

Culturally Responsive Child Care

Environmental Scan Report



PolicyWise for Children & Families

Acknowledgements

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Glossary

Term	Definition
Educator	In Alberta, the term early childhood educator (educator) refers to an individual certified to work in a licensed child care program such as: day care centres, preschool programs, family day home and school-aged care. This report outlines research from various jurisdictions and uses the term educator to refer to professionals that work with children in the above settings, as well as those who may work in recreational programs, family resource centres, and schools.
Francophone Population	The Francophone population as determined by Statistics Canada is generally considered those whose mother tongue or first official language spoken at home is French. However, there is no established definition of Francophone and varying criteria can result in either more inclusive or more restrictive definitions of French-speaking persons (Statistics Canada, 2011).
Indigenous Population	The Indigenous population refers to the first peoples of the land and their descendants. This includes First Nations people, Métis people, and Inuit people who have lived on and cared for these lands for generations.
Racialized Population	The term and definition of the ‘racialized population’ in Canada is derived from the ‘visible minority’ group outlined in the Government’s Employment Equity Act (SC 1995, c 44). This group is comprised of "persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour" (Statistics Canada, 2022a). The racialized population is heterogeneous and includes the following groups: South Asian, Chinese, Black, Filipino, Latin American, Arab, Southeast Asian, West Asian, Korean, and Japanese. Additionally, within this group there is a subset of individuals who are immigrants and refugees.
Rights Holder	In the context of this project, PolicyWise for Children & Families uses the term rights holder to describe communities and individuals that we have a moral and ethical obligation to engage. We acknowledge that Indigenous peoples are rights and title holders. The term is not being used in reference to the formal ‘duty to consult’ Indigenous peoples.

Executive Summary

Introduction

The Alberta Ministry of Children’s Services (Children’s Services) is working to strengthen culturally responsive approaches to child care in Alberta. The primary focus for this project is on workforce development. With early childhood workforce funding under the Canada-Alberta Early Learning and Child Care Agreement 2021 to 2025, Children’s Services is seeking to enhance cultural resources, including training and professional development, to support the delivery of culturally responsive child care.

Culturally responsive child care strongly contributes to the foundational cognitive and social development of children including the development of positive ideas about tolerance and respect for diversity. Culturally responsive child care is also crucial in addressing ongoing inequities and contributing to the creation of fair and equitable society. While this is true for all three communities targeted in this project, special attention must be paid to Indigenous peoples. The Truth and Reconciliation highlights the need for the provision of culturally responsive early learning and child care that supports the revitalization of culture and language through respectful collaborative partnerships with Indigenous communities.

Project Objectives and Scope

PolicyWise for Children & Families is working alongside Children’s Services to **develop a culturally responsive workforce strategy**. The strategy will include a **principles-based framework with resources to support the child care workforce to strengthen and mobilize capacity for culturally responsive child care**. The workforce strategy will focus on three distinct cultural groups: **Indigenous** children, **racialized** children, and **Francophone** children. We recognize that within each group there is a wide diversity of background, cultures, and experiences.

The scope of this project is the child care workforce, which primarily includes early childhood educators who are professionals that work with children in child care programs in Alberta. However, it is important to acknowledge that there are additional roles and responsibilities for individuals involved in other aspects of child care (e.g., individuals operating child care facilities or agencies, policy makers, post-secondary education institutes). To implement the framework on culturally responsive child care, support is needed at a policy and institutional level.

This report presents the findings of an environmental scan which included a literature review and interviews with thought leaders and practitioners in the early learning and child care field. The **objectives** of the environmental scan were to:

- Describe culturally responsive child care, including key elements and outcomes;
- Identify preliminary guiding principles for culturally responsive child care; and
- Outline strategies and implementation considerations for supporting a culturally responsive child care workforce in Alberta, with attention to Indigenous, racialized, and Francophone groups.

What is Culturally Responsive Child Care?

Defining & Understanding Culturally Responsive Child Care

Culturally responsive child care is a strength-based approach that involves a conscious and continuous process of *responding* respectfully and effectively to the cultural needs of children and families through collaborative partnership in a way that recognizes and affirms their worth and cultural heritage. In the child care setting, cultural responsiveness is about adapting practices and spaces to support all children to fully participate while maintaining their cultural identity.

Culturally responsive child care recognizes that:

- Culture is a fundamental component of a child’s identity, development, health, and well-being;
- Children, families, and communities are central to decision-making and practice; and
- Culture is understood as more than ethnicity, and includes values, beliefs, child rearing practice, historical knowledge, and experiences in the world.

The Role of the Workforce in Culturally Responsive Child Care

The role of educators as ‘delivery agents’ in facilitating culturally responsive practices and fostering positive identities cannot be overemphasized. The cultural understanding of educators has significant impacts for children and their families. For example, a limited understanding of culture has the power to disadvantage some while privileging others while culturally competent educators can significantly contribute to the well-being of children. A child care workforce that is culturally responsive enables children and families to feel comfortable and empowered to embody, express and share their home culture in child care programs.

Outcomes of Culturally Responsive Child Care

Existing research has indicated that the impacts of culturally responsive child care extend beyond the individual child (see Figure 2 on page 16). All children in early childhood education and care environments benefit, as do families, educators, and the community.

Culturally Responsive Child Care in Alberta

In Alberta there are several key resources and programs to be aware of relevant to culturally responsive child care and the development of early learning.

1. **Flight: Alberta Early Learning and Care Framework:** Flight is Alberta’s curriculum framework intended to guide the work of educators in centre-based child care and family day home settings. The framework emphasizes the need for inclusivity and equity by ensuring that child care spaces in Alberta are responsive to racialized, linguistic, and cultural identities of children.
2. **Intercultural Child & Family Centre:** This Edmonton-based centre has been involved as a pilot for the implementation of Flight since it was created. The centre focuses on collaboration between families and educators to build a strong sense of community. The environment and curriculum reflect children’s and educators’ home, community, and life experiences.
3. **Creating Cultural Connections:** This pilot project from the Alberta Resource Centre for Quality Enhancement aims to support programs in Southern Alberta to build capacity to address culturally diverse needs of families. Cultural mentors will support programs as they work to enrich and honour cultural perspectives in educator practice and enhance relationship building with children and families.
4. **RAISED Between Cultures:** Through the Multicultural Early Childhood Assessment Learning project, the University of Alberta created this knowledge and reflection guidebook for intercultural practice in the early years. The aim of the resource is to facilitate a deeper knowledge of the cultural, pre- and post-migration experiences of immigrant and refugee families.

Preliminary Guiding Principles

Guiding principles are foundational values that set the standard for planning, decision-making, and action. They endure in response to changes in strategies, leadership, and operations. These are preliminary principles that will act as a starting place for engagement with an advisory group to further refine and contextualize them for development of an Alberta-based framework.

Cross-sector Collaboration

Principles and strategies of cultural responsiveness are integrated across levels and areas of the child care sector, including the policies, pedagogy and curriculum, program philosophies, workforce hiring, training, and evaluation, service delivery support, and physical environments and spaces. Cross-sector

collaboration aims to combine top-down and bottom-up approaches while ensuring the various roles and responsibilities beyond educators are addressed.

Diversity and Equity

Embracing diversity supports the incorporation of children’s culture, home values, and beliefs into the environment and instruction. Integrating different ways of doing and being into the provision of child care is crucial. Equity is both a value and important goal for child care. It recognizes that individuals and groups have different experiences and circumstances which may require unique considerations. A child care sector that is equitable looks to minimize barriers and provide support when needed to fully participate in society.

