



First Nations  
Early Childhood  
DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

<http://fnecdc.ca>



## Training and Retention of Early Childhood Educators (ECE) working in First Nations Communities

In honour of the first Family Day in British Columbia, First Nations Early Childhood Development Council (FNECDC) is releasing its newest research report: Training and Retention in the First Nations ECE Sector: A Report from the Frontlines.

The goal of this research was to gain a better understanding of the quality and First Nations cultural content of the training being provided to Early Childhood Educators at accredited Post – secondary institutions in British Columbia. A secondary intent was to examine the many factors currently influencing First Nations workplace retention for these Educators.

Early Childhood Development (ECD) researchers in BC and across the world have long agreed that the critical time for laying the foundations for life – long learning, health, happiness and well – being occurs between the ages of 0 – 6.

First Nations traditions recognize and value that parents and extended family are children’s first teachers. Yet, we also know that First Nations ECD programs enhance a child’s early learning experience by including structured curriculum with traditions, culture and languages. Those programs that are able to hire and retain high quality Early Childhood educators offer an even greater benefit to children and families.

To support ECD, First Nations communities from around the province came together to form the First Nations Early Childhood Development Council (FNECDC) in March 2007. For more information: <http://fnecdc.ca>

## What are the current challenges?

- Services are unequally distributed – 46 First Nations in British Columbia have no early childhood education services.
- Untrained staff – large numbers of staff in First Nations child care programs have not completed their Early Childhood Education certification. Geographic disparities continue to exist: 35% of staff in the Interior region of the province are untrained, while the number rises to 85% in the North.
- Cultural relevance is missing – Only 8 of the 56 provincially approved training institutions in British Columbia are identified as offering an Aboriginal perspective.
- Low wages – Most staff respondents are not making a “living wage” (\$20/hr or more). 0% of Vancouver Island staff, 20% of North staff and 24% of Interior staff reported making a living wage. Only in the Coast Fraser region was there a high number of staff reported to making a living wage: 51% of staff

## What are some solutions?

- Read the full report Training and Retention in the First Nations ECE Sector: A Report from the Frontlines. It contains a list of recommendations. The report is included in this package for your reference. You can also urge others to download it from <http://fnecdc.ca>
- Early Childhood Educators working in First Nations communities need to feel supported for the work they do with our children. Spread the word about the positive learning experiences you know of that are happening in your community preschool, daycare or Headstart program. A simple “Thank You” note to a dedicated teacher also goes a long way!
- Early Childhood Educators working in First Nations communities need to be properly trained. They must be certified by accredited learning institutions that offer cultural perspectives on First Nations culture, traditions and language. Our children deserve knowledgeable teachers!
- Early Childhood Educators working in First Nations communities need to be adequately compensated for the work that they do with our children. Paying a living wage and providing benefits will ensure that staff are retained. Consistency of staff in an ECD environment is a good indicator of a quality program.
- Find out more about the FNECDC, its ongoing research and how you can get involved by visiting the website: <http://fnecdc.ca>

What is First Nations ECD? Early Childhood Development programs enhance a child’s early learning experience by including structured curriculum with traditions, culture and languages.



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## Fact Sheet

### Training and Retention of Early Childhood Educators (ECE) working in First Nations Communities

- The ECE workforce in First Nations communities is aging as 50% are over the age of 40.
- There is a wide variation in wages in on - reserve programs. Seniority, training, and education do not always translate into higher wages.
- More than a quarter of the respondents (27%) felt “poorly” or “not so well” prepared to support children with special needs.
- During training, the cost of living expenses were noted as a challenge by the respondents as well as balancing commitments to family/friends while juggling studies.
- Only 10% of North respondents, 19% of Interior respondents, 22% of Island respondents and 29% of Coast Fraser respondents indicated that all of their staff members working directly with children have ECE certification.
- Only 7% of ECD staff participated in non-credit courses (other than food safe or first aid) with ECE content. This translates to a very low participation rate in on-going professional development within the staff.
- Accessing professional development was a challenge for respondents. A lack of replacement staff was the most commonly noted challenge in attending professional development opportunities, with 58 respondents noting this as a challenge and 27 noting this as the biggest challenge.
- For professional development, travel distances are noted as being too far, high costs, and leaving family/community responsibilities.
- Only 69% of manager respondents and a mere 22% of staff respondents are making a \$20/hour or more; which is considered “making a living wage.”
- Most staff respondents are not making a living wage. 0% of Island staff, 20% of North staff and 25% of Interior staff reported making a living wage (\$20/hr or more). Only in the Coast Fraser region was there a high number of staff reported to making a living wage: 51% of staff.

