 years ago how hard was that sell, to get people to buy into that vision and we'll add that to how – from your perspective, I mean here we are 30 years later, how relevant and how important is that work still today?

Sandra Griffin: I think all the more relevant today as the need for early learning and child care continues to just grow exponentially. We know that, you know, 80% of families with school aged children or, you know, young children are in the paid labour force in some way, shape or form. You know, it is the fabric of our nation and the partnership that these families need to have with early childhood educators is I think just critical to the wellbeing of the nation.

And I think that we still have a field where education resources are difficult to find, laddering from certificates to diplomas to degrees are difficult, wages are poor, benefits are poor and with something that is so critical to the health of a nation, it's children, then we all the more at this point in time need to draw together as a very strong voice and speak out on behalf of the children and families we serve and the practice that we use.

The difficulty 30 years ago was at that particular point in time people felt that there was kind of an either or. You either had to be advocating for a particular position around early learning and child care because of course it was just fighting for any kind of recognition because it had never been really recognized by government or funded. And so advocacy was a very strong need and people came together under an advocacy banner.

The unfortunate part of that was coming together under a practitioner banner to really focus on practice, for some people it felt like it was competitive but it never was. It really was it's a huge field and a huge need and on the practice side of it there

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is always going to be a need for a practice organization that focuses on practice, what I do in my work Monday morning.

And you then also need organizations that are out there fighting the political fights and you know it's very much a partnership, it's not an either or. But I think too often, and particularly I think in resource poor sectors, too often people are fighting for tiny, tiny little bits of the pie and I think it sets up an unfortunate false dichotomy, yeah, and not healthy.

Don Giesbrecht: So 30 years ago and fast forward to today, did you envision or think that we would have been further ahead as a sector and as a profession, or is this kind of you know where you thought it might end up? Has it met with what you and Karen and others all sat down and planned or envisioned at that time in terms of where could this sector go?

Sandra Griffin: One of the things that I've learned with age is, my gosh change is either almost instantaneous and immediate or it's very slow. And so one of the things in just reviewing material for the keynote address and looking back over 30 years, I was struck by – I looked at the throne speech in March committing dollars and I looked at the throne speech – so 2017.

I went back and looked at the throne speech when I was with Dryden and Paul Martin came out with the throne speech on the importance of early learning and child care and committed \$5 billion over five years, which is just under \$7 billion now, I think \$6.5 billion in today's dollars, and we now have \$7 billion committed over 10 years. That \$5 billion never did all get spent as you know.

So in some ways you could look at that and think, "Are we going backwards on this", but I don't think so because no political party would not have a position on early learning and child care now. That wasn't the case 30 years ago. While a lot of the stats have remained the same, I think the pressure is



buildings, it's become more than – it's become a norm issue almost, you know, rather than a fringe issue and I think at this particular point in time what we're finding is people really moving towards you know, "This has got to get solved, it can't go on like this".

And so while I wish it would have moved along much more quickly, yes, do I wish that there in Manitoba wait lists of 15,000 children you know not getting into service, yeah I really do wish we had gotten a lot further, but do I think we've made huge progress, yes.

I sat with the ethics committee last night over dinner. Again, that was something we as practitioners did, we pulled together, we developed a national code of ethics, we developed a national training program 20 years ago, 25 years ago and I talked last night, they have over 700 trainers in Manitoba alone on this and we have a code of ethics that we own, that people actually use and bring to life in their everyday practice.

And I looked around at other resources on tables and remember the proposals we wrote to get the money to develop those resources or – you know, and I just see huge progress from all of that. I see a really strong foundation that's been created out of the work of the Canadian Child Care Federation and then in partnership with really critical partners like MCCA in that whole time.

And I think if we can do all that, think what we can do in a go forward if even more people start to step up to the plate and say, "You know, I want to be a part of that. I need to be. I'm a practitioner, I work in this field", or, "I'm a parent, I want the people working with my kids to be a part of that", and I think the stronger that voice gets the better and I think the timing for that is really good now.

Like honestly if I was new coming into this field and found the Canadian Child Care Federation, if I lived in Manitoba



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and joined the MCCA, I would – you know the difference of when I first went into the field just knowing so little and not feeling much in the way of support and to look around and see what we’ve built now, I just don’t know why every college and institution across Canada doesn’t just give memberships to all their students to these organizations so that they can actually see the importance of being a part of that work.

