



Our Children Our Way

Early Years Conference

Report and Resources



Nishnawbe
Aski Nation
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Dear Reader,

It was wonderful to see so many attend the Our Children Our Way conference in November. I thank each and every one of you for your dedication to the children and families of Nishnawbe Aski Nation.

The early years from 0-6 are the formative years in a child's development. Together we need to provide a healthy, safe, culturally rich, holistic, strength-based environment that promotes physical, social, and emotional development.

According to the seven grandfather teachings what we teach our children now will have an affect for the next seven generations. Indigenous childcare centres build a foundation of the seven grandfather teachings through love, respect, bravery, truth, honesty, humility and wisdom.

High quality childcare and early learning programs play an important role in the reclamation and preservation of language, culture and traditions and the development of a positive self identity.

We hope you find this resource meaningful and supportive of the important work that you do.

Miigwetch,



Deputy Grand Chief Anna Betty Achneepineskum

Deputy Grand Chief Anna Betty Achneepineskum provided Opening Remarks with words of support and gratitude to delegates for their work in the Early Years. DGC spoke of the importance of Early Learning and Child Care programs and services and the importance they play in the life of a child, family and community.



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CONFERENCE SUMMARY

175
REGISTERED

155
ATTENDED
SESSIONS

35
NAN FIRST
NATIONS
COMMUNITIES
REPRESENTED

4
TRIBAL COUNCILS
PARTICIPATED



One of the favourite parts of the conference was the Elders Panel “Raising Children in their Culture and Language”. Elders Stella Schimmens (Moose Cree FN), Jenosa Sainnawap (Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug) and Sam Achneepineskum (Marten Falls) shared their thoughts and wisdom. The Elders opened the floor to answer questions from the audience. Much of this session was captured with illustration and can be found in this report.

COMMUNITIES REPRESENTED

- Aroland
- Attawapiskat
- Bearskin Lake
- Beaverhouse
- Brunswick House
- Constance Lake
- Deer Lake
- Eabamet Lake
- Eabametoong
- Fort Albany
- Ginoogaming
- Kasabonika
- Kashechewan
- Keewaywin
- Kingfisher Lake
- Lac Seul
- Long Lake # 58
- Marten Falls
- Mattagami
- McDowell
- Mishkeegogamang
- Missanabie Cree
- Moose Cree
- Neskantaga
- North Caribou Lake
- North Spirit Lake
- Pikangikum
- Round Lake
- Sachigo Lake
- Sandy Lake
- Slate Falls
- Taykwa Tagamou Nation
- Weenusk
- Webequie
- Wunnumin Lake

CONFERENCE AND REPORT SUMMARY

Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) Early Years department hosted the 3-day **Our Children, Our Way Early Years Conference** at the Victoria Inn Hotel & Conference Centre in Thunder Bay on November 22, 23, 24, 2022. The event was intended to support and build capacity for those working in the Early Years while continuing important work towards a NAN Early Years Framework and Strategy. Conference delegates and Women & Youth Council representatives included childcare and Aboriginal Head Start Staff, Indigenous Healthy Babies Healthy Children Coordinators, FASD Coordinators, JK/SK staff, Education Directors, Health Directors, Elders, Tribal Councils and any community member who works with children and their families.

In total, 175 people registered to attend either in-person or virtually for the 3-day conference. Conference feedback showed delegates thoroughly enjoyed the conference and the opportunity to collaborate and connect with so many Early Years professionals and staff. Feedback also showed that delegates

found the plenary and brainstorming sessions very helpful to their work and all delegates requested copies of conference presentations and brainstorming sessions. This report has been developed to include some of these presentations and brainstorming session results in the hopes that others will also find it helpful.

The conference keynote presentations and subsequent work sessions for “Exploring Models of Care – What could a NAN Based Model of Care look like?” and “Early Learning and Child Care Policies” are part of a research project with Nicole Ineese-Nash and Dr. Shelagh McCartney of Toronto Metropolitan University. These sessions presented by Kaitlyn Wilcox, Nan McLeod, and Ji Eun Park of the MTU Research Team offered delegates the opportunity to share their knowledge and experience as they provided input for the NAN Early Years Framework and Strategy. The results of this consultation work will be compiled into a report that will be shared with NAN communities. For more information on this research project and report please email ielcc@nan.ca.



Also presented at the conference was the draft report from the Community Planning Workshop hosted by NAN Early Years and Together Design Lab (TDC) in June 2022 for NAN Early Learning and Child Care Centres. Jeffery Herskovitz from TDL presented the workshop findings and the draft Case Study Resource – A Closer Look at child care centres across the World. Conference delegates had the opportunity to explore the different design elements featured in these child centred spaces and discuss what they would like to see in their own communities. Conference delegates included Women and Oshkaatisak Council representatives, childcare and Aboriginal Head Start Staff, Indigenous Healthy Babies Healthy Children Coordinators, FASD Coordinators, JK/SK staff, Elders, Education Directors, Health Directors, Tribal Councils and community members who work with children and their families. The results of the brainstorming session can be found in this report. For more information and copies of this report and Case Study Guide please email ielcc@nan.ca.

Additional sessions were held to explore:

- Strengthening community capacity to deliver Early Childhood Care and Development programs
- Supporting and Engaging Parental Involvement and Parenting Skills
- Developing Language in the Early Years from an Indigenous Lens.

One of the conference highlights were community success presentations from Ginoogaming Aboriginal Head Start and Child and Youth Milopemahtesewin Services. Presentations and resources from these

sessions can be found in this report. The sessions presented by Kaitlyn Wilcox, Nan McLeod and Ji Eun Park of the MTU research team provided delegates the opportunity to share their knowledge and experience to further build on the NAN Early Years Framework and Strategy.

For more information and support with IELCC in your community please email ielcc@nan.ca.



Our Children Our Way

Early Years Conference

November 22-24, 2022

Victoria Inn Hotel & Conference Centre | Thunder Bay, ON



Nishnawbe Aski Nation
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Our Children, Our Way – Early Years Conference
November 22, 23 & 24, 2022, Venue: Victoria Inn

Elders: Stella Schimmens, Jenosa Sainnawap and Sam Achneepineskum

Drum: Drew Nahwegahbow

Master of Ceremonies: Stan Wesley

Early Registration – November 21

6:00 pm – 8:00 pm	Early Registration Welcome Reception – Early Years Gallery Regency A
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Day 1 – November 22

