

Interaction

VOLUME 26, NUMBER 1, SPRING 2012

CCCF Celebrates 25 Years!



Then & Now: 25 Years
of Child Care in Canada

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CCCF Celebrates 25 years!

Find out what sector leaders and seasoned child care practitioners have to say about how the child care landscape has changed in Canada over 25 years. We asked child care professionals what they think has truly changed, or stayed the same, over the years. (see page 23)

Departments

OPINIONS

- 2 Behind the Scenes
Claire McLaughlin
- 3 Inside the Federation
- 4 From Where I Sit: Here's to 25 Years!
CCCF President Don Giesbrecht
- 5 A Community Plan for a Public System of Integrated Early Care and Learning in British Columbia
Sharon Gregson

PRACTICE

- 7 Keeping Parents in the Loop with
DailyChildcareReport
Christian Pekeler
- 9 Looking Beyond the Centre as a Whole: A "Goodness of Fit" Approach to Care in the Early Years
Tina Bonnett
- 11 BOOK REVIEW: Observing Young Children; transforming early learning through reflective practice; 4th edition
Reviewed by Leigh Ridgway

FOREST PRESCHOOL CHRONICLES

- 12 Forest Preschool Chronicles
Marlene Power

IDEAS

- 16 Natural Environments and Emotional Well-being
Lynn Wilson & Connie Winder

FOCUS

- 23 Then & Now: 25 Years of Child Care in Canada – *ECE's and Child Care Practitioners Across Canada Tell Us What has Changed in Child Care*

NEWS

- 28 Research Updates
- 28 Across Canada and Beyond
- 29 Calendar
- 30 Resources

One new resource sheet accompanies this issue:

#100 – *Nine Crucial Elements of Early Childhood Education*

Behind the Scenes

When anyone in my family turned 25, my father would remind us that we were “a quarter of a century” old. For a national organization that stands up for early learning and child care in Canada, that is quite an accomplishment indeed. This issue celebrates CCCF's 25th anniversary with an article quoting a number of sector leaders on how the child care landscape in Canada has changed over 25 years. Meanwhile, the CCCF itself is also going through another innovation and transition, as we move offices in the Spring and begin a journey to increase our online presence to meet the changing needs of the child care sector to communicate online, learn online, and access our resources and share knowledge online. The ‘iChild Care Sector’ is now upon us.

But with this e-change, we find much of the core needs and authentic vision in national child care has remained constant over 25 years. To draw from the original vision statement in 1987, we continue to create, “a national body to help us coordinate our community, network with each other and share resources and expertise.” We also mark this year with our 100th resource sheet, the National Statement on Quality Early Learning and Child Care poster.

Interaction also welcomes a new section on Nature Learning through the Carp Ridge Forest Preschool Chronicles section.

Let's celebrate all that CCCF has accomplished in 25 years and make a collective wish for many more years of networking, building and believing in our early learning sector across Canada.

Claire McLaughlin, Editor
cmclaughlin@cccf-fcsge.ca

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President/CEO	Don Giesbrecht
Publications Manager	Claire McLaughlin
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CCCF is about the value of children. We *value* children.

In order to protect and enhance our children, to promote their safety and their healthy growth and development, we are committed to providing Canadians with the very best in early learning and child care knowledge and best practices.

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Inside the Federation

Welcome to the new CCCF Affiliate Member Council Representative

CCCF welcomes Josée Bourgoïn representing the Saskatchewan Early Childhood Association. We wish to thank the outgoing representative Lyn Brown on behalf of CCCF during her tenure.

Farewell

Lynda Kerr, CCCF's Senior Director of Business Operations for 12 years is no longer with the organization. We wish Lynda all the best in the next stage of her career and life endeavours and thank her for her years of work and dedication to the CCCF.

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FROM WHERE I SIT

Here's to 25 Years!

CCCF President Don Giesbrecht

As the cover has already told you, this edition of *Interaction* marks the CCCF's 25th year — a significant milestone in the history and evolution of any organization, and a time where you can look back on what has been, and look to the future for what might be. It is also a time to look not only at the CCCF, but at what the early childhood education sector has accomplished and achieved over the past 25 years.

As you enjoy this 25th anniversary edition, you will find quotes, stories and remembrances of what the CCCF and child care means to people from across the country. I know you will find them sincere, heartfelt and significant. It took a community of leaders, visionaries and social entrepreneurs to start the CCCF and also to sustain it. If it takes a village to raise a child, then surely the same can be said for the CCCF. To everyone who has ever supported the CCCF through their time, volunteerism, membership, work or in whatever way, a sincere thank you from not only myself, but from everyone at the CCCF. Together we have created something that is uniquely Canadian and weathered the good times and, shall we say, the challenging times.

I could spend time and energy writing about what could have been, or more precisely, what should have been when it comes to early childhood in Canada and where we are at today. I'd prefer to focus on the future, specifically for the CCCF and its role in Canada's early childhood sector. It is abundantly clear that the sector has to look within itself and in its collective supporters for leadership and support. It is also clear that this is a role that the CCCF can continue to achieve and work towards. Connecting Canada's early childhood sector has always been our strength. We will continue to embrace new



We will continue to embrace new and innovative ways of ensuring that our collective experience and knowledge is communicated and shared across Canada and that best practices and emerging issues are presented and discussed in each province and territory.

and innovative ways of ensuring that our collective experience and knowledge is communicated and shared across Canada and that best practices and emerging issues are presented and discussed in each province and territory. Our shared vision of quality child care is critical and necessary for our growth as a profession, and as an important component of early learning and child care practice that believes that it is an essential right for children and families.

We have accomplished much through our first 25 years. In continuing to work together, we will accomplish so much more.



A Community Plan for a Public System of Integrated Early Care and Learning in British Columbia

A 'Made in BC' Solution to the Child Care Crisis that Incorporates the Best Of Child Care And The Best of Public Education

by Sharon Gregson

What would it mean to the families you know if quality child care was available for \$10 a day?

What about free child care for families who earn less than \$40,000 a year?

What if early childhood educators earned an average of \$25 an hour?

While BC's Ministry of Education recently implemented universal, publicly funded full day Kindergarten for 5-year-olds, BC's child care crisis only gets worse. Fees are too high for parents, wages are too low for staff, and throughout the province quality regulated spaces are far too few.

In response, the Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC and the Early Childhood Educators of BC developed a Community Plan for a Public System of Integrated Early Care and Learning. This 'made in BC' plan incorporates the best of child care and the best of public education. It addresses the urgent need to provide children and families with quality, affordable early care and learning services – a key missing piece of BC's family policy.

Currently in British Columbia, child care sits in a child protection focused ministry, the Ministry of Child & Family Development, whose priority is to protect the most vulnerable children and families. Despite the efforts of many dedicated staff, child care is not the ministry's priority

and has not thrived there. As is the case in Saskatchewan, Prince Edward Island, Ontario, New Brunswick, Nunavut and North West Territories, we are advocating for the provincial government in BC to move child care into the Ministry of Education.

Some people may assume that a move to education means we believe young children should be in 'school'. We do NOT. Rather, the Community Plan for a Public System of Integrated Early Care and Learning [referred to as 'the Plan'] proposes a new home in education because the public education system, with all of its challenges, is based on a set of principles that, to date, have not been extended to early care and learning programs. These include the universal right to attend school at no cost, public funding

and democratic control of the school system and a high level of public understanding and support. Along with health, education is a top public priority.

Child care, from infant and toddler care through to school age care in both group and family settings, plays a central role in supporting families. Today, BC child care providers interact on a regular basis with the families of over 95,000 young children. This makes child care the largest front line support service for BC families. And yet, because governments have failed to adequately plan for and invest in child care, the crisis gets worse each year.

But, this plan is about much more than simply moving the words 'child care' from the list of one minister's responsibilities to another. It's about extending the rights and principles of our public education system to younger children. We believe that a home in education provides the best option for achieving this goal.

Our Community Plan builds on ample research that demonstrates that public spending on the early years is a



wise social and economic investment and that quality child care IS early learning. It honours children's and families' rights to quality early care and learning.