Family-Centred Relationships

Children and families are knowledge holders; they have a range of experiences, traditions, values, and beliefs that provide valuable unique and individualized insights on children’s development. Building connections with children and families and valuing their lived experience will support the child care provider to be responsive in a way that authentically represents children. This principle acknowledges the opportunity to learn from and collaborate with parents, caregivers, and children.

Cultural Safety

Fostering cultural safety in all environments is crucial to culturally responsive care as it supports trust and healing. This includes both physical spaces and the relationships between peers, families, educators, and other stakeholders in the sector. Child care environments should reflect diversity and be a safe place and experience for children and families. Additionally, the curriculum should also foster a space of trust and healing for all cultures.

Ongoing Learning

The workforce builds cultural awareness and competence by engaging in ongoing learning. Culturally responsive child care is not achieved through taking a few training courses. Rather it is a lifelong commitment, especially as children and families will change each year. Culturally responsive workforce development and training encourages self-reflection and enables child care professionals to form positive views about children’s abilities, race, cultural background, and practices.

Implementation Strategies

Leading practices for all three communities indicate that access to early learning in the relevant language and culture of the child is best. For example, in an ideal scenario an Indigenous child would be able to attend an Indigenous created and led early learning environment. However, this is not always possible, especially in Alberta where staff that represent these communities may be unavailable

particularly in certain locations across the province. As such, we present six broad categories of strategies that can be implemented more immediately given the current landscape in Alberta.

1. Policies that support culturally responsive child care
2. Self-awareness and reflective practices for educators
3. Collaborative partnerships with children and families
4. Standardized training and professional development for all educators
5. Creating culturally responsive and engaging environments (physically and in child care practices)
6. Curriculum that supports culturally responsive child care

Implementation Considerations

We identified five main themes of implementation considerations and key aspects (potential barriers or enablers to be aware of) for each. Note that the majority of these findings were informed by our discussions with thought leaders who have experience with providing child care, teaching early education, researching key issues, and involvement in decision-making.

- **Need for supportive policies and regulations**
 - Minimum requirements for educators to undergo trainings in culturally responsive child care
 - Systemic barriers to receiving post-secondary education
- **Overcoming hesitations and challenges with engaging in intercultural dialogue**
 - Difficultly engaging in intercultural dialogue
 - Families' reluctance to share their cultures
 - Workforce's level of comfort to express their own culture
- **Addressing rigid mainstream views of child care practices**
 - Limited conceptualization of culture in child care environments
 - Tensions between licensing expectations/standards and culturally responsive practices
- **Ensuring direct support for the workforce**
 - Expansion of knowledge and awareness of Indigenous history and culture
 - Mentorship, coaching, and networking opportunities
 - Centralized place for resources
 - Providing safe spaces for reflection and open dialogue
- **Navigating resource constraints**
 - Increase the ability for educators to participate in training

Next Steps

The intent of this document is to serve as a starting point to initiate conversation. The guiding principles, strategies, and implementation considerations are not finalized, and are open to further refinement. We will build on and contextualize the findings in the next phase of the project through engagement with strategic advisors from each cultural stream. In particular, we will look to add specific knowledge and context around the Alberta early learning and child care landscape as well as the cultural streams.

We will use the information from this report as an evidence base to begin developing a workforce framework to support the implementation of culturally responsive child care in Alberta. The development and design of the strategy will be co-created with strategic advisors and incorporate their expertise, knowledge, and perspectives. The framework will be principles-based and include resources to support the child care workforce to strengthen and mobilize capacity for culturally responsive child care.

Introduction

The Alberta Ministry of Children’s Services (Children’s Services) is working to strengthen culturally responsive approaches to child care in Alberta. The primary focus for this project is on workforce development. With early childhood workforce funding under the Alberta-Canada Early Learning and Child Care Agreement 2021 to 2025, Children’s Services is seeking to enhance cultural resources, including training and professional development, to support the delivery of culturally responsive child care. Enhancing understanding of the important role of culture, language, and heritage for early childhood educators (educators) will improve access to high-quality child care for the three cultural groups of focus in this project: Indigenous peoples, racialized Canadians, and the Francophone population. The culturally responsive child care project is one part of the Government of Alberta’s larger effort to expand access to and increase equity in early learning and child care¹ (early learning).

Culturally responsive child care strongly contributes to the foundational cognitive and social development of children including the development of positive ideas about acceptance and respect for diversity (Government of Canada, 2017; Massing & Matheson, 2021). As noted in the *Alberta Early Learning and Child Care Act, SA 2007, c E-0.1*, “the child’s familial and Indigenous or other social, linguistic, and spiritual heritage are central to the child’s safety, well-being, and development” and therefore should be prioritized in child care program delivery. If the cultural basis of a program is not intentionally designed and implemented it is very likely the culture that will be transmitted is that of mainstream society, even if it is unintentional (McLeod, 2010).

Culturally responsive child care is also crucial in addressing ongoing inequities and contributing to the creation of a fair and equitable society (Massing & Matheson, 2021). While this is true for all three communities targeted in this project, special attention must be paid to Indigenous peoples. Federal and Provincial governments have a moral and ethical obligation to provide culturally responsive care as recognized in several national and international legislations (Greenwood et al., 2020). Culturally responsive child care supports the revitalization of Indigenous culture and language while also promoting respectful collaborative partnerships with Indigenous communities. Both are crucial steps to address the legacy of colonization and facilitate reconciliation and cultural healing (Gerlach et al., 2021; Grace et al., 2019; O’Brien & Trudgett, 2020). Culturally responsive child care is critical for connecting Indigenous children with Indigenous land, culture, language, and histories.

Project Objectives and Scope

¹ The terms ‘early learning’ and ‘child care’ are used interchangeably throughout this document, they both are used to inclusively capture early learning and child care.

We (PolicyWise for Children & Families) were contracted by Children’s Services to develop a culturally responsive workforce strategy and support its implementation across Alberta’s diverse early childhood education and care services and programs. The project objectives are to:

- Provide the workforce with resources and professional development to support the implementation of culturally responsive child care;
- Strengthen capacity in Alberta to provide culturally responsive child care services; and
- Increase cultural competence among child care providers.

The workforce strategy will focus on three distinct cultural groups, as outlined in the funding agreement with the Government of Canada: Indigenous children, racialized children, and Francophone children. We recognize that within each group there is a wide diversity of background, cultures, and experiences. While we aim to be nuanced to the uniqueness within each group, this project does not provide extensive breakdowns within each community and instead emphasizes the importance of culturally responsive child care attending to such uniqueness (for example, by avoiding “pan-Indigenous” thinking that assumes all Indigenous cultures are the same).

As shown in Figure 1, we are conducting the work in four successive phases, each building upon the findings from the previous phase. We will co-develop the culturally responsive workforce strategy in

consultation with key stakeholders, thought leaders, and practitioners in the field of early learning. It will ultimately include:

- A principles-based framework for culturally responsive child care;
- Resources to support the implementation of the framework, such as workforce training, professional development, and communities of practice; and
- Implementation supports and evaluation tools.