Don Giesbrecht: So sitting here today, what’s your continued vision for children and for the families and for the sector as we go forward? And I agree with you, I think that this is an amazing time and we’ve really stepped forward, it’s not perfect but that’s perhaps the point is that nothing is ever perfect and you always have to keep pursuing that. But what’s your vision for children and families and the sector as a whole?

Sandra Griffin: Well, you know, when we first sat in those millions of little hotel rooms across Canada in the early development work of the federation and we were looking for that one phrase that sort of just captured, you know, what the work meant and we came up with, “Children, the heart of the matter”, and that hasn’t changed. If you look at a nation, a province, a community and you look at the health and wellbeing of its children, you know at the end of the day if we do right by our kids the rest of the world is going to go right.

If we have phenomenal early learning and child care services and supports for children and families, if we have good health care, if we have good education systems, if we really do well by our children I think a lot of the problems and issues that we’re trying to solve later in life we wouldn’t have them.

I don’t understand why people can – I’ll never forget George Bush standing up on that destroyer declaring war on Iraq, which essentially committed the U.S. to \$3 trillion and no progress, you know, in terms of making the world a better place and I think what if we had had some brave person like that stand up and say, “I’m running this country \$3 trillion in debt, you know where I’m putting it, I’m putting it in education”. And you imagine these dozen years later, if the U.S. would have invested \$3 trillion in its education system, where it would be as a country now.

That’s what I think the potential is, that has not changed for me that we need braver politicians who will step out, not feeling like this is some soft issue or another way of the state having to, you know, pay for things that families should be doing, but really step out and say, “You know what, we are not doing well enough by our kids and we’re going to do that and here’s how we’re going to do it”.

Don Giesbrecht: Did you think in 2005 when you went to work with Ken Dryden that that sector had achieved it, that this was the launching point?

Sandra Griffin: Absolutely and you just saw how all the stars aligned in that moment, and I think if – you know, if the Liberals would have won that next election and that agenda would have slid into place that we would have been a lot further ahead this you know 12 years later, all the pieces were there.

And, you know, right across – you’ll recall, we had negotiated very quickly agreements with all the provinces and we were just working on the territories, but over an issue that usually people would say, “Well that’s your responsibility, no that’s yours”, no, people were ready. The time was really good on that one and we had a minister with a real vision, and again a real commitment to children, he knows the quality of a nation rests on its children.

And so I think that would have been a phenomenal step forward, the sector was working well together, organizations were working well together, people were really pulling in the same direction. So that was I think a huge, huge loss for Canada in so many ways.

Don Giesbrecht: Well it’s been great Sandy. Is there anything else you’d like to say or add before we close this up?

Sandra Griffin: Well I think the sector has a lot to be proud of in the last 30, 40 years and I think that the time now, I’m repeating myself I know but I don’t think I can say it too often, that we absolutely need people in this field and people using the service, the parents, we need them to understand that a strong voice and a push forward will get us what we need.

But if we continue to work in small pockets, if we don’t work together, if we don’t share resources then it’s going to be another 30 years of pushing that ball uphill and it doesn’t have to. We don’t need a whole other generation of kids not getting what they need.

So I guess I would say to anybody listening to us talk, if you’ve got any influence at your college or university, you know get in those classrooms, get those students joining, get them active coming out into the field. If you’re already in the field, find where your location organization is and join it and it’s going to matter. You are going to help change the world by becoming part of the work to do that.

Don Giesbrecht: Thank you so much Sandy.

Sandra Griffin: My pleasure.



RESEARCH UPDATE

Ready for Life: A Socio-Economic Analysis of Early Childhood Education and Care

The Conference Board of Canada releases a report supporting the investment in early learning and child care. This report explores the impact of early childhood education (ECE) on the Canadian economy and highlights its potential to improve socio-economic outcomes including the reduction of poverty and income inequality

The Conference Board of Canada, 96 pages, October 26, 2017
Report by Craig Alexander, Kip Beckman, Alicia Macdonald, Cory Renner, Matthew Stewart

Read it at : <http://www.conferenceboard.ca/e-library/abstract.aspx?did=9231>

ACROSS CANADA

CANADA

Over the past few months, the Government of Canada is making significant investments in early learning and child care systems to improve the lives of Canadian children and their families. Jean-Yves Duclos, Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, and provincial and territorial governments are signing three-year bilateral agreements that the Minister says reaffirms their commitment and support of the unique early learning and child care needs for each region of the country. Five provinces have signed various bilateral agreements to date.