Highlights of the Plan include:

- New legislation: a BC Early Care and Learning Act that will legislate the rights of all young children to access quality services that respect their unique developmental journey. All families will have access to quality, affordable care for their children on a voluntary basis and First Nations will have the right to govern their own services.
- A new home for child care in the Ministry of Education for all community & school-based early care and learning programs. School will still start with kindergarten at age 5. The Plan welcomes existing community delivered services with the strengths of a public system extended to young children and their families and child care at the table as a strong and equal partner.
- A new role for boards of education with elected boards mandated and funded to plan, develop, and govern the delivery of early care and learning services (EC&L) and school-aged child care in their districts.
- The development of Early Years Centre Networks which integrate early care and learning programs that meet the needs of infants, toddlers, and 3 to 5 year olds while their parents are at work, school or home. The Plan equally supports and strengthens play-based, quality early childhood education and offers a clear alternative to school-based junior or pre-kindergarten. Early Years Centres will welcome existing licensed group and family child care into neighbourhood EYC networks. School districts will develop new EYCs to meet demonstrated need. EYCs will offer play-based, diverse approaches to early care and learning and will receive new direct operating funds from government. EYCs will be staffed by early childhood educators and family child care providers and will not displace existing family support programs. Existing child care providers can remain independent as long as they meet licensing requirements – but will not receive NEW public funds.
- Enhancing kindergarten and grade one by having early childhood educators work with teachers and education Assistants as professional colleagues to improve ratios, cover the full working day and full year and enhance ECE practice in schools.
- Developing the Early Childhood Educators' workforce. The new system depends on a well-respected, well-educated, well-compensated workforce. This will enhance quality while respecting the expertise of early childhood educators and moving towards parity with teachers. A Bachelor of Early Childhood Education will become the new educational

standard for the sector, with a diploma as the minimum for group, family and school age providers. There will be support for the sector to upgrade qualifications while mature providers, who may not want to upgrade their education, can remain in their current positions until they decide to retire or move on.

Clearly, significant new public investment is required to create this systemic change. The costing model supporting the Plan comes from work by the well-respected Human Early Learning Partnership (HELP) at UBC. HELP projects that a new annual investment of \$1.5 billion will be required for a fully implemented, fully developed system. The Plan has built-in accountability measures to support this public expenditure:

When Early Years Centres accept new public funds they will be accountable to:

- Cap parent fees at \$10 a day full-time, \$7 part-time, free for families with incomes under \$40,000
- Improve wages and education to an average \$25 an hour + 20% benefits
- Include ALL children, including those with special needs
- Meet demonstrated community need through a planning process
- Offer a program consistent with BC Early Learning Frameworks

The Community Plan for a Public System of Integrated Early Care and Learning offers a concrete, innovative and ambitious way forward. It provides a framework for significant and lasting change. While it does not yet answer every question, the excitement and interest it has generated continue to grow. To date, the Plan has received overwhelming support from municipalities, labour unions, boards of education, child care and community organizations (www.cccabc.bc.ca). While organizational support is important, individual parents and early childhood educators from over 90 BC communities are also endorsing the Plan as the solution to the child care crisis in BC.

Now we need those in positions of influence to make a commitment to move the Plan forward so that child care and the Plan become a central issue in BC's 2013 provincial election. We invite you to join the growing enthusiasm and momentum for the Plan. Visit www.cccabc.bc.ca/plan/ for more information and to endorse the Plan.

Sharon Gregson is an outspoken child care advocate, often quoted in media, at the municipal, provincial and federal levels. She works with the Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC, and is also the Director of Child and Family Development Services for a multi-service agency in East Vancouver. Sharon was twice elected as a Trustee on the Vancouver Board of Education and sat on the Boards of the Child Care Human Resource Sector Council, Canadian Child Care Federation and Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada. Sharon travels extensively to schools and child care centres around the world, she is the mother of four terrific people and is working towards a Bachelor of ECE at Capilano University.



Keeping Parents in the Loop with *DailyChildcareReport*

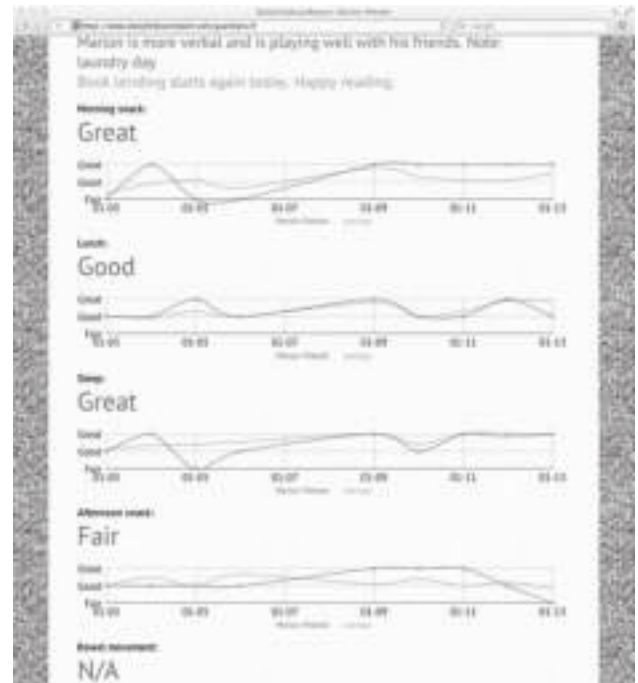
by Christian Pekeler

The Problem

It is 5:00 pm on a Tuesday. I arrive at the daycare to pick up my son Marlon. He sees me the moment I enter the room, immediately runs towards me, and shows me all the toys he played with today. He is too young to tell me about his day, so I want to have a quick chat with his teacher. A couple of other parents are currently talking with that teacher, and Marlon is becoming cranky because he notices that he doesn't have my undivided attention anymore. So I decide to just dress him up and go home.

Fast forward to 6:15, dinner is on the table and we are all seated. Even though we are having meatballs, one of Marlon's favourite meals, he refuses to eat and is more whiny than usual. My wife asks if he ate his lunch at daycare today. I don't know. When Marlon's whining increases, my wife wonders if he could have a stomach ache. Did he have a bowel movement today, she asks. Not knowing the answer to that either makes my wife a little angry. With both my wife and son being upset for various reasons, I am glad that at least the dog is still looking happy. There's got to be a better way, though, I think.

Marlon used to go to a different daycare that provided a short written report at the end of each day. That was helpful. Except when we forgot to pick it up, or when the report was in Marlon's room but the kids had to be picked up from the outside playground (and sometimes, when carrying junior on one arm and his clothes and snack box on the other, the report got lost on the way). The daycare staff also didn't know if parents actually received and read the reports. Important messages still had to be communicated in a different way.



How reports look for parents

The Solution

I am a software engineer and spent the last 14 years creating various applications for the web. Tackling this problem became my new project. The executive director of Marlon's daycare, Shannon Cattoni from the Inglewood Child Development Centre in Calgary (ICDC), was excited about my plan and agreed to become my first user. A lot of early childhood educators and parents have since given me their ideas and requirements, and I have to thank them all because I am very happy with the result: *DailyChildcareReport*, a simple to use website where teachers can quickly and efficiently write daily reports for the children, and then send them off to the parents with a click of a button. Parents can receive their reports by email or SMS, and they can also log into the site to review reports and trending charts.

Simple to Use Technology

The ICDC has been using this system since early January. All the wrinkles have been ironed out and the feedback has been exclusively positive. Around the same time, ICDC purchased an iPad for each of their rooms to get access to the great selection of interactive children books available on that platform. Now the teachers are also using the iPads to write their daily reports. While they are convenient, tablet computers are not a requirement - existing computers



will work as well, as long as they are hooked up to the internet. Smartphones like the iPhone or Android, something that a lot of teachers own nowadays, can be used to write reports. Even an iPod Touch, which can be found used for about \$100, works fine.

“As a quality childhood setting we are always looking for ways to improve the services we provide and the DailyChildcareReport is just one way that we support and encourage communication with our families. The report is user-friendly and enables practitioners to quickly and accurately complete daily progress reports that are age appropriate and accessible for all children.”

— Shannon Cattoni, Inglewood Child Development Centre, Calgary

Because *DailyChildcareReport* has been so successful, I’ve made it available to other child care centres. The website is running in the “cloud” which means that it can accommodate any number of facilities, users, and children reports.



Lemon, a teacher at ICDC, writing reports

Interested facilities can simply go to **DailyChildcareReport.com**, sign up, enter their children, inform the parents, and start writing reports.

Christian Pekeler is a father, husband, and software developer in Calgary. Originally from Germany, he spent four years living and working in New York City before settling in Canada 10 years ago.

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Looking Beyond the Centre as a Whole

A “Goodness of Fit” Approach to Care in the Early Years

by Tina Bonnett

One of the most stress-provoking decisions that many families face is choosing care outside the home for their precious little one. Whether parents decide to enroll their child in a formal child care setting or choose a homecare provider, there are many elements that require consideration. There is an abundance of readily available resources to guide a family as they investigate different child care options and most parents are well-versed on obtaining information related to cost, ratios, hours of operation, location, cleanliness and curriculum approach. As equally as important however, but most often overlooked by both the family and early years practitioners, is the secondary step of then determining which educator within the team is the “*best fit*” to take the lead in the care of the child.