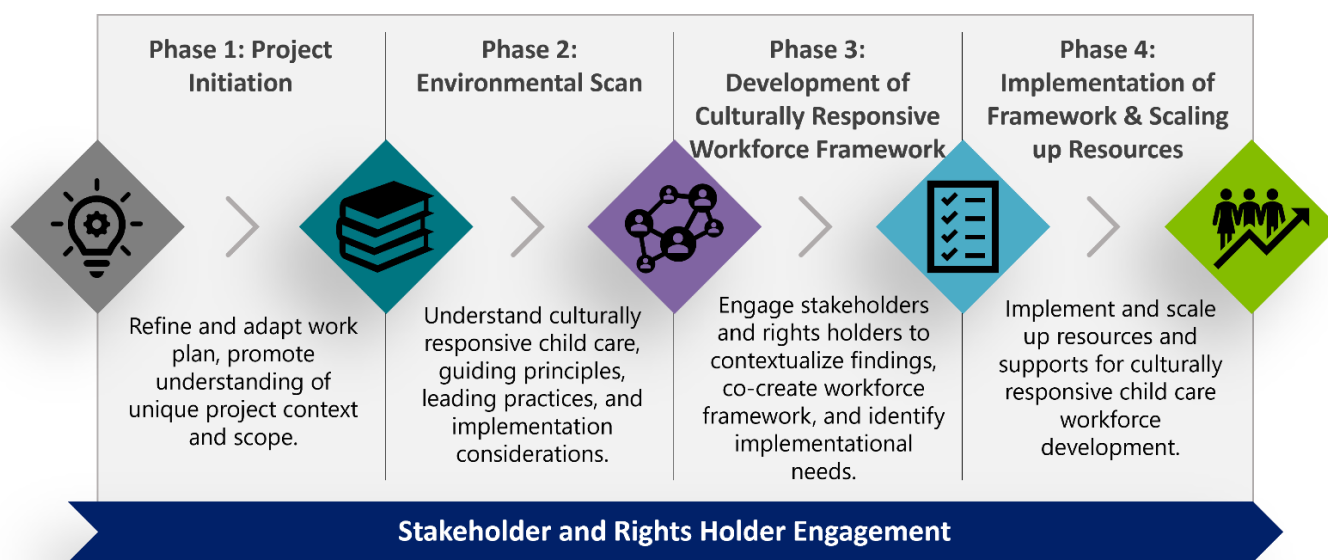


Figure 1: Overview of project phases

The scope of this project is the child care workforce, which primarily includes early childhood educators. However, it is important to acknowledge that there are additional roles and responsibilities for individuals involved in other aspects of child care (e.g., individuals managing child care programs, policy makers, post-secondary education institutions). To implement the framework on culturally responsive child care, support is needed at a policy and institutional level (Richards et al., 2007). This includes considerations related to child care policies, addressing access to care, curriculum development, and child care services. As such the products developed from this work have a wide audience. While the workforce strategy is targeted to child care providers and organizations, supporting material will also be produced for policy- and decision-makers.

Environmental Scan Objectives and Approach

In this report, we present the findings of the environmental scan conducted in Phase 1. The **objectives** of the environmental scan were to:

- Describe culturally responsive child care, including key elements and outcomes;
- Identify preliminary guiding principles for culturally responsive child care; and
- Outline strategies and implementation considerations for supporting a culturally responsive child care workforce in Alberta, with attention to Indigenous, racialized, and Francophone groups.

To respond to these objectives, we synthesized evidence from a rapid literature review and interviews with thought leaders in the early childhood education sector across Canada (see Appendix A for methodology). The scope of the environmental scan included approaches to culturally responsive child care that were relevant to educators, child care environments, and policy makers involved in the early childhood education and care field. However, due to the crucial role of educators in delivering high quality care and creating safe environments (Massing & Matheson, 2021), and the focus of this project on workforce development, we centre the environmental scan on aspects directly relevant to educators.

We begin the report by defining culturally responsive child care in the context of this project. Next, we describe the three cultural streams and highlight the unique experiences, barriers, and considerations relevant to early learning. Then, we present the findings of the environmental scan, including high level outcomes and preliminary guiding principles for culturally responsive child care. Finally, we highlight key implementation strategies for strengthening a culturally responsive child care workforce in Alberta, and implementation considerations that include workforce needs, challenges, strengths, and opportunities.

What is Culturally Responsive Child Care?

Defining Culturally Responsive Child Care

Culturally responsive child care is a strength-based approach that involves a conscious and continuous process of *responding* respectfully and effectively to the cultural needs of children and families through collaborative partnership in a way that recognizes and affirms their worth and cultural heritage (Child Welfare, n.d). Responsive approaches stem from understanding a child and their family's background. In the child care setting, cultural responsiveness is about adapting practices and spaces to support all children to fully participate while maintaining their cultural identity (Allen & Steed, 2016; Guo, 2014). A child care workforce that is culturally responsive enables children and families to feel comfortable and empowered to participate in and share their home culture (Guo, 2014).

Understanding Culturally Responsive Child Care

Culturally responsive child care recognizes culture and heritage as fundamental components to a child's identity, development, health, and well-being. Culture plays a significant role in the way children understand the world and constitutes a crucial aspect of their identity formation (California Department of Education, 2013). Fostering the foundational values of understanding and respect for diversity at an early age is a critical aspect of developing a sense of belonging (Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages, 2016) and crucial in enabling children to form respectful and positive relationships with others in adulthood (College of Early Childhood Educators, 2020; Majid et al., 2021).

For the Indigenous community, culturally responsive child care contributes to providing Indigenous children with the best possible start in life (Halselth & Greenwood, 2019). Quality Indigenous early learning is recognized as a critical component to enhancing Indigenous children's health and development, redressing colonial impacts on Indigenous peoples, cultures, and languages, and mitigating the intergenerational impacts of social and structural inequalities on families (Gerlach et al., 2021; Grace et al., 2019). There has also been a clear link identified between improving Indigenous health through holistic health promotion and early childhood development; therefore, considerations of Indigenous health should be situated within discussion on care and education of Indigenous children (Greenwood, 2005). Early learning anchored in local Indigenous culture, language, protocols, and practice can provide a strong pathway for the collective health and well-being of communities and nations (Gerlach et al., 2021).

It should be noted that child development is often limited to the skills valued in the mainstream culture. This narrow view can marginalize children whose way of engaging with the world does not conform to this "list of norms" (Callaghan et al., 2018). Newcomers to Canada can hold diverse views around what constitutes high quality child care and child development priorities (Mardhani-Bayne et al., 2021). Additionally, it is vital to acknowledge that institutions Indigenous children encounter with throughout development often reproduces colonial practices that are harmful to a child's identity (Ball, 2008; Chapman, 2012). Therefore, it is important in culturally responsive care that developmental norms are

critiqued and contextualized, and that child development dialogue incorporates other ways of thinking (Callaghan et al., 2018).

Culturally responsive child care ensures that children, families, and communities are central to decision-making and practice. It encourages ongoing willingness and openness of early child care professionals to learn from families and children to ensure continuity of home culture in children’s early learning and child care experiences (California Department of Education, 2013; Derman-Sparks, 2011). Thought leaders also identified that culturally responsive child care means children and families see themselves and their cultures in the environment and practices of child care. Additionally, children and families feel listened to and respected, and families are recognized as the experts on their children (Massing & Matheson, 2021). Interview analysis and literature clearly identified that deep and meaningful relationships with families are crucial to move beyond superficial incorporation of culturally responsive practices.

Guidance by children’s families and communities is fundamental for the development of quality Indigenous early child care and education programs (Greenwood, 2005). On a large-scale this means Indigenous people are leading the way, fostering partnerships and collaborations at multiple levels, across sectors, with all players involved in early child care and education. On a more local scale it means understanding the child in the context of family and community, and prioritizing direct involvement of families in the delivery of a continuum of care (Government of Canada, 2018a; Grace et al., 2019). For immigrant and newcomer children, knowing more about families and their larger communities is a way to support the transitions and their specific needs. It also helps them feel included and welcome to their new home (Mardhani-Bayne et al., 2021).