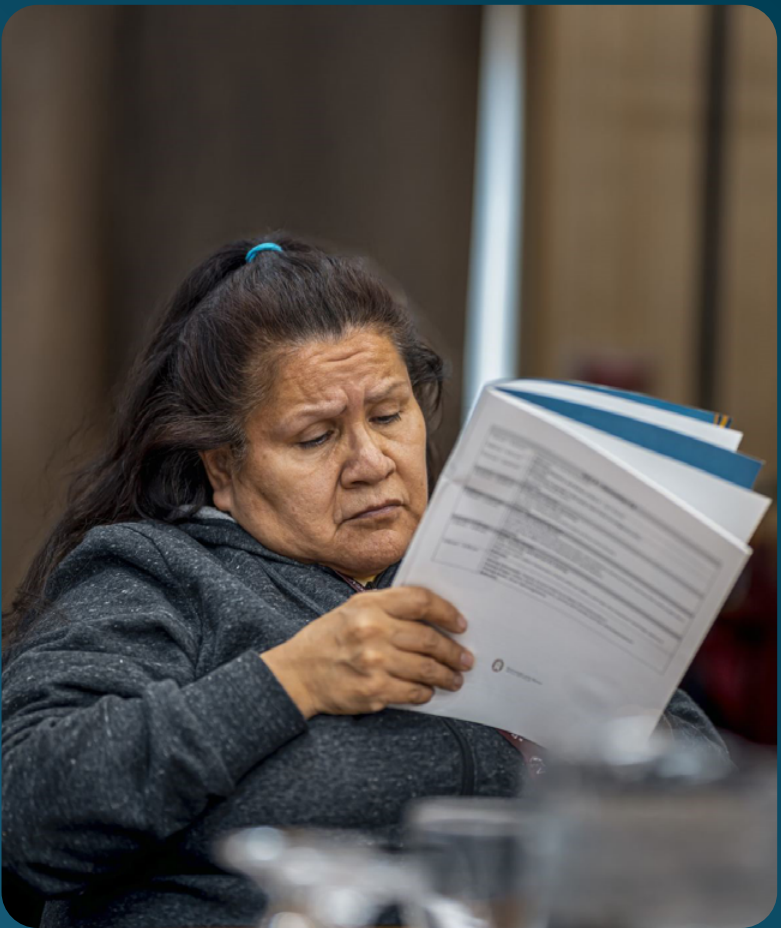
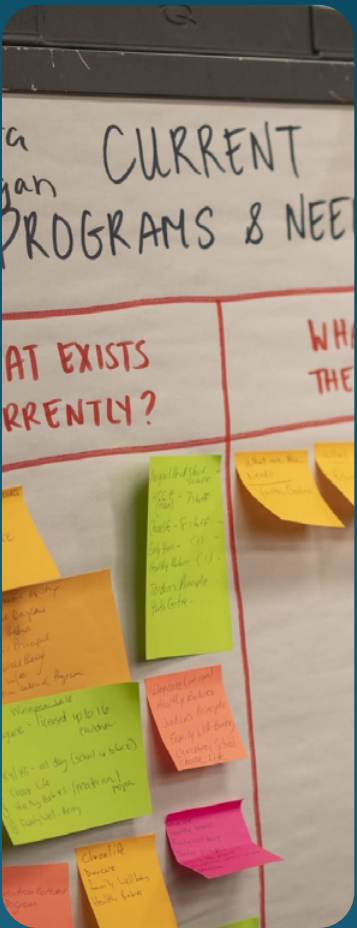
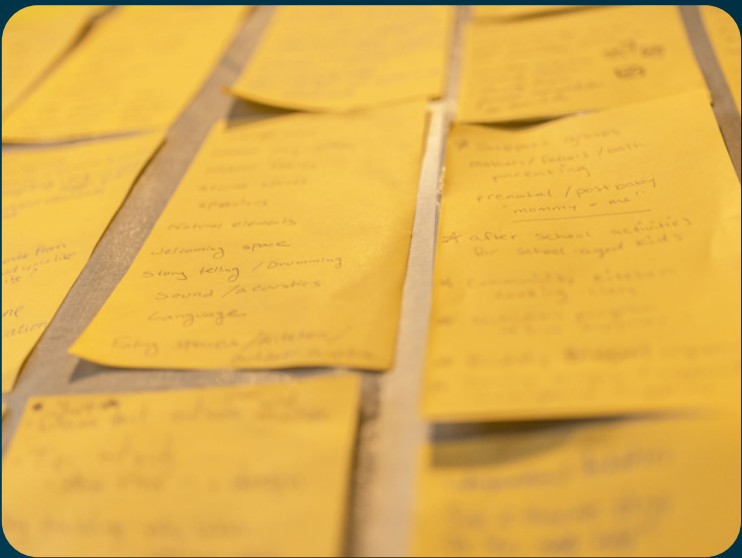
7:30 am – 8:50 am	Registration and Hot Breakfast Ballroom
9:00 am – 9:30 am	Opening Song/Drum: Drew Nahwegahbow Opening Prayer: Elders Stella Schimmens, Jenosa Sainnawap and Sam Achneepineskum Opening Remarks: Deputy Grand Chief Anna Betty Achneepineskum Ballroom
9:30 am – 9:45 am 9:45 am – 10:15 am 10:15 am – 10:30 am	Welcome and Ice Breaker Activity – Stan Wesley NAN Early Years Department and Resources – Beedahbin Desmoulin NAN Early Learning and Child Care Update – Kristy Hankila Ballroom
10:30 am – 10:45 am	Break – Stan Wesley Ballroom
10:45 am – 12:00 pm	Keynote Address Exploring Models of Care – What could a NAN Based Model of Care look like? Nicole Ineese-Nash Ballroom
12:00 pm – 1:00 pm	Lunch – Blessing of the Food Ballroom
1:00 pm – 2:15 pm	Workshop – Exploring Models of Care through a Cultural Lens Nicole Ineese-Nash and Research Team Participants will explore Models of Care using pictographs, stories, animals, and other traditional mediums. Breakout Rooms
2:15 pm – 2:45 pm	Break – Stan Wesley Ballroom
2:45 pm – 3:45 pm	Strengthening Community Capacity to Deliver Early Childhood Care and Development Programs – Jessica Ball Ballroom

3:45 pm – 4:15 pm	Brainstorming Activity: How can we strengthen community capacity? Kari Chiappetta, Facilitator Ballroom
4:15 pm – 4:30 pm	Wrap Up Day 1 and Prizes – Stan Wesley Ballroom

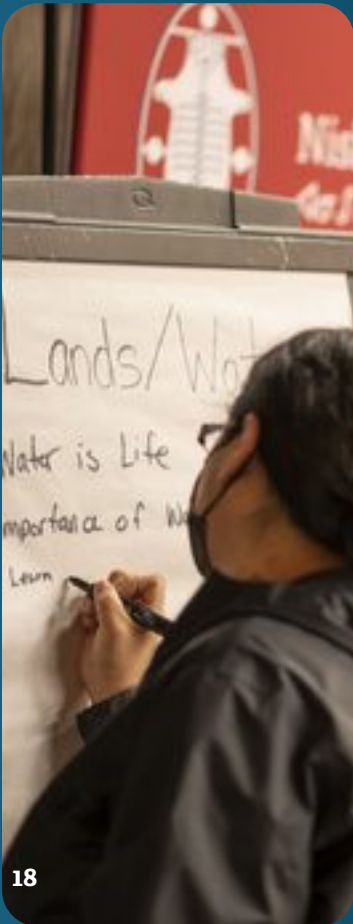
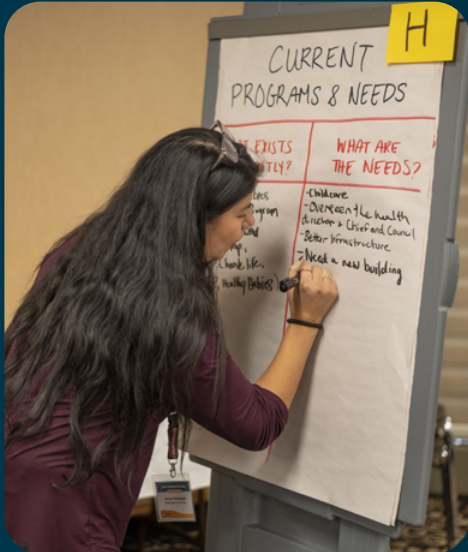
Day 2 – November 23	
7:30 am – 8:50 am	Registration and Hot Breakfast Ballroom
9:00 am – 9:15 am	Welcome, Recap of Day 1 – Stan Wesley Ballroom
9:15 am – 10:00 am	Community Planning Workshop Summary Together Design Lab Participants will hear a summary of the Community Planning Workshops held in June. Participants will be introduced to the Case Study Resource and will have the opportunity to review and reflect. Ballroom
10:00 am – 10:40 am	Case Study Resource – A closer look at childcare centres around the World Kari Chiappetta, Facilitator Participants will take a closer Look at the Case Study Resource and engage in small group discussion about the different design elements featured in these child centered spaces. Ballroom
10:40 am – 11:00 am	Break – Stan Wesley Ballroom
11:00 am – 12:00 pm	Elders Panel - Raising Children in their Culture and Language Stan Wesley Elders Stella Schimmens, Jenosa Sainnawap and Sam Achneepineskum will share their thoughts and answer participant’s questions. Ballroom
12:00 pm – 1:00 pm	Lunch Ballroom
1:00 pm – 1:50 pm	Supporting and Engaging Parental Involvement and Parenting Skills - Jessica Ball Ballroom
1:50 pm – 2:10 pm	Large group Idea Share - Supporting Parental Involvement Kari Chiappetta, Facilitator Ballroom
2:10 pm – 2:30 pm	Break – Stan Wesley Ballroom
2:30 pm – 3:15 pm	Early Learning and Child Care Polices – Nicole Ineese-Nash An introduction to mainstream policies and Indigenous practice. Ballroom