There is a growing body of research focusing on child development, particularly related to group care. Considering that well over half of Canadian children are in non-parental care at some time during their early years (www.statcan.gc.ca)¹ it is imperative that we truly consider what quality care means. Although factors such as fees and location play a key role in the equation when choosing care, it then becomes as vital to consider if the child is paired with a caregiver who best meets his or her individual needs. This is paramount for the infant or toddler who has less adaptable temperamental traits, and can prove as equally valuable for the preschooler who is solidifying

Given what we know about attachment relationships, no longer is it current practice to force the child to connect with numerous caregivers with the goal in mind that it will make the the child more adaptable later in life.



their sense of self. Thinking beyond the program as a whole and reflecting on each child’s unique self-regulation, temperamental and learning styles, provides a framework for both the family and the team of early year’s practitioners in each age group to ensure the child is paired with a caregiver that best meets their needs. This means that, as professionals, we respect the preference to be cared for by a caregiver other than ourselves without taking it personally. It also means that our practice is developmentally appropriate and current in that we recognize that is not the “quantity” and interchangeable nature of relationships, but rather the “quality”, “security” and “goodness of fit” of the caregiving relationships, that is of importance in these formative years.

A “Preferred Attachment Figure”

In most families it is typical for each child to have a preference for one particular adult. Right from birth children are very adept at figuring out who can best meet their individual needs, and will readily seek a “preferred attachment figure” or “preferred play companion” (Bowlby, p. 11)². It can be typical for this preferred figure to change as the child’s developmental needs shift.

Although it is not always obvious why children may show a preference for a particular family member one month and another the next, it is crucial that the child’s lead is followed.

The same holds true for the child’s relationships with caregivers outside the home. It is likely that a child entering the world of



child care will show a preference for one specific caregiver, and this too should be respected by the family and each individual educator. Pressuring a child to be soothed or to have feeding, diapering, sleeping and other needs carried out by one educator when the child is clearly cueing or requesting to have these needs met by another educator can potentially have a long term emotional effect.

Determining a “Goodness of Fit”

One of the most effective ways that a family and program can determine whether an early years practitioner is a good fit for a child is to spend some time observing the interactions of the child and caregiver. Do they smile, offer eye contact and seem genuinely interested in one another? And, if there is more than one caregiver in the program, who does the child naturally gravitate to for comfort, especially when sick, hurt or upset? Does the child typically seek, either through eye contact or by gaining physical proximity, one caregiver consistently at drop-off or during play?

If the response is “yes” to any of these questions, then it is highly likely that the child is indicating their preferred attachment figure. This does not mean that other caregivers in the program are not responsive, nurturing and caring but that the child is aware of their own unique needs and knows who can best meet them. Some additional indicators that a child is paired with the most fitting caregiver are:

- The child is settled and soothed in the presence of the preferred “goodness of fit” caregiver
- The child actively engages the “best fit” figure in interactions and play
- The family reports that the child talks about the caregiver in their home environment
- The caregiver is in tune with the child’s developmental and temperamental needs and is aware of their own temperamental style
- The caregiver observes the child and shares rich information about the child’s day with the family and colleagues
- First language and cultural continuity is respected and integrated into the curriculum

Primary Care: A Key Indicator of Quality Caregiving

Another way in which families and programs can ensure that each child is matched with the best fitting caregiver is to actively practice Primary Caregiving. Primary Care, a model in which each child is paired with the caregiver who can best meet their individual needs, allows “goodness of fit” to unfold in a natural and child-led way. In this approach to care, the child’s primary caregiver meets their unique needs related to soothing, diapering, feeding, curriculum and family communication, the majority of the time. This more intimate relationship, where care

is being provided predominantly by one, instead of a multitude of caregivers in a group setting, allows for more accurate cue-reading and establishes a more solidified foundation of trust. This in turn creates a secure base from which the child can explore, resulting in optimum development and learning, and in a child’s willingness to open themselves to trust other adults. Primary Care is at the core of any program that values relationships and is a key means of obtaining a “Goodness of Fit” for each child.

The Early Years Practitioner’s Role in Promoting a “Goodness of Fit”

As we begin to acquire an increasing amount of knowledge

relating to the early years, it is becoming progressively clear that early relationships are at the core of all learning, and that they are conclusively linked to self regulation, later academic and lifelong success. “*Relational Health*”, the new buzz word in the field of early growth and development, speaks irrefutably to the need of families and early years programs to value the linking of each child to a caregiver who is most in tune with their needs, and therefore most able to develop a secure and responsive relationship.

Tina Bonnett is a faculty member of the Early Childhood Education and the Bachelor of Applied Arts Early Childhood Leadership Degree Program at Fanshawe College.

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1. www.statcan.gc.ca
2. Bowlby, J. (1988). *A Secure Base. Parent-Child Attachment and Healthy Human Development*. USA: Basic Books.



BOOK REVIEW

Observing Young Children: transforming early learning through reflective practice

Sally Wylie and Kristine Fenning
4th edition

by Leigh Ridgway

Both authors of this book are Canadian. Sally Wylie has been writing observation texts for over a decade. She has been a dedicated observer of children and her knowledge and experience is bountiful. This is Kristine Fenning's first book, but her understanding of how we learn through observing children is enlightening. She is currently a professor at Humber College and I hope that she will continue to share her insights in subsequent editions.

The book is organized into three parts:

Part 1: defends why observations are so important in helping early childhood educators plan for the children in their care. The reflective cycle of observation is introduced and is referred-to throughout the text. The authors also address how biases and judgements influence the way we observe and record.

Part 2: contains specific examples of existing observational tools.

Part 3: recognizes changes in the way we communicate within the "global village". Detailed guidance on how early childhood

educators might share the learning and development of the children in their early learning and care programmes is also offered.

Each chapter follows the same format. It begins with one or more focus questions that will be discussed and ends with key terms that were introduced. This allows the reader to be focused from the start and then review what was discussed before proceeding to the next chapter. This is important for students who might be struggling with a term or are still unable to quite grasp a particular concept.

I felt that the examples shared in each chapter were realistic, as were the challenges. This is essential not only for the novice, who might not have much experience working with children, but also for the experienced observer who may feel validated by what she already knows.

Observing Young Children provides samples of observations that can be easily reproduced by the student and the educator. There are templates that can be selected for immediate use in any programme. Sometimes the smallest hurdle can be the biggest challenge and the templates might help eliminate this.

The specific observations covered in this text include:

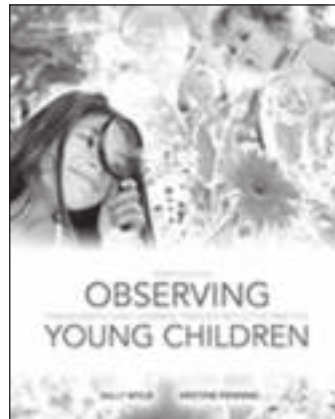
anecdotes, running records, ABC analysis, checklists, rating scales and charting. The authors discuss the purpose of each tool and how they can be used in the development of children's portfolios.

A list of advantages and disadvantages is provided with each observation, thus making the tools "real" for the reader. Novice or experienced recorder, the lists remind us which tool is the most appropriate for the identified purpose.

The book concludes with practical advice on how to use the tools to assist with early identification. The authors successfully focus on the fact that it "takes a village to raise a child" as they identify that ECEs should not work in isolation but must involve the wider community.

Overall, I thoroughly enjoyed reading this book. The 265 pages are well-organized and easy to interpret. It would be an asset for students and all early childhood educators who are committed to learning from the children in their care.

Leigh Ridgway RECE ECEC: I have been teaching at Algonquin College in the Early Childhood Education programme for over 18 years. I am the mother of two wonderful adult children and the proud nanna of an incredible 11 month old grandson.





Forest Preschool Chronicles

by Marlene Power

Forest Preschools have been around since the 1950's when a mother and educator, Ella Flautau, began taking her children into the local wooded areas surrounding her home in Denmark in order to learn in and appreciate the natural world. Today, Forest Preschools are sprouting up across North America and are beginning to make waves in the early childhood education sector in Canada.

Children in a Forest Preschool have the opportunity to connect to the rhythms of the seasons, the fluctuations of weather patterns, the animals that have visited the site overnight when all was dark, and the materials that fall to the forest floor, creating a blanket of warmth and accessible art materials for later in the day.

The beauty in this Early Childhood Education approach can best be told through the eyes of the children, and their educator, early in the winter season as they observe the changes of the forest through their creek.

This creek has been an important source of inspiration for the children throughout the year, and continues to offer excitement and learning opportunities as it freezes in the blistering cold of later winter days.