Culturally responsive child care ensures that culture is understood as more than ethnicity, and includes values, beliefs, child rearing practices, historical knowledge, and experiences in the world (College of Early Childhood Educators, 2020). The conceptualization of culturally responsive child care has evolved over time. We identified closely related concepts such as *culturally competent child care*, *culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy*, and *cultural safety and sensitivity* in the literature. A common objective of these approaches is a commitment to incorporate cultural knowledge, respect, and humility in child care policies and practices. Furthermore, they highlight that learning about unique cultures impacts many practice areas including play-based learning, behaviour guidance, child development, and roles of the learning community. Culturally responsive child care aims to move culture beyond ‘food, fashion, and fun’ (Heran & Matheson, 2016). Appendix B provides an expanded overview of these concepts.

The British Columbia Aboriginal Child Care Society’s description of quality child care highlights this broader view of culture within the Indigenous community. They note the following elements that pertain to culture: Indigenous world view, teaching respect and care for the environment, cooperative relationships, Elder involvement, adopting a holistic view of development, preparation for future responsibilities, incorporation of Indigenous languages, and inclusion (BC Aboriginal Child Care Society & Assembly of First Nations, 2005).

The Role of the Workforce in Culturally Responsive Child Care

The role of educators as ‘delivery agents’ in facilitating culturally responsive practices and fostering positive identities cannot be overemphasized (Massing & Matheson, 2021). Thought leaders highlighted that many educators enter the field with knowledge of centre-based practices but lacking knowledge of cultural practices. The cultural understanding of educators has significant impacts for children and their families. For example, a limited understanding of culture has the power to disadvantage some while privileging others (Kirkland, 2012; New York State Education Department, 2018). In contrast, practitioners and researchers we interviewed observed that culturally competent educators significantly contribute to the well-being of children. They foster an environment where children feel valued and understood, which promotes connection to home culture.

In addition to knowledge, perceptions that educators have about children and their culture can positively or negatively influence their professional practices and interactions with the children. This has a direct impact on what the child care environment looks and feels like (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013). Children’s perception and understanding of their cultural and racial identities is largely formed by the way significant individuals in their lives, including educators, treat them and speak to them. Young children may model their behaviours and construct their identities based on the behaviours of educators (Nganga, 2015). This highlights the importance of cultural responsive child care approaches such as anti-bias and anti-racism curricula and trainings that support educators in modelling behaviours that promote social justice and foster open attitudes and tolerance (Massing & Matheson, 2021).

Outcomes of Culturally Responsive Child Care

Existing research has indicated that the impacts of culturally responsive child care extend beyond the individual child. All children in early childhood education and care environments benefit, along with families, educators, and the community. Key outcomes from the literature and thought leader interviews are summarized in Figure 2.



Figure 2: Outcomes of culturally responsive child care

Culturally Responsive Child Care in Alberta

In recognizing the need for cultural responsiveness in early childhood learning and care, existing guidance like the **Flight: Alberta Early Learning and Care framework** (Flight) was created. Flight is Alberta's curriculum framework intended to guide the work of educators with children between the ages of 0-6 years and their families in centre-based child care and family day home settings. The framework emphasizes the need for inclusivity and equity by ensuring that child care spaces in Alberta are responsive to the racialized, linguistic, and cultural identities of children.

There are some notable organizations and child care facilities in Alberta that were highlighted during thought leader interviews for their work in culturally responsive child care. The **Intercultural Child & Family Centre** in Edmonton has been involved as a pilot centre for implementation since the Flight framework was created and was acknowledged by thought leaders as an exemplar for providing high quality culturally responsive care. The Intercultural Child & Family Centre focuses on collaboration between families and educators to build a strong sense of community. Additionally, the environment and curriculum reflect children's and educators' home, community, and life experiences (Intercultural Child & Family Centre, n.d.).

The Alberta Resource Centre for Quality Enhancement which provides support and resources specific to needs of the Alberta child care community is also piloting a new project. **Creating Cultural Connections** is a 3-year grant that aims to support programs in Southern Alberta to build capacity to address the culturally diverse needs of families. Cultural mentors will support up to 160 programs as they work to

enrich and honour cultural perspectives in educator practice and enhance relationship building with children and families (Alberta Resources Centre for Quality Enhancement, 2022).

Through the Multicultural Early Childhood Assessment Learning project, the University of Alberta created the **RAISED Between Cultures** resource. RAISED Between Cultures is a knowledge and reflection guidebook for intercultural practice in early years. The aim of the resource is to facilitate a deeper knowledge of the cultural, pre- and post-migration experiences of immigrant and refugee families with young children in Canada (Georgis et al., 2017). Specifically, this resource enables educators to understand the impact of the migration experiences of young refugee and immigrant children on their development. It also provides practical strategies to support young children to feel a sense of belonging, learn about other cultures, and acquire early skills for navigating multicultural spaces later in life (Georgis et al., 2017). In line with this, the RAISED resource highlights the need for early childhood educators to honour multiple ways of raising young children and foster intercultural dialogue with families.

We acknowledge that there are likely other programs and child care spaces providing culturally responsive care and engaging in innovating practices. However, there is insufficient documentation of culturally responsive child care practices. For additional examples of programs, projects, and initiatives related to culturally responsive child care in other jurisdictions please see Appendix C.

This project will complement the Flight framework by supporting the development of a workforce strategy to equip educators with resources and tools to gain knowledge and translate it into providing culturally responsive care. It will also look to learn from ongoing programs and initiatives across Alberta and other provinces. Thought leaders emphasized the need for collaboration in the development of a holistic and representative framework. Ongoing engagement with strategic advisors throughout this project will ensure various aspects of the sector, perspectives, and experiences are captured. This is particularly crucial for the three cultural groups of focus, which are highlighted in the following section.

Population-Specific Considerations

The three cultural groups of focus in this project have unique characteristics and histories which shapes what the provision of culturally responsive child care will look like for each cultural group. In this section, we set the foundation for creating a better understanding of the cultural groups by providing a description of key population-specific elements and characteristics of each group. We also examine how certain histories, experiences, and recommendations highlight the crucial role that culturally responsive child care plays in addressing the effects of historical legacies. Further, we outline the enablers and barriers to implementing culturally responsive child care for the three groups.

Indigenous Children

Alberta is the traditional and ancestral territory of the Indigenous peoples of Treaty 6 (Central Alberta), Treaty 7 (Southern Alberta), and Treaty 8 (Northern Alberta). Namely: the Blackfoot Confederacy – Kainai, Piikani, and Siksika – the Cree, Dene, Saukteaux, Nakota Sioux, Stoney Nakoda, and the Tsu T’ina Nation and the Métis People of Alberta. This includes Métis Settlements and the Six Regions of the Métis Nation of Alberta within the historical Northwest Métis Homeland. Alberta is also home to a small population of Inuit peoples. First Nations, Inuit, and Métis are distinct and diverse groups with unique traditions, histories, languages, and knowledges. However, they share the experience and impacts of colonialism, including loss of culture and language. Additionally, children hold a unique and sacred place in the cultures of Indigenous peoples, and this comes with a sacred responsibility to care for them (Little Bear, 2000).

Culturally appropriate child care is crucial to addressing ongoing inequities and the legacy of residential schools. The Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action call for the development of culturally appropriate childhood education programs for Indigenous children and families (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). Further, recommendations from the National Inquiry into the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls report highlight the critical need for conscious effort to be geared towards supporting the retention and revitalization of Indigenous identity, including cultures, lifeways, and languages (National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, 2019). This recommendation acknowledges the negative impacts of previous assimilation policies of residential schools on Indigenous languages. The provision of culturally responsive child care for Indigenous children is thus a vital part of maintaining Indigenous culture and a key element of implementing this Call to Action.