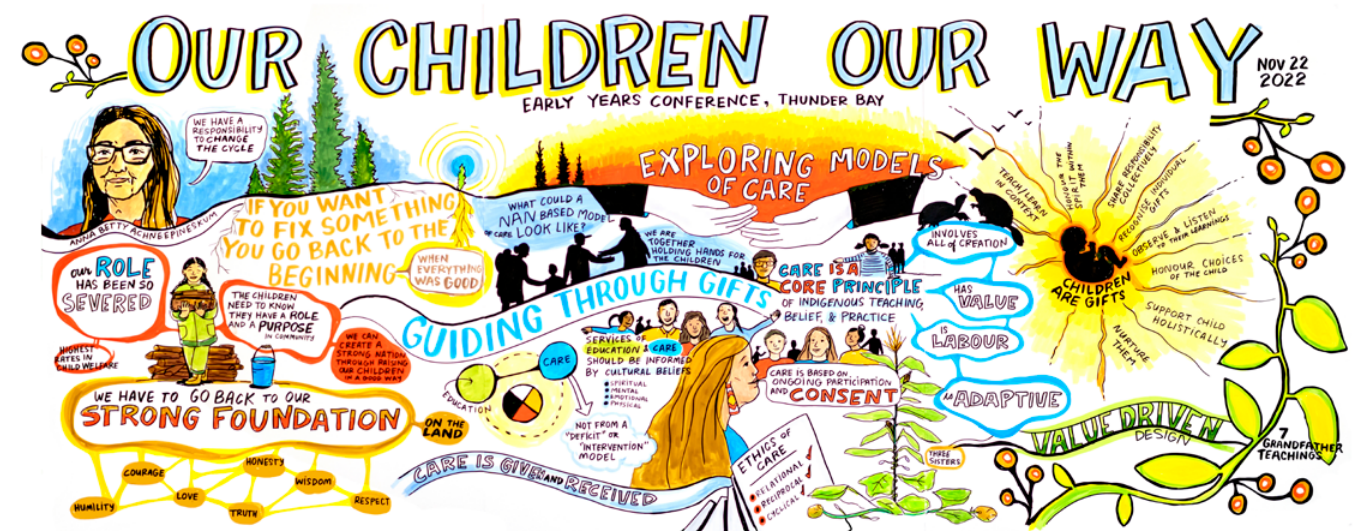
3:15 pm – 4:30 pm	Policies Workshop Nicole Ineese-Nash and Research Team Participants will explore mainstream policies and Indigenous practice through brainstorming and small group activities. Breakout Rooms
4:30 – 5:15	Break – Check out our Artisan’s Market & Early Years Gallery
5:15 – 7:30	Dinner Reception & Entertainment Rabbit and Bear Paws Puppet show – Dream Catcher and the Seven Grandfathers Ballroom

Day 3 – November 24	
7:30 am – 8:50 am	Registration and Hot Breakfast Ballroom
9:00 am – 9:15 am	Morning Welcome and Recap of Day 2 – Stan Wesley Ballroom
9:15 am – 10:15 am	Developing Language in the Early Years from an Indigenous Lens Dr. Sharla Mskokii Pettier Ballroom
10:15 am – 10:30 am	Break – Stan Wesley Ballroom
10:30 am – 12:00 pm	Developing Language Workshop Dr. Sharla Mskokii Pettier Oral Story Telling activity and a look at Early Land Literacy Ballroom
12:00 pm – 1:00 pm	Lunch
1:00 pm – 2:15 pm	Community Success Stories Ginoogaming First Nation will present their new Childcare Centre and the journey they took to get there. Moose Cree will present their Natural Helpers program. There will be a Q&A session following their presentations. Ballroom
2:15 pm – 2:30 pm	Break– Stan Wesley Ballroom
2:30 pm – 4:00 pm	Elder Teachings and Special Art Activity Freida Sackaney Make your own Infant Protection Charm with our Elders and hear the important teachings behind it. Ballroom
4:00 pm – 4:30 pm	Prizes Closing Comments: Deputy Grand Chief Anna Betty Achneepineskum Closing Prayer: Elders Stella Schimmens, Jenosa Sainnawap and Sam Achneepineskum Closing Drum: Drew Nahwegahbow









Nishnawbe Aski Nation
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OUR CHILDREN OUR WAY: Early Years Conference November 22, 2022



idea by Deven Kordak

OUR CHILDREN OUR WAY

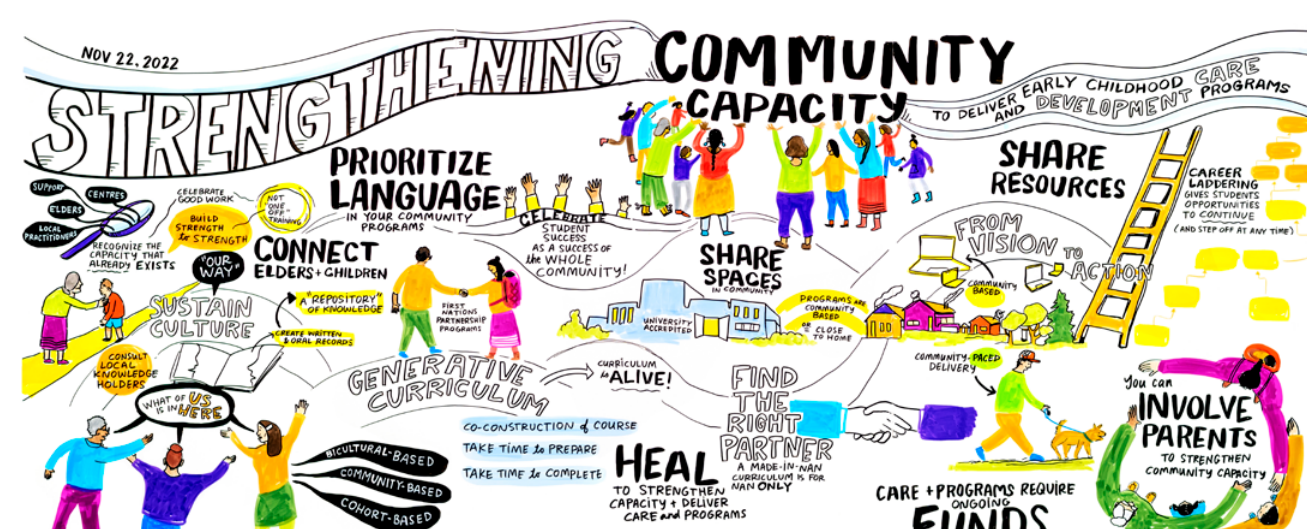


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ELDERS PANEL



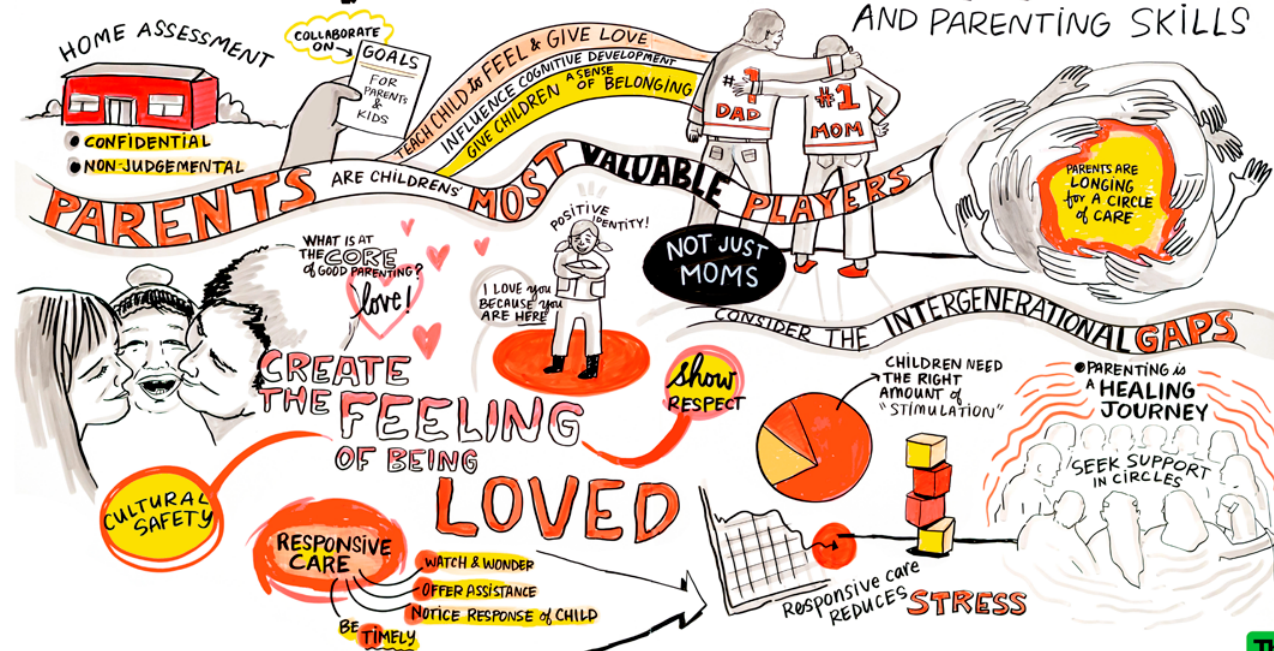
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OUR CHILDREN OUR WAY: Early Years Conference November 22, 2022



STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY CAPACITY

SUPPORTING & ENGAGING Parental Involvement AND PARENTING SKILLS



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OUR CHILDREN OUR WAY: Early Years Conference November 23, 2022

inked by Devon Kerzlake



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OUR CHILDREN OUR WAY: Early Years Conference Thursday November 24, 2022



SUPPORTING & ENGAGING PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AND PARENTING SKILLS

COMMUNITY SUCCESS STORIES

PRESENTATIONS AND RESOURCES

STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY CAPACITY TO DELIVER EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS – JESSICA BALL

BRAINSTORMING SESSION,
FOLLOWING DR. JESSICA BALLS PRESENTATION

What are some specific ways you can strengthen community capacity in your communities to deliver Early Childhood Care and Development Programs?

- Professional development - training specific to the job description
- Public speaking - learning to think in English
- Presentations
- Work skills
- Recognizing wisdom and knowledge of all people
- Utilizing these people
- Space for programming
- Dealing with trauma - not separately, but with families - deal with this first before can move on
- Lifelong healing
- In person - virtual you can't feel the energy of the people
- Leaving for college - understanding English
- Each one teach one - people teach others their strengths (watch and learn)

- Sewing circles - group projects
- Involving families and community members in programs
- Consistent and continuous access to resources and professional development
- Gear activities to seasons in order to maintain interest
- Engage in national initiatives (orange shirt day, Indigenous week)
- Offer incentives for participants in order to increase engagement, attendance, and participation
- Train staff to work with autistic students
- Cultural shock training
- Parenting classes
- Welcome package e.g., benefits
- Translate when teaching
- Give students flashcards to practice at home with parents' involvement
- Cultural activities with school programming
- TV programming
- Staff/community breakfast
- Self care for everyone

- Counselling sessions
- Elder's involvements - tea parties
- Ongoing funding that does not have to be re-applied for annually
- Infrastructure for the program
- More prevention awareness - suicide, depression, open dialogue
- Libraries in community
- Youth centre
- People that are self taught, have knowledge (licensing issues, grandfather status, NAN licensing)
- Communication/ coordination between programs within community (collaboration, teaching, funding, coordinator position)
- Find out how to get ECE
- FNTI - work with them
- Oshki Wenjack presenter
- Offer space to hold education
- Bring in Elders and Knowledge Keepers to start
- Mentorship in community for interested youth
- Make sure it can be possible for those with Autism/ ADHD to be successful in the course
- Start with local staff to create program
- Communication with child
- Providing drop ins
- Traditional parenting teachings
- Helping young mothers with their babies
- Cree word of the day - flash cards, pics with words
- Native language position with ongoing funding
- Special training for FASD and Autism

- Sewing/ beading/ cooking club
- Language curriculum (Cree/ Oji-Cree/ Ojibway)
- Training for educators with incentives
- Community youth centres
- Parent involvement
- More infrastructure
- Local staff first
- Deal with trauma
- Self care
- Open mind
- Transportation
- Parent involvement
- Transportation
- Evening activities
- After school program
- Working with other agencies
- Men involvement
- Use students and parents as volunteers
- More money
- More training
- Teaching language in community not just in school
- Land based
- Counsellor being available
- Breakfast program
- Cultural programs (fishing, hunting, trapping)
- Elders - head start to chat with children
- Clothing exchange
- Supper/ Christmas party
- Community feasts
- Galas

- Sports activities/ recreational activities
- Monthly celebration
- Adjust time for activities that best suit everyone's needs
- More celebrations
- Support services for addictions (treatment, detox, awareness)
- Community birth announcements on TV or radio
- Positive outlooks and attitudes
- Newsletters of events
- Parent council
- Needs assessment to survey the community
- Hub model to service members (child welfare, food bank, winter clothing) - programming and resources run through a wellness hub
- Portal for wellness workers in community to communicate with each other
- Elder present for programming
- Aboriginal Head start programming for all children not just for working parents
- Utilizing high school students in childcare programs
- Cultural/ land-based activities and gatherings
- Camps
- Fishing derbys
- Trapping
- Community bonfire
- Family skating



CASE STUDY RESOURCE – A CLOSER LOOK AT CHILDCARE CENTRES AROUND THE WORLD

IN THIS SESSION PARTICIPANTS VIEWED THE CASE STUDY GUIDE FROM TOGETHER DESIGN LABS AND NISHNAWBE ASKI NATION.

For your own copy of this case study please email: ielcc@nan.ca

With regards to the Together Design Labs report and case study, what design elements from the case study do you love, and would you love to see in your community?

- o Greenhouse, gardening
- o Wheelchair access
- o Family room
- o Smudging circle
- o Something to help with mold, design wise
- o Training teaching room
- o Design to reflect the community environment
- o Need space for each child
- o Page 6 - Lutsal Ke'nunt
- o Yurt - dome tent outside - solid structure
- o Tipi outside - stone floor in design
- o Big building that has play space, storage space, kitchen space, language learning, land-based, Elders, staff spaces, outdoor space
- o Fence or wire - vandalism
- o Bus safety
- o More space for children
- o Tipi as entrance to building (like healing centre in Attawapiskat)
- o Outdoor play centre - outdoor activities

- o Huge greenhouse to teach kids to garden
- o Youth centre
- o Storage areas
- o Natural spaces
- o Outdoor spaces
- o Welcoming
- o Space for story telling and drumming
- o Eating spaces/ kitchen/ outdoor campfire area
- o Consider the sound and acoustics of building
- o Charts on walls (pg. 35)
- o Innovation hub
- o Cultural design with wood and plants
- o Labelling walls
- o Play area with rocks, and trees
- o Walking paths
- o Lower level for Elders
- o Prayer room
- o Plant trees outside
- o Outdoor spaces that are not plastic
- o Exposed wood
- o Outdoor cloth sensory swings
- o Open areas that can be flexible
- o Indoor/ outdoor space
- o Natural elements - rocks, trees, dirt, wood

- Life skills spaces with kid friendly, accessible resources (appropriately sized kitchens so kids can be involved in snack and meal prep, smaller sinks, toilets, tables to foster independence)
- Space to run - obstacle course
- Themed rooms (7 grandfather teachings)
- Garden, greenhouse, chickens
- Mix of indoor and outdoor
- Indoor gross motor area for indoor play
- Teach kids about landmarks - navigation
- Use local resources and local labour
- Kitchen areas that are communal, traditional cooking, outdoor cooking
- Exterior design consideration
- Traditional medicines
- Consider location - near rivers, natural resources in order to teach, easily accessible
- Mud kitchen - play kitchen outside
- Animal pictures and structures with their names in language
- Learning centre
- Camp dining hall
- Library community centre
- Forrest school- outdoor classroom
- Native child family life centre
- Library - Toongnatapin school
- School garden
- Aboriginal Head Start
- Nature based
- Every community would be different so working together as a team
- Have full interest and fully committed about childhood care and development programs