Explore and enjoy "Four Weeks of Play and Adventure in the Creek," by Sara Rocio Raeesi-Gujani, who is lead ECE at Carp Ridge Forest Preschool in Carp, Ontario.

Week One:

November 22-29

The water: The creek's water flow

This week the water flow of the creek has increased



and there were many leaves on it. The children commented that they have waited since July to see and hear the water. They were disappointed to see the creek full of leaves. Some of the children observed:

- "Poor creek cannot move nicely"
- "Cannot breathe", "it is contaminated with leaves"
- "We cannot walk, splash, or play on it"
- "We cannot hear the sounds of the creek"

I encouraged the children to think about how we can solve the problem? How to clear the leaves from the water? How to accomplish such an endeavour? The children concluded that it is better to find something from nature which will help to clear the leaves from the water.



The children first decided to find all sorts of sticks so they can clear the leaves from the water. The best ones, they said, were medium size: "the ones we can hold in our small hands". The children were all set and ready to start their project: 'the cleaning of the creek'. Bridges were built, dens were created, the water play started, and after the hard work every day we held tree trunks and stretched our bodies, and rested our backs flat on the ground thinking how nice it is to see the clear water. Most importantly we thought about how beautiful it is to hear the creek's water flow. While looking up high to the sky we saw Canada Geese flying overhead and making a 'V'. We concluded: The V is the half of the W, two 'V's creating a W, and the word WATER starts with the letter W.

Week Two:

November 30-December 3

The water: from liquid to solid, surprise!

This week we had frost, and temperatures were in the -5 to -10 range. Surprisingly, the water has magically transformed from liquid to solid.

"There is ice on the creek, Sara!" they exclaimed.

As the children walked up and down the frozen stream, they observed that the ice broke when I walked on it. They asked why the ice did not break when they walked. Some children answered:

- "Because she is an adult"
- "She weighs more than us"
- "Yes because she is bigger than us"





Some children very creatively started to dig on the ice with sticks; others traced shapes, figures, lines, and created beautiful designs on the ice. Some touched the ice and pressed down until the ice broke. Others discovered the ice was very soft and breaks easily. The children one by



one, started to jump up and down. Then, suddenly, everybody decided to jump, run, and break the ice in many possible shapes. The children called themselves 'the ice-breakers'. Once there were lots of large and small pieces of ice they decided to use these pieces to build houses on the creek's shore.

The children also decided to move to another part of the creek where there was a mini-pond. There, the children used garden shovels and cut various shapes: triangles, squares, half circles, any shape they could make.

Also, in another part of the creek the children tried to "skate" without breaking the ice but quickly learned it was an impossible task so early in the season.

Week Three:

December 6-11

The ice: From soft breakable to hard slippery

This week's temperature dropped to -20 and the children could not wait to see the changes in the creek. As they approached the creek, they screamed: "The creek has become ice and now we can skate" The children challenged themselves to walk and move their bodies on the icy, slippery surface: they walked slowly with hands extended, crawled under small branches, skated without skates, laughed, took breaks, rested, and insisted they play in the creek.

Now, that the children are conscious of the slippery surface, they started slowly by gently sitting down to slide. After landing with enjoyment and laughter they worked to solve the problem of how to return to the starting point. After many attempts and much laughter, all the children safely succeeded in their quest to reach the top of the icy slide. Now the children created another challenge: they lie on their backs and slide with their whole body flat on the ice surface. They ask me to sit in the middle of the fall just in case they needed help. With a bit of help they accomplished the mission to move up and down the icy stream.

"We did it Sara!" They remarked.

Week Four:

December 13-17

The ice: From hard slippery to layered surface

This week's temperature has risen from the -20's to -10 and there had been a snow fall during the night. The creek has been transformed from hard slippery to layered surface. While the children walked along the creek, they have noticed various cracks along it. Without hesitation the preschoolers [3-5 years of age] have used their shovels and their imagination to "repair" the creek. As the snow falls into the holes of open water, we noticed a magical transformation.

I invited the children to think about: What happen when the snow falls in the water? Where does the white of the snow go? Why does this happen? As the children repeat the process of adding [shovelling] snow, I invited them to pause and see what happens. As all the children stopped and looked, we slowly used our feet to add snow to the water. They noticed the snow change colour when it gets wet and that the white disappears as soon as it is in contact with the water. One of the older preschoolers said:

- L: "The water is transparent and its colour is grey and when we add the snow, the snow becomes grey and that is how the colour grey is created".
E: "We can see our faces in the water is why the water is grey". Another child said.
G: "No it is not grey; it is transparent because we can see the sand and rocks".
L: "But it is grey because the snow becomes grey".
W: "Let's go guys, let's repair the creek".

All the children continued to shovel until the hole was full of snow, then they decided to do a test and jump to see if the hole was solid. I encouraged the children to think about why the snow is not solid and strong enough.

As we moved to another hole, I invited the children to feel the water and the snow and to tell which one is warmer. The children noticed the water is warmer than the snow. I said, "If the water is warmer", what happens when the snow, which is cooler, falls on it?"



"The snow melts!" the children exclaimed.

The creek has been a source of inspiration for the children's play. It invites them to think, play, wonder, inquire, laugh, take risks, negotiate, and learn. This process is visible learning about how much joy, wonder, and inquiry are taking place.

Marlene Power is Executive Director of Carp Ridge Learning Centre.



ideas

Emotional Well-Being in Child Care



Natural Environments and Emotional Well-being

by Lynn Wilson & Connie Winder

“Every child should have mud pies, grasshoppers, water bugs, tadpoles, frogs, mud turtles, elderberries, wild strawberries, acorns, chestnuts, trees to climb. Brooks to wade, water lilies, woodchucks, bats, bees, butterflies, various animals to pet, hayfields, pine-cones, rocks to roll, sand, snakes, huckleberries and hornets. And any child who has been deprived of these has been deprived of the best part of education.”
– Luther Burbank (American horticulturalist and botanist, 1849 – 1926)

“Children used to be able to move about from place to place on their own, from the back door to the yard, as they grew older, through the neighbourhood by foot or bike. Most children walked to places. The yard, the park, the playground, the sidewalk, the stoop, and the schoolyard were their territory, if not fields, trees, vacant lots, and woods. When they moved they often chose the most challenging way: balancing on the fence, avoiding the cracks, jumping the fence, leaping over or stomping on puddles, or crawling under bushes” (Greenman, 2005, p. 37). Today, many children live restricted lives and a good number of the traditional places where children used to play are now lost to them. For some children, the hallway in their apartment building is their outdoor play space. Researchers believe that the amount of time that children spend in child

care and early learning programs, the increases in their television viewing and screen time, the fact that children have fewer siblings to play with than children of previous generations, the greater number of constraints placed on their play spaces and safety concerns have resulted in dramatic increases in sedentary behaviour (Bilton, 2010; Chawla & Hart, 1995; Greenman, 2003; Keeler, 2008; Louv, 2008)

Today, children are more likely to know the names of television and video game characters than of plants and animals in their back yards. While children enjoy a world of unparalleled technological advances they are the first generation for which nature is more of an abstraction than a reality (Louv, 2008). For many researchers and educators children’s lack of access to play and exploration in natural

environments poses a real concern. Most young people never have the opportunity to experience wilderness; many living in urban settings have very limited opportunities to explore natural environments. As visits to outdoor education centres become limited by financial constraints, the danger exists that learning about the natural world will increasingly depend upon printed and electronic materials. Teaching in this way is largely an academic abstraction; it cannot foster the kind of lifelong ecological consciousness derived only from learning through the senses in natural settings throughout childhood. Nature, it has often been repeated, is our best teacher (Coffey, 2004). But a growing body of evidence is starting to show that it’s not so much what children know about nature that’s important, as what happens to them when they are in nature.

Physical Surroundings Affect Our Well Being

While our physical reliance on nature for survival has never been seriously questioned, our emotional and spiritual ties to the natural world have not been as widely understood. There is considerable research to suggest that separation from nature has negative effects on our emotional well-being and that, to some extent, our happiness and mental health is mediated by our relationship with the natural world (Kaplan 2001; Laumann, Garling, & Stormark, 2001; Nisbet, Zelenski & Murphy, 2011). In his book, *Last Child in the Woods*, Richard Louv (2008) coined the phrase, “nature deficit disorder” to describe the costs of our alienation from nature, among them: diminished use of the senses, attention difficulties, and higher rates of physical and emotional illnesses.