In its fall economic update, the Liberal government announced that beginning in July 2018, Canada child benefit payments will be adjusted as the cost of living increases - almost two years earlier than previously promised. The change will also see the qualification threshold for families adjust along with the cost of living. Speaking to the House of Commons, Morneau credited the government's child-benefit program for helping lift the economy.

The child benefit adjustment means the government will be paying out an additional \$5.6 billion over five years, between 2018-19 and 2022-23, to families with children aged 17 years and younger. While the government suggests this extra money in the hands of parents will help pay for child care if needed,

the money barely puts a dent in real costs for the average family and real child care investments into a quality, universal, affordable child care system would do the trick.

ALBERTA

The first provincially licensed on-reserve child care centre in Alberta opened in Kapawe'no First Nation northeast of High Prairie in September. It was celebrated by Kapawe'no leadership and Alberta Minister of Children's Services Danielle Larivee, who called it an "exciting step forward" in government efforts to make child care more affordable and accessible.

The licensing process took about a year and enables families to have access to subsidies which helps lessen the financial burden of accessing child care. The child care centre aims to help lessen the load on parents who may feel overwhelmed. It could also play a role in helping to keep children out of the child welfare system. In 2016 the Alberta government directed each ministry to look at ways of implementing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Larivee says providing equal opportunities for access to licensed child care benefits is an extension of implementing the UN declaration.

BRITISH COLUMBIA

After pledging to introduce \$10 a day childcare during the last provincial election, the B.C. government has announced \$33 million in funding for childcare spaces, including \$1.1 million in Prince George. According to a background document the funding would create 3,806 new licensed childcare spaces throughout the province, saying it will help "thousands of families." The new funding will be allocated to 52 communities throughout B.C., through a total of 103 different projects. Most of the spaces are being administered by non-profit agencies, while 20 per cent are being administered by First Nations communities. Although a substantial increase in funding for childcare spaces, the funding does not yet bring the government in line with its election promise of \$10 a day childcare.

MANITOBA

The Manitoba government has introduced a legislative change it believes will clarify and streamline current rules governing the operation of daycares and home-based child care in the province. Families Minister Scott Fielding tabled the Community Child Care Standards Amendment Act in December to "enhance powers respecting governance and accountability" in the child-care system. The newly elected Conservative government say this new Early Learning and Child Care strategy allows for the first time, new incentives for private investments in child

care spaces. Manitoba has a 98% not for profit child care rate in its services across the province and this is big shift in the provinces child care policy. The plan announced is promising to create new child care spaces, reduce wait times and reduce red tape for early childhood educators. They add that they will focus on partnerships with other levels of government, traditional and home-based service providers, businesses/employers, schools, rural and northern communities.

NEW BRUNSWICK

The food served at New Brunswick child-care centres is not meeting nutritional recommendations, according to a new report published in the Canadian Journal of Public Health. Researchers analyzed the food served at 24 child-care centres in New Brunswick and 37 in Saskatchewan. The lunches and snacks were low in calories and fibre, but had high sugar and sodium content, the study found. The child-care centres are generally not offering one full serving of the four food groups, as recommended in the Canada Food Guide. The research team hopes to see the province develop comprehensive nutrition guidelines and better resources for child-care centres. "Interventions are required to improve the quality of foods offered in [child-care] centres," the report concludes.

NOVA SCOTIA

Two months into Nova Scotia's new pre-primary program, the province is asking daycare operators and families for feedback, but the education minister says it won't alter what's already rolled out. In October the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development launched an online survey to assess the child-care needs of families with children 12 years and under. This new child-care study is redundant and too late, according to critics. The department said it's also surveying every regulated child-care operator in the province about where they want future investments to go. The Education Minister said that survey is about how we strategically grow the child-care sector and the private and not-for-profit sector. The survey is part of a \$75,000 consultation contract the Liberal government signed in August. But people who make a living in the child-care field say it's difficult to compete with the free program.

ONTARIO

The Association of Early Childhood Educators of Ontario's Decent Work Task Force has released policy recommendations to inform the province's current Workforce Strategy. The recommendations reflect the voices of over 4,000 early childhood educators who participated in the



Association of Early Childhood Educators of Ontario's online survey consultation and call for a new, base funding approach for early years services; a wage scale with a minimum floor of \$25/hr for all early years staff; and workforce supports at the system level, designed to improve working conditions and sustainability of the sector.