At a national level, the Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care Framework outlines a high-level vision for improving child care for all Indigenous children (Government of Canada, 2018a). A document that may help to support this work in Alberta is the Indigenous Cultural Understanding Framework (Ministry of Children’s Services, 2019). However, the Government of Alberta’s framework relates to the broader work of the Ministry of Children’s Services and only considers government employees. There is a need for a closer consideration of issues related to Indigenous child care within the Alberta child care workforce, which includes individuals within and outside of government. Below, we outline these issues

in relation to enablers and barriers to implementing culturally responsive child care for Indigenous children.

Enablers

- Indigenous leadership and governance in child care, including program planning, design, and delivery, strengthens program impacts on Indigenous children (Gerlach et al., 2021; Grace et al., 2019).
- Relationships are a source of strength, additional support, and cultural connection for Indigenous children and families (Halselth & Greenwood, 2019).
- Re-telling of traditional stories from Indigenous Elders connects children with ancestral and cultural knowledge in the classroom (Peltier, 2017).
- Inclusion of Indigenous knowledge in child care settings have meaningful impacts when incorporated throughout programming (Simon, 2021a).
- Promoting land-based experiential learning which aligns with the Indigenous values of reciprocity, balance, relationships, and sense of place and supports connection to universe, water, and land (Callaghan et al., 2018; Simon, 2021b).
- Revitalizing and protecting Indigenous languages, which are a main form of cultural expression (Gerlach et al., 2021).

Barriers

- An over-representation of Eurocentric approaches to early learning and child development (Huston et al., 2020).
- Provincial licensing requirements create barriers to implementing Indigenous land-based learning (Simon, 2021b).
- Diminished diversity and vitality of Indigenous languages as a result of residential schools (Gerlach, 2021).
- Stereotypes and discrimination of Indigenous peoples and communities still exists and need to be dismantled (Simon, 2021a).
- Early childhood educators do not feel prepared to teach Indigenous children, pointing to the need for more training in this area (Lamb, 2021).
- Impact on child development caused by generational trauma and disruption (Gerlach et al., 2021; Voyageur & Bill, 2021).
- Urban Indigenous children and families lack equitable access to Indigenous early learning and child care as a result of unstable funding, lack of continuity in a patchwork of programs, lack of Indigenous control over planning and design (Gerlach et al., 2021).

Racialized Children

There are notable regional differences in the concentration of the racialized population across the provinces in Canada. The South Asian, Filipino, Chinese, and Black populations are the most dominant racialized groups in Alberta (Statistics Canada, 2017). In recent years, there has been a steady rise in the population of racialized groups in Canada with young children making up a significant proportion of this population. The increase in the total population of the racialized group in Canada is projected to reach 22.3 million by 2041 from 8.0 million in 2016 with a proportion of 1.6 million racialized children

recorded in 2016² (Statistics Canada, 2022b). In Alberta, there were 1 million racialized people and a proportion of 223,000 racialized children in the province in 2016. The total population of the racialized group in Alberta is projected to reach 3 million by 2024 (Statistics Canada, 2022b). This highlights the importance of ensuring culturally responsive child care for this population.

It is crucial to note that because the racialized population is not a homogenous group but rather a population of people with diverse and distinct cultural histories and values, providing culturally responsive child care will look different for the sub-groups within this population. However, we found some overarching themes on the issues faced by racialized population in relation to the provision of accessible culturally responsive child care. Below, we outline these issues in relation to enablers and barriers to implementing culturally responsive child care for racialized children.

Enablers

- Educators equipped with cultural knowledge and capacity to continue learning can effectively implement culturally responsive practices for racialized children (Berman et al., 2022).
- Educators using multiple modes of communication that take family preferences into consideration facilitates better relationships with newcomer families (Mardhani-Bayne et al., 2021).
- Supporting diversity and inclusion have been stressed in early child care policies and guidelines, but approaches that explicitly name and address the issue of race and racism increases educator behaviour change and action in early learning and child care spaces (Berman et al., 2017).
- In early learning, children regularly engage in race and identity meaning-making process through interactions with educators, peers, resource materials, and curriculum (Abawi, 2021; Berman et al., 2022).

Barriers

- An absence of national policies or strategies in Canada that explicitly highlight or address the cultural issues and needs of racialized children in early child care (Butler, 2021; Japel & Friendly, 2018).
- Child care related concerns for this population often focus on unequal access to quality and affordable early child care and not necessarily the provision of culturally sensitive and responsive child care (Japel & Friendly, 2018).
- Cultural and colour blind/neutral approaches dominate the provision of early child care in Canada (Berman et al., 2022; Escayg & Daniel, 2019).
- Current approaches heavily rely on Eurocentric pedagogy and practices that are not culturally or racially sensitive to the needs and realities of racialized children (Berman et al., 2017).
- Misconceptions that children are too young to understand and recognize colour or concepts related to discrimination and beliefs about racial identity (Abawi, 2021).

² Statistics for Racialized population by age group (0-14 years).

- Despite an overrepresentation of racialized and newcomer employees in the early learning and child care workforce in Canada, the majority do not occupy managerial/leadership positions where they can influence organizational policies (Abawi, 2021).
- Newcomers face numerous challenges including “culture shock, language barrier, loss of extended family support, loneliness, unfamiliar systems, discrimination, and a new climate” (Massing & Matheson, 2021).

Francophone Children

According to 2016 Census data, the Francophone population in Alberta is one of the fastest growing French-speaking communities in Canada. There was a notable 35.7% increase in the number of people who speak French as their first language in Alberta between 2001 and 2016 (Statistics Canada, 2019a). It is important to note that there is also significant cultural diversity within the Francophone group. Some families that identify as Francophone intersect with the racialized population group and therefore may require care that is responsive to intersectional cultural identities.

Strengthening and promoting Francophone cultural expression in early childhood is important. Not only does Francophone early child care prepare Francophone children for future integration into the French-language school system, but it also promotes positive cultural identity formation and a sense of belonging for children (Frigon & Lemyre, 2021). Canada’s commitment to establishing culturally responsive early child care spaces for the Francophone population is highlighted in the *Multilateral Learning and Child Care Framework, the Protocol for Agreements for Minority-Language Education and Second-Language*, and the *Action Plan for Official Languages 2018–2023*.

The Action Plan for Official Languages focuses on increasing investments and access to linguistically stimulating early child care spaces by supporting training of the Early Childhood Francophone workforce and supporting the private sector in establishing more Francophone child care centres (Government of Canada, 2018b). Below, we outline these issues in relation to enablers and barriers to implementing culturally responsive child care for Francophone children.

Enablers:

- Fostering the French language is a key component in Alberta’s Francophone community’s maintenance and growth (Fédération des parents francophones de l’Alberta, 2017).
- Awareness of cultural referents specific to Francophone culture, such as Francophone public figures, traditions, historical events, and customs, increase feelings of belonging and participation in the collective culture (Rozon, 2018).
- Educators use of Francophone created early child care resources provide specific cultural experiences unique to the population that is absent in resources translated from English (identified by thought leaders).
- Resources for integrating Francophone culture into classrooms that are provided in both French and English help non-French speaking educators implement it (identified by thought leaders and noted by researcher’s observations).

Barriers:

- Shortage of Francophone child care spaces in Alberta, there was a shortage of 600 child care spaces in relation to the demand for Francophone child care in 2016 (Standing Committee on Official Languages, 2018).
- Shortage of Francophone early child care educators and experts in the field (Frigon & Lemyre, 2021; thought leader).
- Current focus on establishing French language child care centres to improve access, insufficient attention on how English-language child care centres can be responsive to Francophone children (Statistics Canada, 2019b).
- Given the difficulty of accessing Francophone early child care, Francophone families increasingly face pressure to enrol children in English-language child care centres (Statistics Canada, 2019b).
- In Alberta there is a lower number of Francophone families transferring the language to their children (thought leader).