Over two thousand years ago, Chinese Taoists created gardens and greenhouses to improve human health. And a century ago, John Muir observed that: “Thousands of tired, nerve-shaken, over-civilized people are beginning to find out that going to the mountains is going home; that wilderness is a necessity; and that mountain parks and reservations are useful not only as fountains of timber and irrigating rivers, but as fountains of life” (Fox, 1981, p. 116). Research across a variety of cultures suggests that not only do people have a shared preference for natural environments there are particular features of these environments that contribute most to our physical and mental well-being. These features include sweeping vistas, open water, secluded hiding places and mysterious passageways (Cheskey, 2001).

There is a growing body of evidence that suggests that our physical surroundings have a profound effect



on our physical, emotional and social well-being. For instance, Frances Kuo and William Sullivan (2001) found that residents of relatively barren public housing buildings reported significantly more aggression and violence than did their counterparts who lived in greener public housing buildings with more surrounding vegetation. They suggest that natural settings assist in the recovery from mental fatigue and, given that aggression increases with mental fatigue, more exposure to nature would be valuable. They note that gardens have been associated with decreases in violent outbursts among Alzheimer patients (Mooney & Nicell, 1992) and prison inmates (Rice & Remy, 1998). Kuo and Sullivan argue that natural environments help to decrease the irritability and mental fatigue inherent in stressful situations, such as living in public housing, a long term care facility or a prison. In addition, behaviours such as littering, graffiti, vandalism, and noisy disruptive behaviours are systematically lower in greener outdoor spaces (Brunson, 1999). There is considerable evidence

that natural settings such as wilderness areas, community parks and even views of nature through windows and indoor plants have cognitively rejuvenating effects (Cimprich, 1993; Hartig, Mang & Evans, 1991; Kaplan, 1984; Lohr, Pearson-Mims & Goodwin, 1996; Miles, Sullivan & Kuo, 1998; Tennessen & Cimprich, 1995).

Children can be as prone as adults to the overstimulation and mental fatigue caused by non-natural environments. Time spent in nature can help children wind down, relax and at that same time increase their awareness of the natural world. In particular, children with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) appear to benefit from time spent in natural environments. Andrea Faber Taylor and Francis Kuo (2009) conducted a study in which children with ADHD were asked to concentrate on completing a series of puzzles that required focused attention. They were then taken on a guided 20 minute walk in one of three locations: a park, an urban area or a residential neighbourhood. The children were then

asked to complete a concentration test and answer some questions about their walk. Over the course of three weeks the researchers found that children who had walked in the park had improved concentration and rated their walk more positively than children who walked in the other two, less natural, settings. These investigators suggest that daily doses of “green time” may have a positive impact on children with ADHD symptoms and these “nature treatments” could supplement current treatments.

Adults too benefit from “recess” in natural settings. Rachel and Stephan Kaplan (1998) have spent many years investigating the idea that time spent in natural surroundings helps to restore our ability to engage in activities that require directed or focused attention. They describe two kinds of attention, “directed attention” and “fascination” and they argue that too much time spent on directed attention activities can lead to mental fatigue, distractibility and irritability. Time spent in nature, on the other hand, engages our fascination and restores our well-being. Terry Hartig and his colleagues (1991) found that, like the children with ADHD who were better able to direct their attention after spending a brief period in a natural setting, adults who walked in an natural setting, rather than an urban one, experienced enhanced attentional and emotional restoration. Researchers from around the world have found that time spent in natural environments helps adults to feel more restored and less stressed and anxious (Bodin & Hartig, 2003; Laumann et al. 2001; Pretty et. al, 2007). In more than 100 studies conducted on outdoor experiences, the results consistently indicate that outdoor experiences produce “positive physiological and psychological responses in humans, including reduced stress and a



general feeling of well-being” (White & Stoecklin, 2008, p. 2).

The Benefits of Naturalized Playgrounds

The majority of Canadians live in urban areas and have limited access to natural settings, however, a movement to “green” playgrounds of schools and childcare centres across the country has provided many children and adults access to natural environments in their own communities. Research on naturalized playgrounds has provided some promising results regarding their influence on the well-being and behaviour of the children who use them.

Anne Bell and Janet Dymont (2006) conducted a study of naturalized playgrounds in Toronto. They surveyed children, parents and staff at 45 schools where playgrounds had been “greened”. Greening playgrounds involves diversifying the environments by doing things like removing asphalt and turf and adding shrubs, trees, gardens, water features, rocks, pathways and

gathering areas. They found that both children and adults reported that they had noticed differences in attitudes and behaviour in the naturalized environments. They observed more inclusive play and gathering of community members. Green school grounds provide a more diversified environment with a broader choice of play activities. These factors appear to foster the type of positive social dynamics that support more socially inclusive behaviour. Study participants reported that when students were learning and playing on a green school ground, they were being more civil, they communicated more effectively and they were more cooperative. These improvements were noted not only among students; interactions between students and teachers were also enhanced. These findings are consistent with those of Netta Weinstein and her colleagues (2009) at the University of Rochester who found that contact with nature can have humanizing effects, fostering greater authenticity and connectedness and, in turn, other versus self-orientations that enhance valuing of and generosity toward others. These findings of increased cooperation, greater inclusion and decreased aggression in naturalized playgrounds have been observed elsewhere. Children tend to bridge their differences more easily in a natural environment; fights and accidents – so common on asphalt yards – give way to more constructive play (Wilson, 2008). Not only do natural environments restore us, reduce our irritability and enhance our concern for others they engage us because, as Rachel and Stephan Kaplan (1998) have pointed out, they are fascinating. Our fascination with the natural world explains why when only a small part of a playground is naturalized (e.g. 10%) children play in the naturalized areas for more than half of their time outdoors (Houghton, 2003). Nature

captivates our imaginations and provides the perfect materials for play.

Nature Provides Ideal Play Opportunities

The frequency and quality of children's outdoor social play is linked to the range of materials available. Comparisons of children's play behaviours and equipment/materials choices on different types of playgrounds reveal that both boys and girls engage in more cooperative and socio-dramatic play in environments containing a rich array of fluid materials (sand and water etc.) portable materials (blocks, containers etc.) and vehicles (tricycles and wagons etc.) than in those featuring large fixed equipment (climbers, slides etc.) (Frost, 1992).

The elements of the natural world offer the raw materials to manipulate, and best practices in early childhood education promote the hands-on approach to learning.

"Children live through their senses. Sensory experiences link the child's exterior world with their interior, hidden, affective world. Since the natural environment is the principal source of sensory stimulation, freedom to explore and play with the outdoor environment through the senses in their own space and time is essential for healthy development of an interior life... the content of the environment is a critical factor in this process. A rich, open environment will continuously present alternative choices for creative engagement. A rigid, bland environment will limit healthy growth and development of the individual or the group" – (Moore & Hong, 1997, p.203)



In his book *Caring Spaces, Learning Places*, Jim Greenman (2005) eloquently describes the qualities of the natural world that explain why it is so rich in play potential:

- *Nature is universal and timeless*
 - *Nature is unpredictable*
 - *Nature is bountiful*
 - *Nature is beautiful*
 - *Nature is alive with sounds*
 - *Nature creates a multitude of places*
 - *Nature is real*
 - *Nature nourishes and heals*
- (p. 284-286)

The natural environment is not the same at all times and this forces a child to think creatively, differently to meet up with these changes. Playing in the natural world supports children's ability to deal with change and the challenges change poses. They can take risks, test their courage and build their physical skills and their self-esteem. They can move freely, make noise and engage in boisterous play. They can engage all their senses and play with materials (sand, dirt, water, leaves, pine cones, twigs, rocks, pebbles, etc) that

are open ended and contain a multitude of possibilities. They can relate to other living things and develop an appreciation of the beauty and wonder of the natural world.

Another fascinating aspect of natural environments is that they are alive. They are filled with a wide variety of living things – animals, plants, birds, fish and insects. David Sobel (1996), a strong supporter for children's explorations in nature advocates that in addition to regular contact with nature, one of the best ways to foster empathy during early childhood is to cultivate children's relationships with animals. Young children feel a natural kinship with, and are implicitly drawn to animals and especially baby animals (Rosen 2004; Sobel 1996). Animals are an endless source of wonder for children, fostering a caring attitude and sense of responsibility towards living things. Children interact instinctively and naturally with animals, talk to them, and invest in them emotionally (Sobel, 1996).

The unpredictability of living things can sometimes create fear in young children, especially children with limited experiences in nature. Insects, animals, unfamiliar surroundings can sometimes cause children to be hesitant and adults, whose aim is to protect children, can inadvertently increase children's fears by describing forests as dark scary places, unnecessarily restricting children's exploration outdoors or expressing fear and disgust when presented with natural materials such as soil, rocks, small animals, spiders and bugs. Nature is not an enemy to be avoided or conquered but a part of us and our world to be understood, respected and appreciated. Children living in northern communities often have more experience playing outdoors, climbing on natural items such as

rocks and trees (Dietze & Kashin, 2012) whereas children in cities are often more restricted, and their limited experiences can make natural environments unfamiliar and fear-provoking, at first. Adults can help to alleviate these fears by acting as role models in their appreciation and respect for nature and they can provide children with opportunities to explore natural environments and take reasonable risks in their play.

