



BC **Aboriginal
Child Care** Society

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Comprehensive Occupational Standards and Fair Wages Crucial to Recognizing the Unique Roles of First Nations Early Childhood Educators

(Coast Salish Territories / Vancouver) – Today, the First Nations Early Childhood Development Council (FNECDC) and BC Aboriginal Child Care Society (BCACCS) are jointly releasing a research report entitled, *Summary Report: Occupational Standards and Fair Wages for First Nation Early Childhood Educators*.

The research project, which began in 2013, is the first of its kind – not only in BC but Canada wide – to address fair wages and occupational standards for First Nation early childhood educators (FN ECEs). The newly released report is a summary of this work and reveals several critical elements that are integral to the creation of Occupational Standards that are inclusive and reflective of First Nations culture and ECE practice.

Current national occupational standards for ECEs, while highly valued, do not fully encapsulate the unique roles and responsibilities of First Nation ECEs, pointed out Pam Lewis, Chair of the FNECDC. “Recognizing the complexities of the profession is highly significant and as such, prompted this research project and fulfills a key component of the First Nations ECD Framework,” added Lewis.

Both the Canadian Child Care Federation (CCCCF) and the Child Care Human Resources Sector Council (CCHRSC), two organizations that developed the national ECE standards, were fully supportive of the project and saw the value of the work undertaken by BCACCS to inform future revisions to their own standards.

“This report examines the literature related to the role and value of First Nations ECEs and could potentially act as a guide for policy makers, funders, ECEs and their employers in the development of a program of fair wage principles and standards,” said Karen Isaac, Executive Director, BCACCS.

This research report and the soon to be published First Nations Occupational Standards were directly informed by front line First Nations ECE staff in five regions of BC. What they said was perceptive, “Early childhood education is a career. You are expected to keep up your license. They have rules and stipulations but these are not reflected in our wages.” (project participant).

The work realities of FN ECEs suggest a level of professional practice that demands both respect and recognition. We can demonstrate our value of FN ECEs (and ECEs generally) through high quality professional preparation that addresses the complexity of the work and the provision of adequate remuneration for their professional efforts. This report suggests how both can be best accomplished with clear and comprehensive occupational standards to guide education and professional development and equitable wage benchmarks that respond to present economic realities.



The First Nations Early Childhood Development Council (www.fnecdc.ca) is comprised of representatives from BC First Nations communities, organizations and political leaders and is committed to advocating for the care, education, health and wellness of First Nations children.

BC Aboriginal Child Care Society (BCACCS) is committed to nurturing excellence through community outreach, training, education, research, and advocacy to ensure every Aboriginal child in BC has access to spiritually enriching, culturally relevant, high quality early childhood development and care services.

Link to Summary Report document: http://www.acc-society.bc.ca/files_2/documents/OccupationalStandardsSummaryWEB.pdf

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