A good understanding of the three cultural groups, including their distinct cultural histories and current issues related to child care is crucial in setting the basis for the creation of a framework that is tailored to addressing the specific needs of the populations for providing culturally responsive child care in Alberta. The next section focuses on the preliminary guiding principles of culturally responsive child care.

Preliminary Guiding Principles

Guiding principles are foundational values that set the standard for planning, decision-making, and action. They endure in response to changes in strategies, leadership, and operations. We propose the following guiding principles for culturally responsive child care based on our analysis of academic and practice-based reports and thought leader interviews. These are preliminary principles that will act as a starting place for engagement with an advisory group to further refine and contextualize them for development of an Alberta-based framework.

Although presented as distinct principles, they are interconnected and overlap with one another. The principles are meant to be addressed cohesively. This implies that all aspects of culturally responsive child care should consider how these principles are being applied intentionally. Rather than a list of checkboxes to tick off, cultural responsiveness is a continuous responsibility and practice (College of Early Childhood Educators, 2020).

The proposed guiding principles of a culturally responsive child care workforce are summarized in Figure 3 and detailed below. While these principles are relevant and applicable to all three population groups that we focus on in this report, there are unique principles for the Indigenous community that must be acknowledged. Previous work has also identified that there are similar but distinct principles for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit approaches and visions of early child care and learning. In Figure 4, we present a summary of Indigenous-specific principles that recognize and address Indigenous history, tradition, cultural revitalization, and holistic view of quality early learning and child care.

The principles apply to all members of the child care workforce, including those who work directly and indirectly with children and families. The intention is for everyone working in child care to see themselves as change agents and commit to living out the principles in their work (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013). Although we view the principles as overarching across cultural groups, we

acknowledge the nuances and differences for Indigenous, racialized, and Francophone children and families. We highlight these by providing culturally-specific examples for implementation strategies.



Figure 3: Summary of guiding principles for culturally responsive child care

Description of Guiding Principles

Cross-Sector Collaboration

Culturally responsive child care is a collective goal. Principles and strategies of cultural responsiveness are integrated across levels and areas of the child care sector, including the policies, pedagogy and curriculum, program philosophies, workforce hiring, training, and evaluation, service delivery support, and physical environments and spaces (Georgis et al., 2017; Massing & Matheson, 2021; New York State Education Department, 2018). Cross-sector collaboration aims to combine top-down and bottom-up approaches while ensuring the various roles and responsibilities beyond educators are addressed. This principle also works to alleviate the burden on the educators as they need support and structures in place from other areas of the sector (e.g., curriculum development, professional development opportunities, policies). This principle captures the importance of strategic planning and systems thinking when developing and implementing culturally responsive child care.

Diversity and Equity

Embracing diversity supports the incorporation of children’s culture, home values, and beliefs into the environment and instruction (Au, 2011). Integrating different ways of doing and being into the day-to-

day provision of child care is crucial to creating culturally responsive environments. This includes multiple modes of learning and expression (Grant & Zwier, 2011), teaching classroom expectations that are linked to values and cultures of children and families (Price & Steed, 2016), and adopting decolonization practices and moving beyond mainstream “western” standards of practice (Massing & Matheson, 2021). Diversity itself is also a valuable resource in an early learning environment, when supported through intercultural practice it can provide all children with the skills to navigate multicultural spaces (Georgis et al., 2017). Seeing cultural differences as assets can help counter the dominant narrative about differences as deficits or characteristics that should be assimilated (New York State Education Department, 2018). McAuley (2018), highlighted that celebrating who students are and diving into their identities supports them in understanding their own potential, which is key to academic, social, emotional, and physical well-being.

Equity is also strongly advocated for in anti-racist approaches to early learning and child care. Equity is both a value and important goal for child care, it recognizes that individuals and groups have different experiences and circumstances which may require unique considerations. A child care sector that is equitable looks to minimize barriers and provide support when needed to fully participate in society (Government of British Columbia, n.d.).

Family-Centred Relationships

Children and families are knowledge holders, and they have a range of experiences, traditions, values, and more that can positively contribute to children’s development. These strengths have been referred to as “funds of knowledge” and may include: resilience, strong intergenerational networks, extended family relationships, educational aspirations, cultural wealth, and first language and bi/multilingualism (Georgis et al., 2017). Building connections with children and families and valuing their lived experience will support the child care provider to be responsive in a way that authentically represents children (Grant & Zwier, 2011). This principle is focused on parent and caregiver involvement; it acknowledges the opportunity to learn from them and co-create with them. As highlighted by Derman-Sparks (2013), child care providers take an important step to practicing culturally responsive care when they partner with families to learn about the care practices and rituals of home cultures, and then apply this knowledge to their interactions and care routines. Partnerships with both children and their families enhance the ability for educators to understand culturally influenced behaviours and actions of children, and therefore help them feel more comfortable in the space (Georgis et al., 2017). Furthermore, developing these relationships helps to build trust and spur meaningful engagement with the child’s communities (New York State Education Department, 2018).

Cultural Safety

Fostering cultural safety in all environments is crucial to culturally responsive care as it supports trust and healing (BC Ministry of Children and Family Development, 2021). This includes both physical spaces and the relationships between peers, families, educators, and other stakeholders in the sector. Child care environments should reflect diversity and be a safe place and experience for children and families.

In addition to the physical environment, the curriculum should also foster a space of trust and healing for all cultures (College of Early Childhood Educators, 2020). This may include a curriculum that speaks to the lives of children, as opposed to a mandated one-size fits all curriculum based on Eurocentric views of a certain socio-economic group (Kugler & West-Burns, 2010). Cultural safety encourages relationships based on respectful engagement, which consider power imbalances. As such, they challenge and explore power the way that bias, stereotypes, discrimination, and racism impact how services are delivered and received (Government of British Columbia, n.d.). Cultural responsiveness cannot function without being open and respectful towards ways of knowing and doing by various cultures. This includes being open and understanding to the reality that others have different experiences of the world, make sense of it in different ways, and may respond to the world differently. Respectfully exploring this can open new possibilities and a sense of wonder for both educators and children (Massing & Matheson, 2021).

Ongoing Learning

The workforce builds cultural consciousness and competence by engaging in ongoing learning. Culturally responsive child care does not come from taking a few training courses. Rather it is a lifelong commitment, especially as children and families will change each year (Derman-Sparks, 2011). All stakeholders need to be aware of the general histories and cultures that children in their care belong to. Culturally responsive workforce development and training encourages self-reflection and enables early child care professionals to form positive views about children's abilities, race, cultural background, and practices, which form important building blocks that create healthy self-identity and esteem of young children (Allen & Steed, 2016; Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013). Ongoing learning and practice are also crucial to move across the conscious competency matrix. The conscious competency matrix explains the stages by which individuals learn and ultimately acquire a new knowledge. It often involves a process of starting from a place of unconscious incompetence (unaware of what you do not know), to recognizing incompetence, consciously acquiring knowledge and then arriving at unconscious competence. An expanded definition of this model is provided in Appendix D. Approaches need to ensure that workforce development and trainings equip educators with the skills to move from a point of knowledge or understanding to being able to have the values of cultural competency and responsiveness effortlessly ingrained in their practice and way of being.

We have presented a discussion on the key guiding principles for culturally responsive child care above. However, we acknowledge that specifically for the Indigenous communities, the guiding principles for early learning may look different and as such other critical issues need to be highlighted. Below, we outline specific guiding principles that capture Indigenous history, issues, and the unique conceptualization of Indigenous early learning and child care.

Guiding Principles for Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care

Indigenous-led and developed: It is important for culturally responsive child care for Indigenous children to begin with acknowledging the rights to self-determination of Indigenous people. This translates to ensuring that Indigenous communities design and deliver Indigenous early learning policies and frameworks that reflects their needs, priorities, and goals for Indigenous children.