Many parents and educators are concerned about the risks involved in play and exploration in natural environments. When we hear the term “risk taking” it is often thought of as having a negative connotation. In fact, in order for learning and development to occur risk taking is necessary. Children learn about new skills, try new ideas, and achieve new knowledge and skills by taking risks. Children need to be gently encouraged to take risks and learn that nothing terrible happens. They need gradual exposure to find that the world is not dangerous (Marano, 2004). In effect, children who have developed the confidence to embrace the challenges of the environment can accept that learning occurs with mistakes and are eager to explore new possibilities. Risk taking must be thought of in healthy terms – providing children with the opportunity to discover, be adventurous, and build confidence in using their bodies – rather than as a possibility of injury. This can be achieved by managing safe risk opportunities.

“My first garden was a place no grown-up ever knew about, even though it was in the backyard of a quarter-acre suburban plot... to a four year old the space made by the vaulting branches of a forsythia is as grand as the inside of a cathedral, and there is room enough for a world



*between a lilac and a wall.
Whenever I needed to be out of
range of adult radar, I'd crawl
beneath the forsythia's arches,
squeeze between two lilac
bushes, and find myself safe and
alone in my own green room.”*
– (Pollan, 1991 p.7)

Nature Relatedness, Happiness and Stewardship

Ruth Wilson (1984) argues that based on our evolutionary history we are naturally motivated to associate with other living things. Elizabeth Nisbet and her colleagues (2011) at Carleton University in Ottawa measured people's “nature relatedness”. Nature relatedness encompasses a person's

appreciation for and understanding of our interconnectedness to all living things. She and her colleagues found that nature relatedness was associated with happiness, autonomy and personal growth in adults. People who related to nature reported having a sense of purpose in life and were more accepting of themselves. Nisbet and her colleagues argue that perhaps having an appreciation for nature helps us to understand how all life is interconnected and reminds us of our own vitality and purpose.

Rachel Carson (1956), one of the first vocal environmentalists in North America, wrote “if a child is to keep alive his inborn sense of wonder...he needs the companionship of at least one adult who can share it, rediscovering with him the joy, excitement and mystery of the world we live in.” (p. 45). She also noted how feelings are often more important than facts when introducing children to nature. She wrote: “I sincerely believe that for the child, and for the parent or teacher seeking to guide him, it is not half so important to know as to feel.” These are important words for those of us who work with young children.

Children who do play outdoors tend to have more positive attitudes about their physical environment. They are more likely to grow up as adults to care and are concerned about conservation issues (Louv, 2008, 2011; Suzuki & Vanderlinden, 1999; Wilson 2009; Wilson, 1984). From the early childhood literature, we know that young children construct their own knowledge and build a sense of rightness and responsibility from the inside out versus having knowledge and ethics handed to them from the outside. And from the environmental education literature, we know that environmental stewardship is rooted in

a sense of appreciation and caring. Fear and mandates have not been effective in developing strong commitments to protecting the environment. Save the earth campaigns are not appropriate for young children. Placing a burden on children is in essence asking them to fix something that they didn't break and assign them a task they are not equipped to handle. Early positive experiences in natural environments have proven to be a far more effective way of fostering environmental stewardship (Chawla and Hart 1995; Wilson, 2008). Once children learn to love and respect the Earth, they are likely to care deeply about its well-being. This is the essence of an environmental ethic.

When we walk upon Mother Earth, we always plant our feet carefully because we know the faces of our future generations are looking up at us from beneath the ground. We never forget them.
– Oren Lyons, Onondaga Nation

There are many ways to provide children with opportunities to play in natural environments. Some are simple and immediate and others are actions that will have a more long term impact. Below are a few ideas to consider, followed by some recommended readings.

- Support nature clubs, conservation areas and other nature organizations in your community
- Plan regularly occurring nature field trips – as simple as a walk in the park
- Bring natural materials into both indoor and outdoor environments whenever possible, loose parts are critical to meaningful exploration
- Check out resources available to “green” your outdoor play space (see recommended readings for some ideas)
- Observe what the children like to do outside, then ask them what they would change, you will be surprised at how insightful they are



- Don't be overwhelmed - start small, begin with container planting or a small garden
- Allow children sufficient time and opportunity to freely explore natural environments (not everything needs to be structured or made into teachable moments)
- Spread the word

Lynn Wilson recently retired from teaching in the ECE program at George Brown College after a 44 year career in education that involved teaching in a wide variety of settings including, kindergarten classrooms, parent cooperative programs, child care programs, college classrooms and international settings including ECE staff development work in Bosnia, China and Jamaica. In 2006, The Association of Canadian Community Colleges awarded Lynn a national teaching excellence award. She has authored an ECE textbook: *Partnerships, Families and Communities in Early Childhood Education* and is currently working on an e-book about outdoor play that will be published in the fall of 2012 by Nelson Canada.

After graduating from Ryerson University with a B.A. in ECE, Connie Winder worked in the field of children's mental health. She completed a Masters degree in Human Development Applied Psychology at O.I.S.E. in 1992 and is currently a PhD. candidate in the same program. She taught in the ECE program at George Brown College for the past 20 years. Connie has adapted the interpersonal communication textbook, “*Interplay*” for Canadian

readers, she currently represents George Brown College in the Child and Family Partnership's applied research on resiliency and she is the managing editor of the *Ideas Journal*.

Recommended Reading:

Richard Louv (2008) *Last Child In The Woods. Saving Our Children From Nature Deficit Disorder*. Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin.

Louv, Richard (2011). *The nature principle, human restoration and the end of nature-deficit disorder*. Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin.

Rusty Keeler (2008). *Natural playscapes. Creating outdoor play environment for the soul*. Redmond, WA: Exchange Press

Evergreen (2004). *Small wonders: Designing vibrant, natural landscapes for early childhood*. <http://www.evergreen.ca/docs/res/Small-Wonders.pdf>

Sharon Gamson Danks (2010). *Asphalt to ecosystems: Design ideas for schoolyard transformation*. Oakland, CA: New Village Press.

Canadian Child Care Federation (2009). *Connecting Children to Nature. Parts 1 and 2. Interaction*, vol. 23 & 24.

Recommended Websites:

Learning Through Landscapes
www.ltl.org.uk

Evergreen
<http://www.evergreen.ca/en/>

Green Teacher
www.greenteacher.com/

Children And Nature Network
<http://www.childrenandnature.org/>

Green Thumbs Growing Kids
<http://www.kidsgrowing.ca/>

Little Eyes On Nature
<http://eyesonnature.blogspot.com/>

Therapeutic Landscapes Network
<http://www.healinglandscapes.org/>

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The Canadian Child Care Federation publishes IDEAS twice a year in partnership with George Brown College's School of Early Childhood and the Child Development Institute. For submission to IDEAS please contact Connie Winder. Phone (416) 415-5000 extension 3018, fax (416) 415-2565, email cwinder@georgebrown.ca

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Then & Now

25 Years of Child Care in Canada



**ECEs and child care practitioners
across Canada tell us what has
changed in child care**



25 YEARS OF CHILD CARE IN CANADA

From my perspective what has changed over the last 2 decades is that child care has become more mainstream. By that I mean that there is a greater understanding by the general public of the value of investing in the early years. Research in brain development, school readiness, the economic paybacks of mothers participating in the workforce. Plus a whole lot more understanding and building respect for the work of early childhood educators. I believe there is a greater understanding now that quality child care should not just be a service accessible to the lucky and the rich, and that educators of young children are not merely babysitters.

—Sharon Gregson is with British Columbia Coalition of Child Care Advocates of B.C. and Director of Child and Family Development Services for a multi-service agency in East Vancouver



Health and Welfare Minister Jake Epp announcing Child Care Initiatives funding to CCCF with Diana Smith (left) and Sandra Griffin (right) 1988.

Some of the most important messages are very simple and when I think about the last 25 years in child care I think the one thing that stands out for me – no matter the political party or level of government, **EVERYONE** now has a stated position on child care – **MUST** have one – it is expected. We may not agree with some of the various positions, but I think the simple fact that *child care cannot be ignored* is significant. It is on every political agenda every time now. It is no longer *whether* it will be addressed – it is always the *how* – and we are seeing the difference that makes.