- More cultural training
- Sharing resources
- Building partnerships
- Parent involvement
- Huge open space with natural light and bright colours
- Outdoor classroom
- Forest shelter to provide shelter from the elements
- Huge dining hall for social activities like assemblies and graduation (pg. 35)
- Indoor activity zone
- Outdoor classroom
- Camp dining hall (interior)
- Lutsel K'e Dene school renovation and addition
- Outdoors - teaching and cultural building, climate shelter, ceremonial tipi
- Indoors - resource room with computers, gym, library, big kitchen
- Community rinks
- Design to reflect our Indigenous culture
- Teepee - teaching lodge
- Values - sharing, kindness, strength, honesty
- Connection to land - prayer, ceremony
- Indigenous art themes
- Outdoor area for learning - local lumber to be used
- After school programming
- Spacious kitchen
- Storage space
- Garden
- Big centre for Head Start with community library, learning centre and outdoor courtyard

- Spaces in places that get snow need to be considered - none of the pictures show what the buildings/ spaces look like in winter
- Maze style learning centre - varies in light, sound, structure, colour, and materials
- Own building with playground
- Indoors space to play inside or outside
- Outdoor spaces with benches, trees for shade, rock elements, natural light, natural colours
- Teaching harvesting and fishing
- Cultural practices - netting, hunting, gathering, snowshoes, Tikanagan
- Bigger outdoor space that incorporated cultural elements like medicine
- Gardens to grow medicines and greenhouse
- Natural playground
- Alternatives to sand at playgrounds - grass or wood chips



PARENT SUPPORT AND EDUCATION – JESSICA BALL

THIS IS A GUIDE FOR SUPPORTING PARENTS CARING FOR YOUNG CHILDREN.

Research Highlights

The most important contributor to a child's wellness is *at least one consistent, trust-worthy relationship* with a caring adult who values and responds to the child's physical, emotional, cognitive and spiritual being and needs.

Although children's biological parents most often take on parenting roles, a biological parent may not be the child's *primary caregiver*. When providing parenting programs, reach out to the caregiver who is assuming the *parenting role* for the child. This might be a grandparent, older sibling, neighbour, legal guardian, or staff in an institutional care setting. Be sure these caregivers feel welcomed and respected in the program. Below, these caregivers are referred to as 'parents.'

It is safe to assume that parents want the best possible quality of life for their children. However, families may be struggling with economic, social, personal, historical, or political conditions that undermine their ability to provide suitable care to their children. When providing parenting programs, start by *assuming that parents are doing the best possible job they can*, given their circumstances and personal experiences.

While the ultimate goal of parenting programs is to enhance children's well being, the first goal is to understand and address the *needs of parents and the home (or institutional) environment* in which they are raising their children.

Effective parent programs:

- Focus on parents of very young children (before birth and from 0 to 3 years).
- Focus on children who are at most risk (impoverished, malnourished, differently abled, abused, displaced, and bereaved children).
- Combine approaches to meet the needs of the whole child; for example, nutrition, health and sanitation, caregiver-child interactions, and psychosocial development.
- Include all caregivers for the child (mothers, fathers, grandparents, extended family, foster and adoptive parents).

Parent support and education can be achieved through *community events, workshops, home-visits, parent support circles, parent education, and early childhood programs*. The most promising approach in each community will vary depending on the context, expressed needs of parents, and

availability of resources. If possible, provide *more than one approach*, to meet the needs of parents with varying needs.

Parenting programs should *empower* caregivers in ways that will improve their ability to meet a child’s basic needs and provide responsive care for children while respecting the parents’ personal and cultural beliefs, values, financial means, and family context.

Building a foundation

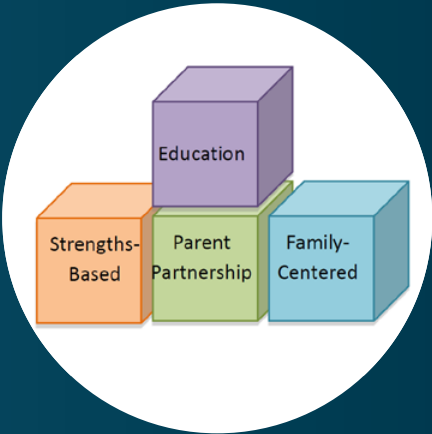
Before engaging parents in the ‘education’ component of a parenting program, it is important to build a foundation of trust and respect. A *strength-based* and *family-centred* approach with *parent partnership* at the core can help build this foundation. This approach is different from the way many programs operate. Too often, content is chosen based on the assumption that parents are lacking knowledge about childcare and need to be informed (told what to do!).

This leads to an approach where an ‘expert’ teaches and the parent listens, with little or no engagement among parents, often resulting in a demoralizing and ineffective program!

Partnerships: build relationships with parents.

Strengths: start with what parents are doing right!

Family-centred: let parents lead, recognize the needs and goals of the whole family, encourage family choice and decision-making.



Supporting parents raising young children

1. Building partnerships

When providing education to parents about early childhood development, take the time to build relationships first:

- Learn each parent’s name. If running a workshop, play an introduction game and encourage other parents to learn each other’s names as well
- Ask parents about their children (name, age, gender, personality)
- Be clear in your intentions – you are there to help facilitate their confidence and effectiveness, not tell them how to raise their child
- Listen to parents and give them time to talk about their experiences
- Use local examples that people can relate to and draw a lesson from
- Find out about each parent’s personal and cultural beliefs and values
- Encourage discussion among parents

2. Start with strengths

Before providing information on specific topics, spend some time finding out the existing strengths of each parent:

- What situations or aspects of caregiving are easy or enjoyable?
- What do they do daily to care for their child?
- Without putting any parent on the spot to disclose personal information, recognize the social, financial, personal, and political conditions affecting the parent and how they navigate these barriers

3. Family-centered, family led

This approach provides insight into the kinds of challenges that parents face, the ways they solve problems and the kind of information or skill building that will be most useful and engaging for them.

- Ask about ‘who all’ is in the home where the parent and child(ren) live most of the time?
- Ask parents *how* they want to learn and *what* they want to learn
- What situations are difficult?
- How does the parent seek help? Who can they go to seek help?
- What would they like to be able to do differently, with more confidence, or to get a better outcome?
- What do they want their child to learn and to be able to do when they are older?

Suggested topics in a parenting program

Early Childhood Care and Development – developmental norms and what to expect from younger children, supporting young children’s physical, social, language, spiritual, and cognitive development

The Importance of Love – attachment, caregiver-child interactions

The Importance of Play – children learn through play, safe and developmentally appropriate play materials, low and no cost toys, activities for learning on the land

Discipline – expectations for children’s behavior based on age and development, positive ways to guide children’s behavior, importance of avoiding corporal punishment

Health – looking after the health of oneself and child, hygiene, ensuring clean water, boiling water, water storage, waste disposal, mosquito nets, personal hygiene, how and when to seek medical help

Nutrition – seeking help gaining access to a variety of nutritious foods (fruit, vegetables, dairy and protein), preparing food safely for younger children

Rights and Protection – awareness of child rights, seeking help for legal support (birth documentation), protection from abuse (physical, verbal, sexual)

Economic Strengthening – seeking support from social welfare programs, government or other programs, seeking help from extended family or community members on how to gain income and balance childcare needs

How to build on existing knowledge while introducing new practices and beliefs

- *Recognize, respect and build on existing strengths* while acknowledging and responding to the need for access to new information
- *Acknowledge local positive practices* while building trust that what is being offered in the parent program has value
- *Share experiences and problem solve together*, recognizing that new ideas may contradict current practices, beliefs and realities

Parents are more likely to try new parenting practices when:

- They are encouraged to think about the topic, discuss it with others and ask questions to clarify their understanding
- They understand how they, their families and communities will benefit
- The language is familiar and in agreement with local cultural and social norms, avoiding judgmental or prescriptive-sounding commands
- The person presenting it or the source of information is well known and trusted
- They hear repeated, simple and consistent messages from different sources
- They are given time to change

Important Considerations

- Make special efforts to welcome men and not only women. Many parenting programs only reach mothers and contain messages that are ‘*mother-centric*.’ It often takes special efforts to reach fathers, grandfathers, uncles, and older brothers who may be providing care for a child or who may want to build their confidence in doing direct care tasks.
- If running a workshop or weekly program, ensure that childcare is available, or involve the children in the workshop or program.