Distinction-based early learning frameworks: Distinction-based approach highlights the need to move away from “one size fits all” approach to decision making, framework and policy development for Indigenous peoples. It acknowledges the need to understand the distinct histories, interests and priorities of First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples and work independently with them. In relation to culturally responsive child care, it is crucial for early learning policies and frameworks to adopt a distinction-based approach that supports and represents the distinct realities, needs, and priorities of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Nation children and people.

Indigenous knowledges, pedagogy, languages, and cultures: A fundamental component of culturally responsive child care for Indigenous children is the provision of early learning that is rooted in distinct Indigenous cultures, languages, and knowledges. This includes emphasis on decolonizing pedagogies, intergenerational and experiential learning as well as teachings and play-based activities that are rooted in Indigenous storytelling, ceremonies, and rituals.

The centrality of Indigenous early learning to the community health and well-being of Indigenous people: Central to Indigenous early learning is the need to acknowledge the ongoing effects of colonialism and intergenerational trauma. Early learning is thus viewed as an important *site* for reconciliation, cultural healing, and enhancing children and family health.

Quality and accessible early learning: Supporting access to affordable early learning programs and

Figure 4: Summary of guiding principles for Indigenous early learning and child care

Implementation Strategies

This section provides a summary of implementation strategies that capture how to act upon the guiding principles for culturally responsive child care. We discovered that all strategies can be relevant to the Indigenous, racialized, and Francophone groups. However, how the strategies are applied may look different. The overarching strategy and key components of each strategy are outlined in Table 1. It is important to note that while some strategies are informed by Alberta-specific thought leaders, as we move into framework development, strategies will be refined to Alberta's context. It is also important to note that the strategies outlined in the table are only examples of what can be done to effectively implement culturally responsive child care for the three communities and not comprehensive solutions to the barriers previously described.

Leading practices for all three communities indicate that access to early learning in the relevant language and culture of the child is best. This means in an ideal scenario an Indigenous child would be able to attend an Indigenous created and led early learning environment (Gerlach et al., 2021). Quality Indigenous early child care and education incorporates elements including Indigenous pedagogy and languages, Indigenous educators, and empowerment of Indigenous parents and community (J. Preston, 2014). Similarly, a Francophone child would be able to access child care provided by and for the Francophone community, and racialized children would have child care providers that speak their language or come from the same culture. However, this is not always possible, especially in Alberta where staff that represent these communities may be unavailable, particularly in certain locations across the province. Furthermore, thought leaders identified that a transition to more Indigenous- or Francophone- designed and controlled child care will take time and it is important to support the current workforce to be culturally responsive. As such, the table presented below offers strategies that can be implemented more immediately given the current early child care landscape in Alberta.

Table 1: Strategies for implementing a culturally responsive child care workforce

SUMMARY OF IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES		
<u>Examples/application for the Indigenous stream</u>	<u>Examples/application for the racialized stream</u>	<u>Examples/application for the Francophone stream</u>
<p>1. Policies that support culturally responsive child care</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure and enable access to child care, address existing barriers • Consider how standards and monitoring are culturally responsive and inclusive • Conducting regional needs assessments • Developed in consultation with community/families 		
Establish an Indigenous council to provide guidance on decision-making and policy development.	Develop anti-racism policies that are applied across all levels of the sector.	Increase the number of Francophone child care spaces.
<p>2. Self-awareness and reflective practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledge that everyone holds biases, what is learned can be unlearned • Educators have dedicated time and resources to gain awareness of their own culture, cultural insensitivities, bias, assumptions, and prejudices • Educators have support to explore and challenge the dominant views and approaches to child care • May look like self-reflection journal exercises, opportunities to reflect on practices with colleagues 		
Enhance dialogue between settler and Indigenous educators to increase awareness on the dominance of colonial child care practices.	Awareness and training on racial bias and the importance of implementing anti-racism in early child care environments.	Self-reflection on current knowledge and understanding of Francophone population in Alberta.
<p>3. Collaborative partnerships with children and families</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build deep and meaningful relationships with families, engage during pick-up and drop-off, prior to enrollment (e.g., info sheet for families to complete), dedicated time for conversations (e.g., coffee chats) • Learn about children’s cultures, languages, culturally relevant child development outcomes, histories/experiences • Prepare educators to have challenging conversations, spend time building trust, and creating safe spaces for families to share their culture • Embrace curiosity - educators should encourage children’s curiosity and questions about cultural differences even if the questions may be uncomfortable • Encourage parents to connect with each other 		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use learning stories to capture observations of children and share this with children and families 		
Participate in intergenerational learning of values, teachings, language, traditions, and ceremonies.	Use the RAISED model to identify what factors may be contributing to a child's and parents' behaviour.	Have caregivers fill out a survey to gather a basic background on the family.
4. Standardized training and professional development for all educators <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address inconsistencies across educators, currently it can vary depending on their pre-service training • Training should include trauma informed care, anti-racism, Indigenous history, Francophone history, impacts of colonization • Training should be ongoing 		
Participate in the blanket exercise that tells the history of colonization in Canada from an Indigenous perspective.	Training to understand the lived experiences of people of colour in Canada, including the unique aspects for newcomers and refugees.	Support through mentoring and/or field supervision.
5. Create culturally responsive and engaging environments (physically and in child care practices) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure a continuity between home culture and child care practices • Consider how the physical space supports children and families to feel welcome, safe, and comfortable • Children should see themselves and their lives represented in the materials, literature, décor, and pictures • Provide children with multiple modes of learning and expression (e.g., music, art, sharing stories) • Engage with families about what materials might be important, what might be problematic, and how to respectfully incorporate items 		
Support the ability for children to connect with nature and the land, teach children meaningful ways of respecting the environment.	Decorate learning spaces with imagery, or words/quotes that convey values of the racialized groups represented, teach the young children's songs and poetry to help them confidently embrace their cultural identity.	When working with bilingual children, an educator can position themselves as a language learner alongside the children.
6. Curriculum that supports culturally responsive child care <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporate multicultural development theories and practices • Ensure cultural components move beyond 'food, fashion, and fun' 		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integrate culturally responsive literacy practices 		
Embed land-based pedagogies and reconciliation into the curriculum.	Embed anti-racist teachings into the curriculum.	Embed a play-based curriculum that supports the social, cognitive, and linguistic development of children in line with the Francophone culture.
7. Cultural communication and language vitality <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage children and families to share stories of their culture and language Ask family or community to add text in their own language to expose children to different kinds of script Have children and families teach educators words and phrases in their home language 		
Use phrases in Indigenous language during routines and planned activities. Model language use through storytelling and songs. Invite guests from the community who can speak to the children in their Indigenous languages.	Discover the language needs from parents and adopt strategies that foster multilingual language development.	Support French language learning through multimodal language-teaching methods that include gestures, songs, games, and movement-oriented activities.