—Sandra Griffin is past ED and first President CCCF, Assistant Deputy Minister, Government of British Columbia



CCCF passed a by-law to adopt new affiliate structure to represent each affiliate organization at its Member Council table 1996.



25 YEARS OF CHILD CARE IN CANADA



The Honourable Lloyd Axworthy, Minister of Human Resources Development addressing a National Forum on Guiding Principles in Child Care, 1994.



Prime Minister Paul Martin and Patricia Hogan at the Nova Scotia Member Council Prime Minister's Awards, 2003.

We need a revolution in early childhood education – I have come to believe now over 25 years that the revolution we are beginning to experience is called ecology.

—Suzanne Major, B.A., C.Éd., M.A. Épe, is the Director of the certificat petite enfance et famille: intervention précoce, Université de Montréal, Quebec

One significant transformation in the daycare field that I have witnessed in my practice is the inclusion of the family in creating curriculum and daily programming. There has been a growing awareness that including families in the program process has translated into more creative and innovative programming and to more trusting and authentic relationships. Asking parents for advice, information, ideas and opinions on every aspect of their child's development is helping ECEs have a deeper understanding of each child and opens up our minds to many new ideas. For example, learning about a family's ethnic culture deepens our understanding of both the child and his background. Learning and understanding a culture shows the family that they are respected and raises the self-esteem of the child. Programming is enhanced because we move from simply having a dragon dance for Chinese New Year or eating Samosas during Diwali to embedding cultural inclusiveness into all aspects of the program on a daily basis, in many subtle but powerful ways. It also has ensured that curriculum development is from the "ground up" not the "top down" where programming is developed from the real needs and interests of the families and of the children themselves.

What hasn't changed is the fact that financial compensation for ECEs is still significantly below the average salary in Canada and is not at all reflective of the significantly increased and expanded expectations placed upon ECEs. At the same time that we are trying to create exceptional programs we have program funds and resources that have flat-lined for close to two decades. Considering the barriers to funding that we have faced, we have a lot to be proud of over 25 years.

—Karen McLaughlin, of Toronto, Ontario is an ECE in K5 classroom in the Toronto District School Board



Don Giesbrecht at the Manitoba Child Care Conference with colleagues, 2008.



25 YEARS OF CHILD CARE IN CANADA



Past CCCF President Marg Rodrigues.



Tammy McCormack-Ferguson with CCCF President Don Giesbrecht.

The world of “child care”, now more commonly referred to as “early years environments”, has undergone a significant metamorphosis in the last quarter of a century. In addition to the more obvious shifts such as the restructuring of our systems in an effort to move towards a more universal, seamless and family orientated approach, I believe that two other fundamental changes have occurred: (1) The more solidified understanding of the foundational skill of “self-regulation”. The focus over the last two decades has been to put research findings into practice that conclusively link early brain development to longitudinal outcomes for the child in all domains of development. Now that early childhood professionals have a more solidified understanding of brain development, we have identified “self-regulation” as a foundational life skill and as early years practitioners are actively integrating strategies into our interactions and curriculum to foster the development of this core skill; and (2) The educational opportunities for early years practitioners has most definitely broadened and there is a deeper awareness of the value that we play as early childhood educators within an “interdisciplinary” team due to the much deserved professional status that our field has gained. Those wishing to pursue education and training now have opportunities to gain specialization in infant mental health, autism and behavioural sciences and many other fascinating branches related to the formative years. Postsecondary institutions are now offering applied degrees in Early Childhood Leadership and our knowledge and practice is becoming increasingly research-based. In reflecting on the achievements of our early years community over the past quarter of a century, I enter the next phase of our growth with a sense of optimism, passion and hope for our children, families and educators of the future.

—Tina Bonnett is a faculty member of the Early Childhood Education and the Bachelor of Applied Arts Early Childhood Leadership Degree Program at Fanshawe College in London, Ontario



Past CCCF President Sandra Beckman.



Child Awareness Days.



25 YEARS OF CHILD CARE IN CANADA

When I look back at the world of child care and how it looked for me 25 years ago, I am startled by how much actually *hasn't* changed in that time! I marvel at how child care costs are pretty much the equivalent of a young mother's salary, how much angst there is when the baby is too sick to attend the program, how hard it is to balance both work and family. The waiting lists are still overly full. The providers are still being paid so little in comparison to other fields of practice.

Parents still say they are so *lucky* to have their child care arrangements – you can't expect quality child care in your community even though we all know children have a right to it. Nevertheless, there have been improvements over 25 years. Canadians agree that the early years really matter – a major milestone. And it's common to see men working in child care now – another great achievement. The term "daycare" is known today as a place where children spend happy hours. Baby boomers have emerged as the new champions of child care now that they see their families struggling to find quality care for their grandchildren.

When I look back on those 25 years I think fondly of how much I enjoyed the teamwork and leadership opportunities offered to me at the Canadian Child Care Federation. Quality child care was our passion – and that's something I'll always be proud of.

—Barb Coyle retired in 2006 as the Executive Director of the Canadian Child Care Federation, Ottawa



Past CCCF Executive Director Barbara Coyle.



The Honourable Ken Dryden, Minister of Human Resources Development Canada.



"Sharon, Lois and Bram" perform at the CCCF National Conference in Calgary, 1995.



(left to right) Pamela Taylor, Diane Porter, Karen Chandler and Sandra Griffin, 1987.



RESEARCH UPDATES

CLINICAL REPORT

The Importance of Play in Promoting Healthy Child Development and Maintaining Strong Parent-Child Bond: Focus on Children in Poverty*From the American Academy of Pediatrics*

Play is essential to the social, emotional, cognitive, and physical well-being of children beginning in early childhood. It is a natural tool for children to develop resiliency as they learn to cooperate, overcome challenges, and negotiate with others. Play also allows children to be creative. It provides time for parents to be fully engaged with their children, to bond with them, and to see the world from the perspective of their child. However, children who live in poverty often face socioeconomic obstacles that impede their rights to have playtime, thus affecting their healthy social-emotional development. For children who are under-resourced to reach their highest potential, it is essential that parents, educators, and pediatricians recognize the importance of lifelong benefits that children gain from play. <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/129/1/e204.full>

In the Best Interests of Children and Families: A Plenary Discussion of Early Childhood Education and Care in Alberta

Published by the Muttart Foundation in November 2011, this summary report outlines the major themes that emerged from a plenary forum with 51 participants involved in early childhood education and care hosted by the Muttart Foundation and Success By 6. The forum was organized to review findings from a series of five regional forums organized to discuss the Foundation's paper 'In the Best Interests of Children and Families: A Discussion of Early Childhood Education and Care in Alberta; and to consider the broad outlines of a possible path forward for strengthening early childhood education and care in the province. See www.muttart.org/reports for further details.

Investing in high-quality early childhood education and care (ECEC)

The organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) often tells countries that they should invest more in high quality early childhood education and care (ECEC). But why invest in high quality ECEC? This brief states: that "ECEC needs to be of sufficient quality to achieve beneficial child-outcomes and yield longer term social and economic gains."

There are three broad rationales for putting public resources into high quality ECEC. First, it has significant economic and social payoffs. Second, it supports parents and boosts female employment. Third, it is part of society's responsibility to educate children, to combat child poverty and to help children overcome educational disadvantage. Visit the OECD website at www.oecd.org.

ACROSS CANADA AND BEYOND

International

The Scottish Government is drafting a *rights of children and young people bill* that would consider access to nature as being included in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. No government has recognized access to nature as a right, yet it can and does deliver benefits to everyone in society. The proposed bill would outline how every child and young person has the right to grow up and live in a high-quality, wildlife-rich environment with ready access to the physical and mental health benefits, developmental advantages, and play opportunities it affords. There is a growing and compelling body of evidence that regular and ready access to a wildlife-rich environment is essential for children's health and wellbeing.

Alberta

New Premier Alison Redford was elected leader of the Alberta Progressive Conservative Party on October 1, 2011 and sworn-in as Alberta's 14th premier on October 7, 2011. Her election platform indicated that she supports early learning and care. The Alberta Children's Services Ministry has now become a part of the larger Alberta Human Services Ministry. The Early Child Development Mapping Initiative, a five-year research and community development activity, is in place to support the healthy development and well-being of children. This is an Alberta Education initiative involving the community and an astounding 75 early childhood development coalitions have emerged across the province in the last two years, bringing together people who are passionate and committed to nurturing young children in their community.

British Columbia

While British Columbia's Ministry of Education recently implemented universal, publicly funded full-day kindergarten for 5-year-olds, BC is faced with high child care fees for parents, low wages for staff and few quality regulated spaces throughout the province. In response, the Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC and the Early Childhood Educators of BC developed a Community Plan for a Public System of Integrated Early Care



and Learning. It addresses the urgent need to provide children and families with quality, affordable early care and learning services – a key missing piece of BC's family policy.