Resources online

Families Canada provides resources and publications in digital and print format to assist families and family support practitioners in their work to give every child the right start in life. While some resources have a fee, many are free.

<https://shop.familiescanada.ca/collections/resources>

The National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health provides First Nations and Metis parent magazine-like resources (free to download)

https://www.nccih.ca/485/NCCIH_in_the_News.nccih?id=439

- **Growing up Healthy** focuses on the steps parents and caregivers can take to keep infants and children well, through nutrition, physical activity and caring for the body;
- **Family Connections** presents information for parents and caregivers on bonding, forming secure attachments with children, and connecting with extended family and community;
- **Parents as First Teachers** places emphasis on early childhood development and learning through experience and play; and
- **Fatherhood is Forever** discusses the important parenting role of fathers, including learning about being a positive role model for children and some of the different approaches they can take to deal with different situations.



PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT BRAINSTORMING SESSION
FOLLOWING DR. JESSICA BALLS PRESENTATION

What are some specific ways we can engage and support parental involvement in our communities?

- Welcoming men - involving more fathers that want their children in their lives
- Involve single parents
- Daycare, drop in
- Fathers traditional teaching - snare, wood cutting, medicine harvest, prepare and cook wild food
- Game night - board games, educational games
- Sewing/ beading - moss bags, moccasins, tie blankets
- Men’s cooking classes
- Men prenatal night - how to support women during prenatal, during delivery and post natal
- Involve parents when designing and developing programs
- Build relationships and trust
- Retreat for fathers
- Support them with kitchen items - recipe books, food, equipment
- Programming for parents and kids
- Transportation
- Tea/ Bannock - mother and father at daycare
- Food and door prizes
- Weekend programming
- Support programs (infants, toddlers)
- Childcare during parent programs

- Support aimed at men and dads
- Entertainment or festivals - socializing fun moments
- Transportation to grocery store and appointments
- Communal laundry
- Clothing exchange
- Donations, charities, winter clothing drives
- Cooking classes with ingredients provided
- Home hub model
- Ask families what programs they’d like to have
- Community kitchens - meal planning and recipe learning
- Single father targeted programs
- Cultural show and tell community nights
- Pre and post natal programs - mommy and me
- After school activities for school aged kids
- Nutrition program with supplies
- Friend bingo - bring neighbor or friend
- Baby massage classes
- Baby food making classes
- Cedar foot baths
- Young parents support
- Welcome basket when someone has baby that has items, resources, gift cards
- Play group
- Native language
- Sports activities

- Parent circles
- Nutrition bingo
- Walking groups
- Snowshoeing, ice fishing, hunting
- Sewing or craft night
- Cooking classes
- Land-based activities - fish netting, camping, collecting traditional medicine
- Workshops
- Food vouchers, gift certificates
- Community wood cutting
- Babysitting programs
- Fundraising programs
- Incentives and game tickets to get involved
- Hampers
- Elders/ Aunts/ Uncles coming in
- Positive engagement
- Parent meetings
- Kindergarten night
- Facebook posts
- Self-care night
- Camping trips
- Field trips
- Crafts, games, baking that parents can do with children
- Community dinners
- Medicinal teachings
- Group land-based activities
- Encourage parents to bring their ids to events - advertise as family friendly
- Home visits - can give pamphlet on resources

- Pop-up playrooms - parents can bring toys and books to like health centre - have activities and toys for children at kid friendly events
- Fathers and kids go out to get firewood
- Start with what parents are doing right
- First aid and CPR classes
- Internet communication
- Registration blitz
- Elder led mentor programs like Big Brother
- Intergenerational activities
- Baby friendly events
- Group activities to share knowledge
- Get away/ trip for families
- Excursions
- Respite



DEVELOPING LANGUAGE IN THE EARLY YEARS FROM AN INDIGENOUS LENS – SHARLA MSKOKII PELTIER, PhD

Chippewas of Rama/ Mnjikaning First Nation
Associate Professor, Faculty of Education, Lakehead University, Orillia Campus

Euro centric education problematizes the Indigenous Child

- Focus is turned away from accountability for the colonial legacy to an emphasis on Fixing the Indian Problem
- Improving academic performance
- Remedial language, reading programs with phonics training, special education and Jordan’s Principle....

Features of mainstream Speech-Language Services that are Mis-Matched in an Indigenous Context

- Deficit model (Clinical, medical model and Special Education perspective)
- Formal speech and language tests are invalid and evaluation requires clinical interpretation by a knowledgeable Speech Language Pathologist
- Lack of relationships between parents and schools/services
- Home programming and homework tends to be prescriptive and therapizes the family/parents

The Problem:

Schooling is at odds with Indigenous perspectives and traditions of teaching/ learning. The western Special Education process problematizes Indigenous children as learners.

First Nations “Language Communication Profile”

- Reflection of cultural differences
 - conceptual knowledge
 - vocabulary
 - interpersonal communication styles
- Reflection of environmental factors
 - exposure
 - dual language learning
 - transition
 - setting
- Reflection of World-View

First Nation English Dialect (FNED)

- The variety of English spoken by an Indigenous person
- Different pronunciation/ accent, vocabulary, sentence structure
- Dialects have a complete grammatical rule system governing pronunciation, word formation, and the combining of words into sentences
- Seen in mainstream (dominant culture) schools as “inferior”, “ungrammatical” when biased assessment tools and norms based on Standard English are used as the yard stick
- FNED is an important area of socialization/ power/ link to community and self-identity

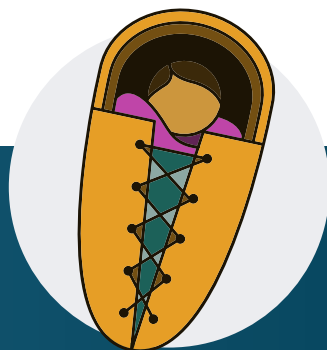
Silence and Listening

- Vary with socialization practices -Learned at home and in the community prior to school enrollment
- Indigenous people value this skill and expect young people to listen more than they talk
- Teachers can direct students to “send your words to the listener’s ears”

Professionals who understand what a First Nations English dialect is are able to differentiate children with a language “difference” from those who have a “disorder”



Children Are Sacred Gifts



Young Children Have Extensive Funds of Knowledge



Children are Teachers

Speech Language Pathologists in First Nations Contexts

- Have a cultural and linguistic sensitive lens for professionals, educators to view child’s presenting profile of communicative behaviours
- Utilize parent/ cultural informant interview to identify contextual evidence supporting First Nation’s dialect – survey of adults’ English/ dialect, Indigenous language
- Observe/ identify child’s interests and familiar activities and use in assessment, and programming sessions
- Implement dynamic assessment (test-teach-retest)

VALUING INDIGENOUS ORAL STORY FOR LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT AND EARLY LAND LITERACY – SHARLA MSKOKII PELTIER, PhD

Chippewas of Rama/ Mnjikaning First Nation
Associate Professor, Faculty of Education, Lakehead University, Orillia Campus

NOTE TO READER: The below content includes slides from Dr. Peltier’s plenary session as well as brainstorming notes from the subsequent workshop where conference participants listed concepts/ understandings that the young Indigenous child learns through our cultural traditions of teaching and learning.

Waters

As

Teacher

Land

As

Teacher

Land Literacy Knowledge

“Although my boys were young, they were acquiring land literacy knowledge – without rain, the soil, grasses, plants, trees, and ponds dry out and fire comes through”.