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

Jean-Yves Duclos, Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, and the Honourable Doug Currie, Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture for Prince Edward Island, reached a three-year bilateral agreement that reaffirms their commitment and support of the unique early learning and child care needs of Prince Edward Island. The agreement allocates \$10.5 million, over three years, to Prince Edward Island for early learning and child care investments. The Island's funding focus will be on early learning and child care access for vulnerable children such as infants, pre-schoolers, children whose parents work seasonally or non-standard hours, and under-served populations including Newcomer families and Acadian and French speaking communities. Funding will also be directed towards professional training for early learning and care educators with the aim of improving the quality and richness of experiences for children.

QUEBEC

A tentative agreement has been reached between the Quebec government and the union representing about 11,000 daycare workers across the province in mid November.

The agreement caused scheduled walkouts to be cancelled along with a rally that was set to be held at the provincial legislature in Quebec City in late November. No details of the tentative deal have been revealed. The employees, who have been demanding better working conditions, have been without a contract for two-and-a-half years. They also want to negotiate better salaries and a government proposal to raise the retirement age to 61 from 60. Child care operators staged a one-day walkout on Oct. 30 affecting some 400 daycare centres and forcing thousands of parents to seek alternate daycare arrangements for more than 21,000 children. Quebec Family Minister Luc Fortin said he gave the government's negotiator a mandate to bring all parties back to the bargaining table as soon as possible.

SASKATCHEWAN

One of the Saskatchewan NDP leadership candidates has proposed the idea of making childcare accessible to every family in the province. Trent Wotherspoon has announced

a commitment to build a universal \$15 a day childcare system. He said this kind of investment is good for families and good for the economy and it generates revenues for the province. He noted that there would be some sort of initial upfront investment that would be needed. He added also that having child care for each family would eventually be a boon to Saskatchewan's economy. It's a similar plan to the one the federal NDP has floated in recent years

YUKON

A Yukon daycare is passing on an Indigenous language where students learn through games such as Tlingit bingo on Fridays and Tlingit versions of kids songs. The Carcross/Tagish 'language nest' aims to get kids learning as early as possible.

It's part of the daily "language nest" at the Haa Yatx'i Hidi early childhood education centre at Carcross/Tagish First Nation. Launched in 2013, the program is designed to introduce local kids to the Tlingit language. The language of the Tlingit people is Indigenous to parts of today's southeast Alaska, southern Yukon and northern B.C. Like other Indigenous languages across the continent, the assimilative effects of colonialism — including Canada's residential school system — have drastically diminished the number of fluent speakers.

CALENDAR

January 2018

25-27

Vancouver, BC

Strengthening Resilience in Today's World - Leading with Kindness and Understanding

The 2018 conference will continue to lead the field of professional development in early childhood development. Topics will include considerations and practices in work with young children and their families, as we adapt to our rapidly changing society. For more information and registration, visit: <http://interprofessional.ubc.ca/initiatives/earlyyears2018/>

May 2018

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Edmonton, Alberta

MacEwan Child Care Conference

The MacEwan Child Care Conference continues to work towards meeting the professional development needs and interests of the participants who work in

the broad spectrum of settings making up this field.

Join us for an engaging day of information, networking and inspiration. Registration details.

24 – 26

Winnipeg

The 41st MCCA Early Learning and Child Care conference, "A Few Of Our Favourite Things" will be held May 24 – 26, 2018 at the Victoria Inn, Winnipeg, MB.

Online registration and the conference brochure will be available on our website on Feb. 2, 2018. <http://mccahouse.org/conferences/>. If you have any questions, please direct them to Karen Houdayer at khoudayer@mccahouse.org

RESOURCES



Fritz Goes to Treehouse

by Heather Logan

Fritz is not your average puppy. He sometimes forgets that he is a dog. Find out what Fritz learns when he visits Treehouse

Fritz the dog is a cockapoo that lives with the Walsh family in Richmond, BC. Fritz makes everybody laugh with his speed running, ladder climbing at the playground and sliding down the slide. Fritz forgets he is a dog.

The book Fritz Goes to Treehouse was created after Heather was looking for a way to give back to Treehouse. Buy on Amazon or go to the author's website: www.fritzthedog.com

All proceeds from the sale of the book go directly to Treehouse to purchase playground equipment and supplies.