Currently in British Columbia, child care sits in a child-protection focused ministry, the Ministry of Child & Family Development, whose priority is to protect the most vulnerable children and families. Because child care is not the Ministry's priority, the Community Plan leaders are advocating for the provincial government in BC to move child care into the Ministry of Education (much like other provinces).

Manitoba

Following the re-election of the NDP government for a third term of office, the Hon. Jennifer Howard was appointed as the new Minister of Family of Family Services & Labour. An ECD Unit has been established in Manitoba Education. For 2012, school divisions will receive \$2.4 million in funding for the Early Childhood Development Initiative to provide services for preschool children that increase readiness to learn prior to school entry. Child care facilities are desperate for a funding increase to support competitive wages and cover inflationary increases to operating expenses but will have to wait until early spring for their funding announcement.

New Brunswick

The provincial government hosted a public dialogue consultation tour throughout the province to gather input from citizens early this year for the *Learning: Everybody's Project*, which is now in the early developing stages. In 2008 the Liberal government introduced a 2026 Self Sufficiency project. When the government leadership changed in 2010, the conservative government continued to work on the project, giving it a new name of NB 2026.

Newfoundland and Labrador

The Family Child Care Initiative, put in place to increase the number of regulated family child care homes and encourage the establishment of family child care infant homes, particularly in rural and under-served areas of the province, has been increased. The startup grants to regulated family child care homes have been increased to \$5,000 with family child care infant homes receiving an additional \$2,500. Family child care infant homes are also eligible for a \$200 per month Infant Stimulus Grant for each infant in attendance.

The provincial government has begun its 10 Year Child Care Strategy for child care services with the consultation. As part of the planning process, key stakeholders were invited to provide input regarding the main issues in child care and to suggest potential solutions.

The Provincial Department of Education's Early Childhood Learning Division is developing an Early Learning Curriculum Framework in consultation with the Department of Child, Youth and Family Services.

Nova Scotia

Some private daycare operators are concerned about the future of provincial funding when Community Services Minister Denise Peterson-Rafuse said in December that there will be a review of daycare operations in the province, which could lead to cutting off public cash to private operators. But the department's early childhood development services division says the province has no intention of changing how it funds child cares. Members of the Private Licensed Administrators Association of Nova Scotia Child Care Centres want the matter clarified. About half of the 400-plus daycares in the province are private ventures, and the others are non-profit. All are eligible for provincial grants used to top up workers' salaries and support children with special needs. The province is in the early stages of its examination of the early childhood learning system and how public money is spent.

Ontario

The implementation of what is now being referred to as Full Day Early Learning Kindergarten continues to affect child care and early learning delivery across the province, as many child care programs lose 4 and 5 year olds, and qualified staff, to the full day program. Some community based and municipal programs are at risk of closing or have already closed. The Government's decision to allow third party child care operators to run the extended portions of the full day program has divided early learning and child care stakeholders across the province.

PEI

A major study on the state of early childhood education in Canada ranks Prince Edward Island's early childhood education second in the country, according to the Education

and Early Childhood Development Minister Alan McIsaac. The Early Years Study 3, the third in a trio of reports on the state of early childhood learning by the Honourable Margaret Norrie McCain and the late Dr. J. Fraser Mustard, was released in November.

The Prince Edward Island Preschool Excellence Initiative continued with the introduction of Early Years Centres, with all trained staff, regulated parent fees, parent advisory committees and a provincial early learning framework along with the establishment of a school-based kindergarten program which is delivered by early childhood educators.

Quebec

Thousands of families have been forced to make alternative arrangements for their children as workers at more than 100 publicly funded daycare centres in Quebec staged a series of rolling one-day strikes in February. The union representing the workers at 119 centres de la petite enfance (CPE) in numerous regions, including Montreal and Laval, says negotiations surrounding a new collective agreement have been progressing too slowly. The workers have been without an agreement for nearly two years.

CALENDAR

APRIL

28

Edmonton, Alberta

Grant MacEwan University Child Care Conference. Visit www.macewan.ca for information.

MAY

3-5

Richmond, British Columbia

Playing it Forward: Discovering the Wonder and Value of Authentic Play

ECEBC is very pleased to present its 41st annual conference, at the Radisson Hotel. Please join us for this opportunity for professional development and networking. Online registration starts mid-February 2012. Conference brochure at www.ecebc.ca.



3-5

Charlottetown, PEI

Braiding our Resources Conference 2012

Join keynote speaker Mara Krechevsky, lead investigator of the 'Making Learning Visible: Understanding Documenting and Supporting Individual and Group Learning' project, an early childhood education project out of Harvard Graduate School of Education. www.earlychildhooddevelopment.ca/

4-5

Ottawa, Ontario

L'enfant, une étincelle de réussite : Provincial Forum of Association francophone à l'éducation des services à l'enfance de l'Ontario AFESFO

The Provincial Forum of AFESFO will be held under the enchanting theme: The Child: a Spark of Success! The Forum is an exhibition of educational resources with 14 development workshops tailored to the needs of all stakeholders in children's services. www.afesfo.ca

24-26

Winnipeg, Manitoba

MCCA's 35th Early Childhood Education Conference: Live, Learn, Play!

MCCA's 35th Early Childhood Education Conference: Live, Learn, Play! Will be held May 24, - 26, 2012 in Winnipeg at the Victoria Inn. Conference Brochures will be available online at www.mccahouse.org. For more information, contact Karen Gander at karengander@mccahouse.org

May 27 – June 2

Newfoundland and Labrador – Province wide ECE Week

Association of Early Childhood Educators of Newfoundland and Labrador (AECENL) will be celebrating ECE Week May 27th to June 2nd 2012 hosting events throughout the province. www.aecenl.ca

JUNE

8

Dartmouth, Nova Scotia

Families at the Centre - Nova Scotia Annual Child Care Conference

Nova Scotia Child Care organizations will collectively host the Annual Child Care Conference on June at the Holiday Inn Harbourview in Dartmouth. This years focus is "Families at the Centre". www.cccns.org

8-9

Peterborough, Ontario

2nd Annual Association of Early Childhood Educators of Ontario Leadership and Team Building Camp

Working Towards a Seamless Integrated System. www.aecceo.ca

RESOURCES

Be Proud

by Colleen Doyle Bryant

Illustrated by Manuela Soriani

"A conscience is that voice in your head, and that feeling in your heart, that tells you if something is right or wrong, even when no one is looking," the tree explained.



When a little boy takes his handheld game player outside - even though his mom told him not to - he is not prepared for what happens next. Settling down behind an oak tree for a secret game, the boy is startled when the ancient tree begins to talk. He listens intently as the tree lovingly explains how she has watched him grow up, just like she watched his father before him. The tree shares a story about the boy's father when he was young, which helps the boy realize that even if you don't get caught in a misdeed, your heart always knows the truth. With her story, the tree helps the boy to understand what his conscience is and guides him towards making better choices, next time around. When the boy feels badly for having made the mistake in the first place, the tree encourages him to see that learning from your mistakes is all a part of growing into the person you want to be. In the end, the boy's confidence soars and he feels very proud of himself for making an honest choice. With clear character building themes, **Be Proud** will also complement character education curriculum.

Be Proud (published by LoveWell Press, 2011, RRP \$9.99) is available online and can be ordered from all good book stores. For more information please visit www.talkingtreebooks.com

Full Day Learning Resource Kit – for ECEs Transitioning to School Board Full Day Learning Programs

With the introduction of full day learning programs in schools, many of you will find yourselves working in new environments alongside elementary school teachers. The Canadian Child Care Federation has put together a selection of our top resources to help inform, build relationships and empower you in your new role.

The Full Day Learning Resource Kit contains:

- Foundations for Numeracy resources for both early learning environments and the school years
- From Birth to Life Language and Literacy resources
- 2 Moving and Growing volumes that cover from 2-6 years
- 10 of our top Resource Sheets
- Meeting the Challenge
- Physical Activity CD
- Partners in Quality - Relationships resource

Start the year off right and make connections with both parents and colleagues. If you are a member of CCCF you can purchase this kit for \$50 (shipping and handling extra). For non-members \$70. This is a limited offer so order yours today by contacting cmorisset@cccfcscge.ca. To become a CCCF member, visit www.qualitychildcarecanada.ca/membership

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- courses offer the study of contemporary issues & engagement with global and national aspects of early childhood care politics and pedagogy;
- graduates will be prepared to assume leadership roles as advocates, policy specialists, administrators, researchers and early childhood educators.

COURSES STARTING SEPTEMBER 2012

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