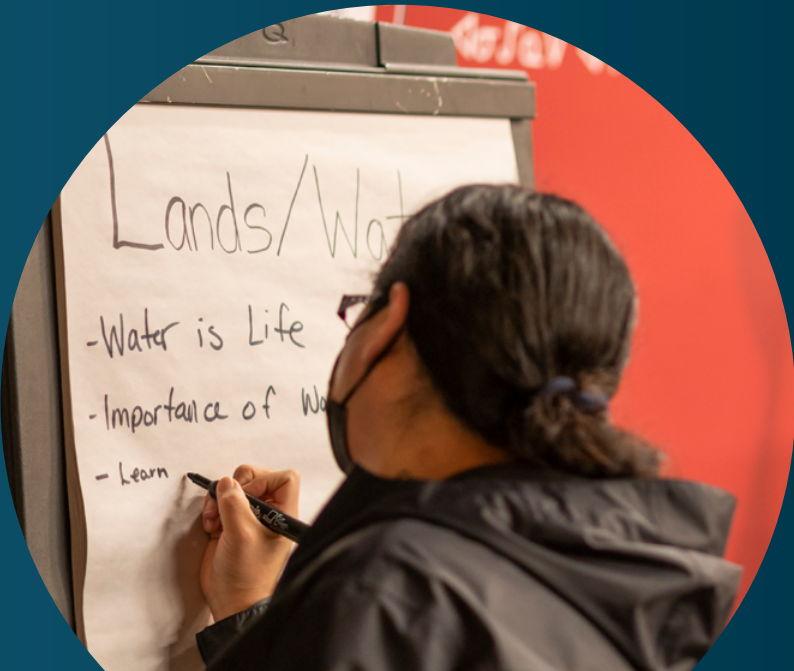
Stories and Knowledge Transmission

- Relevance of Story and The Oral Tradition
- Aboriginal children’s stories have a different story recipe than Western literary models
- Story-telling supports listening, reflection, and re-telling, sharing thoughts, feelings after reflection on the story and application to current context/life stage

LAND
How does the young Indigenous child gain Land Literacy?

Brainstormed list of concepts/ understandings that the young Indigenous child learns through our cultural traditions of teaching and learning:

- Values of everything on the land
- Water is life
- Importance of women carriers
- Learn at a early age when to not go to the water during ice breakup or winter months
- Knowing their surrounding (child’s perspective)
- Medicines of the land (teachings)
- Survival Skills
- Directions (sunrise)
- Landmarks and qualities i.e., one side of tree is drier than the other, individual sun directions (landmark and indicators for direction)
- Respect land and water
- Take only what is needed
- Reading river channels
- Animal tracking (droppings and tracks)
- The weather
- Reading the forests/ regeneration after fires
- Turtle Island
- Water safety
- Reading water depths with tides
- Learning which side of trees to cut



Relational Medicine Circle



EAST

- Visioning and intuitive, spiritual
- The door of our Tipi/ Lodge faces east
- That place where the sun comes up is in the East

Brainstormed list of concepts/ understandings that the young Indigenous child learns through our cultural traditions of teaching and learning:

- Doorway to life
- Walking out ceremony (First time walking/ towards the east)
- Openings of the Tipi facing east
- Baby feasts/ blessings of the baby
- Doorway to enter in pow wow and exit pow wow
- Beginning a new day, making good, new changes in life.
- East wind warns of harsh weather
- Wind direction, geese fly in the spring

SOUTH

- Experiencing and doing, physical
- Hearing talk about where we are going on trips, seeing maps used and visiting “Pinelli’s,” down south at Niagara, going to the pow wow down south at Buffalo/ New York
- Physical skills such as holding an infant and being attentive to a younger child by sharing drinks and snacks, playing with them, and keeping them safe
- Participating in the harvest by helping untangle the fish net, picking berries, wrapping moose meat for the freezer

Brainstormed list of concepts/ understandings that the young Indigenous child learns through our cultural traditions of teaching and learning:

- Beading
- Sling Shot
- Warmth
- Doing, making demonstrations, physicality of things.
- Sewing
- Traveling – canoeing
- Skin rabbits (how to)
- Brings spring geese
- Migration
- Wind
- All steps to partridge hunting, cleaning, and putting away or cooking of the partridge
- Learn about medicine from the land.

WEST

- Feeling, relating, emotional
- That place where the sun sets is in the west
- Emotional such as using voice to release physical pain by yelling or screaming when hurt
- Expressing feelings with words, "I love ____." "I like ____." "I don't like ____."

Brainstormed list of concepts/ understandings that the young Indigenous child learns through our cultural traditions of teaching and learning:

- Feeling, relating, expression of emotion
- Using word to say how you are feeling
- Sunset
- Feeling with nature
- Emotions/ Anger
- Sharing Circles
- Learn role in the family (responsibility)
- Open door, welcoming
- Know night is coming near
- Talking stick

NORTH

- Knowing, thinking
- Hearing talk about where we are going on trips, seeing maps used and going north to "Bill and Emily's farm" by Timmins, driving way up north to Chisassibi/ James Bay
- Respectful consciousness to anticipate others' needs and respond as a helper – extending an arm to offer an Elder support when walking. Fetching/ carrying things for an Elder
- Engaging in an activity quietly and listening when adults are together and when in ceremony

Brainstormed list of concepts/ understandings that the young Indigenous child learns through our cultural traditions of teaching and learning:

- Knowing and thinking
- Cold and winter
- Bundle up
- Wondering
- Helping Elders
- Brings high tides
- Guidance: following the lead of an adult without being told what to do.
- North winds
- Kiiwetin (north)
- Medicine wheel
- Reading the room
- Climate change
- Polar Bears

SKY WORLD

- What is above
- Northern lights
- Stars
- Clouds
- Thunder
- Lightning

Brainstormed list of concepts/ understandings that the young Indigenous child learns through our cultural traditions of teaching and learning:

- Above the earth moon, clouds, sun, stars, northern lights creative spirit beings
- Infinity, eternity, immortality, and transcendence
- Northern Lights
- Stars navigation (gives direction)
- When to sleep, when to wake children
- Constellations
- The future
- Star Child/ Children
- Milky Way
- Connecting to the universe
- Spirit world
- Universal seasons by the sky
- Dreams/ visions
- Stories of grandmother moon and grandfather sun

UNDERNEATH GAANINII GAANIIJIG

- Family/ kin and community members who have gone on to the Spirit World
- Awareness that the ancestors walked here before us
- Stories and artifacts from veterans, Chiefs/ community leaders

- Stories connecting the child to places where ancestors lived
- Annual memorial ceremonies for family members who have passed on to the Spirit World

Brainstormed list of concepts/ understandings that the young Indigenous child learns through our cultural traditions of teaching and learning:

- Passing of someone
- Keeping traditions alive
- Medicine
- Roots = Family Tree
- Ancestors, Artifacts, History, Memorial Celebrations
- Respecting the foundation built for us
- Our children are taught that when people pass on, they are physically not here anymore just spiritually
- Take only what is needed
- Respect the land/ water
- Sacred grounds
- Grandfathers
- Star Child/ Children
- Shelter
- Sweat Lodge
- Cooling system
- Sunrises to east
- Migration
- Sunsets west
- North wind
- Soil



NATURAL HELPERS

for the children
LEARNING CIRCLE



Presented by: Warren Kapashesit & Brittany Biedermann



contents

- Intro
- Development
- Today
- Next steps
- Closing



**Child and Youth
Milopemahtesewin
Services**



**Brittany
Biedermann**

Prevention Coordinator
MA, Ojibwe, Mother

**Warren
Kapashegit**

CYMS Manager
BSW, Cree, Father



What is Natural Helpers?



An 8-part Learning Circle collaboratively designed by NAN, IEMHP @ Sick Kids Toronto & CYMS to build awareness and understanding about prenatal, infant and early mental health using a blend of Indigenous Knowledge and Western Science

How was it developed?

- Started out as a conversation seeking training info
- Funded by NAN to be "Pilot" location
- Advisory committee established
- Bi-weekly planning meetings throughout pandemic
- Used creative methods to design Learning Circle
- Local Indigenous Elders, experts, community leaders, service providers, parents, caregivers, children and landscape represented in final product



NATURAL HELPERS

for the children

LEARNING CIRCLE



Community Launch

- Advertised using Social Media as "hybrid-delivery" program
- 28 signed up
- Accepted 20 spots
 - current practitioners
 - family member / community member
 - students
 - Infant Wellness Workers
- 16 spots confirmed



Community Celebration





Modules

1. Intro: Natural Helpers for the Children Learning Circle
2. Making Connections
3. Our Path as Indigenous People
4. Resilience in Indigenous Communities
5. Gifts from the Creator
6. What All Children Need To Thrive
7. Local Services that Support Young Children and their Families
8. Reflection and the Path Forward

Today



“YOU DON'T LEARN PARENTING SKILLS IN AN INSTITUTION.”

Dr. Emily Faries



Next steps

Evaluate
Share
Train



Questions?

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www.CYMS.ca

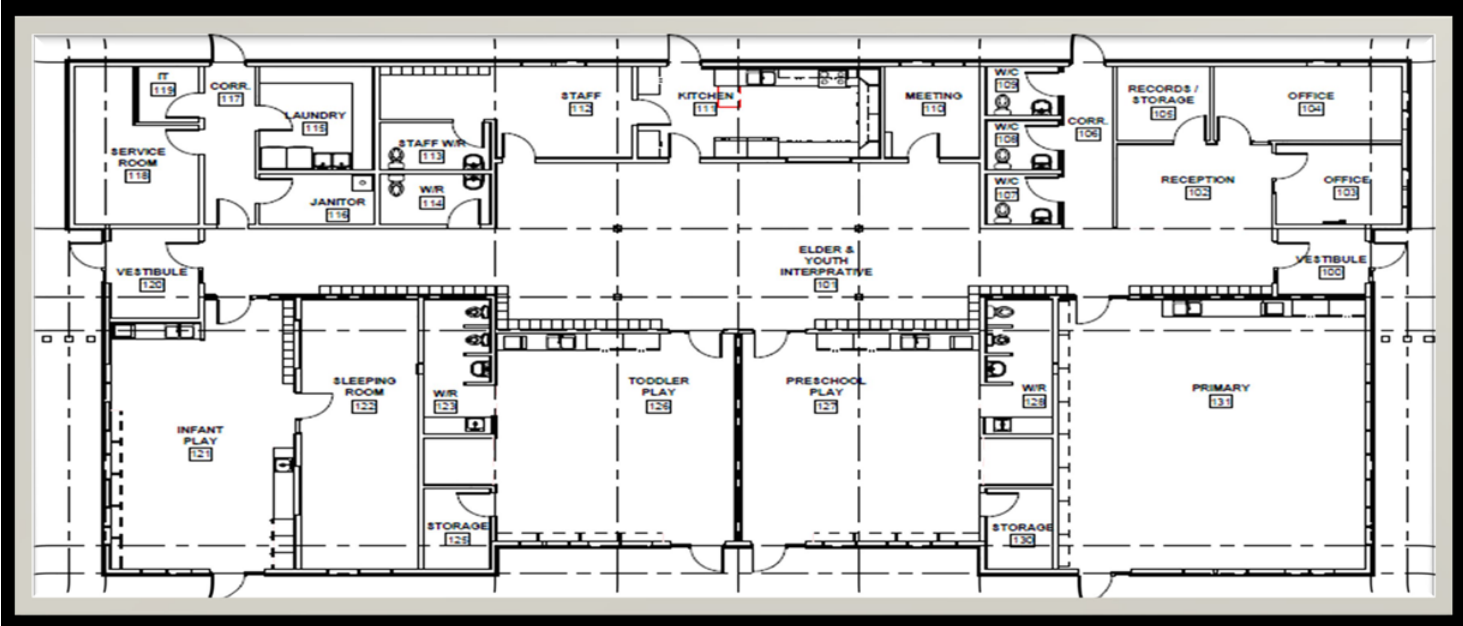
Meegwetich

GINOOGAMING FIRST NATION ABORIGINAL HEAD START

Ginoogaming First Nation Aboriginal Head Start



March 2000 - AHSOR
funding
January 2001 – First
Nations & Inuit Child
Care Initiative Funding
Ministry of Education –
Provincial Wage
Enhancement



In 2017 we were presented
with an opportunity to
complete a
renovation/addition to our
facility

Chief and Council decided
they wanted it located at a
new unserviced location.
This request was supported
but funding was capped at
the initial presented amount

Worked quickly with the
architects and Ministry of
Education for before we
could break ground

Ground broke within a
month

Building delays due to
shortfall of funding













INTERVIEW WITH GINOOGAMING ABORIGINAL HEAD START CENTRE

NOTE TO READER: THIS INTERVIEW WAS DONE WITH CENTRE COORDINATOR SHELLEY FRANCESCHINI TO DISCUSS THE JOURNEY TO BUILD THEIR NEW CENTRE AND CONSIDERATIONS FOR OTHER COMMUNITIES WHO ARE CONSIDERING NEW INFRASTRUCTURE. A VIDEO VERSION WILL BE AVAILABLE SOON.

What were your first steps in developing your new childcare space? For those just starting out with the beginning steps, what advice would you give?

- Staff discussions regarding their vision, how the current space worked for us and how we could improve it.
- Gathering input from Chief and Council, Elders, families and the community in their vision.
- Reaching out to the Ministry of Education for licensed facilities.
- Discussions around space, safety, needs and desires.
- Ensuring the architect we worked with had knowledge of the requirements when designing an early years space set out in the Early Years and Child Care Act.

What are some of the barriers imposed by provincial licensing? What are some of the considerations of your design and build that were impacted by these regulations?

- The Ministry dictates each playroom size, windows and lighting, diapering and washrooms, water sources etc...
- Our licence capacity is 71 which meant our original plan needed one more bathroom to meet the licensing requirements.
- A window needed to be added from the infant play room to the sleep room.

Who was a part of the discussion when planning the design? Were educators a part of the discussion? Who would you recommend be part of these discussions?

- Educators, Chief and Council, Ministry of Education, Architects, Parents, Community Members, Funders, Fire Marshal, Elders, Maintenance

We understand your centre build was moved to undeveloped land. What were some of the considerations that had to be made to prepare the land for the build? Are there any considerations others should make when choosing the location for their centre?

- Land preparation, bringing in all infrastructure – sewer, water, hydro and gas.
- Location of fire hydrant, shelter location for evacuation, extensive costs associated with this.

What design elements of your centre do you love?

- Natural light, height of ceilings, playroom space, all on one level, grand entrances with stroller storage areas, calm colours and decor

What are some elements of your centre you wish you would have done differently?

- Location and design of cubbies, storage spaces for larger items to keep inventory when not in use (shelving, dramatic play, furniture, toys and equipment)
- Simplified HVAC system
- Location of playground
- More attention to the little details, location of electrical outlets (can you plug equipment in where you might like: light table in middle of the room as opposed to along the wall), installation of paper towel dispensers, space for garbage cans
- Considered if the playroom can effectively be monitored while at the diaper change area
- Is there enough counter space in the rooms for the teachers to prepare activities

What are some considerations that should be made around kitchen appliances?

- Will they be gas or electric, commercial or residential and what type of ventilation is required?
- Are the outlets able to accommodate commercial appliances?

We understand you have had challenges with your new heating and cooling system. Do you have any advice or considerations?

- Keep it as simple as possible, who will service the unit, who will repair the unit and where are the contractors located, how much will maintaining the system cost?
- Have your maintenance staff involved in the training and operations of the unit.

- Ensure the mechanical engineer runs each unit despite of the season, for example air conditioning and heating, everything may be installed correctly but does it work properly?

How did you go about finding the appropriate funding and or grants to support the development of infrastructure?

What are some tips you would give those looking for funding/ grants?

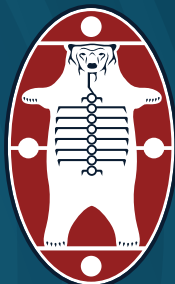
- By having a design brief ready for capital dollars when they became available, reaching out to ISC, local corporations, Ministry of Education, watching out for any call outs for major capital

How do you maintain costs of maintenance to the building throughout the year?

- Operating costs will be calculated upon year end
- Year one had lots of repair costs to maintain the legislated temperature throughout the building and we are still resolving this issue. We must adjust our annual budget to cover any increases in this area.
- Our maintenance department will access the need/ repair and call in contractors if needed.

Are there any funding/ grants or opportunities that help support the educators and staff within your centre that you feel other centres should seek out?

- Dress for Success Initiative for new hires in Child Care,
- Leadership grants in ECE,
- College of Early Childhood Educations,
- First Nation Early Learning Collaboration Website



Nishnawbe
Aski Nation

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