Implementation Considerations

In this section we summarize findings from the literature review and interviews on considerations for implementing culturally responsive child care. Where possible, we highlight Alberta-specific considerations that were shared. Note that the majority of these findings were informed by our discussion with thought leaders that have experience with providing child care, teaching early education, researching key issues, and involvement in decision-making. We identified five main themes of implementation considerations:

- Need for supportive policies and regulations
- Overcoming hesitations and challenges with engaging in intercultural dialogue
- Addressing rigid mainstream views of child care practices
- Ensuring direct support for the workforce
- Navigating resource constraints

Need for supportive policies and regulations

Supportive and intentional policy frameworks and programs are crucial to the implementation of early child care programs that are responsive to and reflective of cultural needs and backgrounds of children in Canada (Friendly & Prabhu, 2010). The existence or absence of policies that support the implementation of culturally responsive child care in Canada provides an indication of government priorities and sets a tone for what can be achieved in relation to the provision of early childhood education and care (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2019). Supportive policies are important institutional resources and guidance for educators on culturally responsive requirements. Thought leaders noted that when there is an absence of policy frameworks that acknowledge and address issues such as racism or gender identity in early child care and education educators are unable to effectively recognize and address these issues in their programs. We identified two key aspects related to supportive government policies:

- ✓ **Minimum requirements for educators to undergo trainings in culturally responsive child care:** Currently, in Alberta, the expectation for educators in the early child care and education field to obtain trainings on cultural awareness and responsiveness are minimal. While there is the 50-hour cultural orientation program within the Flight framework, thought leaders noted it is not enough for sustainable practice. While some individual programs and centres motivate their workforce to take training on cultural diversity and inclusion, the absence of policy frameworks that set requirements for these trainings impacts the ability of child care providers and educators to recognize cultural competence trainings as crucial and engage with such trainings.

“I think knowing that it is an expectation within our early childhood environments would really spur people to do mass professional development in our industry... Having training that's sanctioned by the government, having it embedded into our best practices, through our program plans, maybe through even our minimum standards. Whatever that looks like, I think if it is an expectation, it will happen.” – Thought Leader

- ✓ **Systemic barriers to receiving post-secondary education:** Barriers to attending and receiving post-secondary education in Canada limits the learning opportunities for existing and potential educators. Thought leaders noted that English language requirements for post-secondary educator programs are a significant hindrance for many educators to obtain advanced education, training, and practice-based learning. This is particularly relevant given the percentage of educators that do not have English as their first language.

Overcoming hesitations and challenges with engaging in intercultural dialogue

Findings from the literature and interviews revealed that while educators may aspire to implement culturally responsive child care, some struggle to engage in dialogues around cultural difference, cultural values, and other related issues such as racial bias (Berman et al., 2017). This limits their ability to develop deep and meaningful relationships with families and understand important cultural values needed to effectively support children’s cultural learning and identity development in early childhood. Trainings that also include resources and support to increase the confidence of educators in engaging with families is important. We identified three key factors that impact an educator’s ability to engage in intercultural dialogue with children and families to provide culturally responsive child care:

- ✓ **Difficulty engaging in intercultural dialogue:** A major barrier to educators’ engagement in conversations around culture with children and families is the belief or feeling that they do not have the cultural knowledge and competence to engage in such conversations in a culturally appropriate manner. Perceptions of cultural incompetence and unfamiliarity with other cultures can lead educators to ‘do nothing’ and continue with the status quo because of their fear of doing something that may be considered culturally inappropriate.

“Educators lack the confidence that they are competent enough to engage with families to understand cultural backgrounds and nuances. They feel afraid that they would say or do something that is culturally inappropriate and so do not do anything at all.” – Thought Leader

- ✓ **Families’ reluctance to share their cultures:** In some cases, families may feel uncomfortable to talk about their cultural values and norms with child care providers. In such cases, educators are encouraged to develop a deeper understanding of family preferences and develop intercultural communication strategies in line with preferences. Additionally, educators can encourage families to share their cultures by highlighting the importance of culture for child development and providing a space where families feel that their cultures are respected and valued (Hargraves, 2019).
- ✓ **Workforce’s comfort to express their culture:** Several thought leaders indicated several factors that hinder educators from feeling comfortable expressing and applying their own culture and cultural knowledge into practice. Notably, strict institutional policies and practices, and lack of openness or flexibility to adopt diverse cultural practices can create fear of trying something new. Additionally, they highlighted the impact of learning certain approaches and values in their education that were starkly different to their own cultures or experiences. This left them feeling like their culture was doing things incorrectly, causing them to set aside their own culture. Supportive policies and

environments that acknowledge the value of educators' cultural experiences and encourage educators to express their culture in the workplace are crucial. The environment should also be culturally responsive to the workforce.

Addressing rigid mainstream views of child care practices

Current rigid approaches to child development and child care still predominantly hinge on Eurocentric or "western" standards. This affects the ability of child care providers to be flexible and comfortable to accept multiple approaches and ways of caring for children. This limited view does not consider the vital aspects of culture that shape a child's existence and understanding of who they are such as their family and cultural beliefs, traditions, identity, religious backgrounds, and norms. Thus, for effective and meaningful implementation of culturally responsive child care, it is crucial for child care providers to build deeper relationships with families in order to develop a nuanced and contextual understanding of what culturally responsive child care means to the children and families in their care. Below, we discuss two factors in relation to this theme:

- ✓ **Limited conceptualization of culture in child care environments:** From the interviews, we discovered that there is often a problematic conceptualization of culturally responsive child care. This involves the dominant practice of 'superficial' incorporation of what is considered 'culture' in most early child care spaces. This can take the form of an overwhelming focus on one-off cultural day celebrations, cultural clothing, or food.

"I was thinking of negative outcomes generally, in terms of cultural responsiveness. So, I just thought about the food, fun, and fashion approach.... having one day to celebrate somebody's culture and how terribly isolating that can be for children to feel different and exotic in some way. And, and for the rest of the children too because they get that message." – Thought Leader

- ✓ **Tensions between licensing expectations/standards and culturally responsive practices:** The essence of culturally responsive child care is the provision of an environment that is reflective of a child's culture and ensures continuity with the home culture. However, in practice, strict early child care standards and policies that impact licensing requirements make it difficult for child care providers to implement culturally responsive child care. For instance, child care providers face tensions to implement important culture-specific child care practices such as communal eating or sleeping arrangements because they do not align with existing early child care licensing requirements.

"There are a lot of tensions between cultural practices and licensing expectations... some of the tensions were around the nature of adult-child relationships, the role of play, gender roles, and other really practical tensions, like the thing of giving children coffee, separate sleeping, the eating practices, child guidance." – Thought Leader

Ensuring direct support for the workforce

Identifying the needs of early childhood educators is crucial in fostering more productive and rewarding work for them and ensuring the provision of direct supports that are required to facilitate effective implementation of culturally responsive child care in Alberta (McCuaig et al., 2022). Some overarching challenges and needs of educators in Canada include low compensation with a significant proportion of the workforce lacking access to benefits and/or personal leave, poor working opportunities, and lack of opportunities for career development trainings (McCuaig et al., 2022). Specifically in relation to creating a more culturally competent workforce, there is ample evidence that suggests more supports are needed in the areas of reflective practice, ongoing professional development, culturally relevant pre-service training to increase educators' preparedness to care for children from multi-ethnic cultural backgrounds, and culturally responsive curriculum and inclusive environments to complement educators' practice (Cameron & Macdonald, 2015; Lamb, 2021). In addition to these, in our discussions with thought leaders, we identified four needed direct supports for the educators:

- ✓ **Expansion of knowledge and awareness of Indigenous history and culture:** A lack of understanding about the impact of residential schools, The Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action, Indigenous early child care frameworks, as well as respect for Indigenous ways of being and knowing present a significant barrier to implementing culturally responsive child care (J. P. Preston et al., 2012). Some interviewees noted that they observed negative preconceived notions among immigrant educators about Indigenous people which negatively impacted the ability of educators to build relationships with Indigenous families and children in their centres. Considering many early learning educators are immigrants and newcomers there is a crucial need for Indigenous cultural trainings and awareness. This will support educators to unpack and unlearn biases about Indigenous people. Additionally, there is an opportunity to understand and value their cultures, traditional practices, and world views.
- ✓ **Mentorship, coaching, and networking opportunities:** Beyond trainings on cultural awareness and competency, there is also an identified need for practical coaching and mentorship for educators to enable them to translate the theoretical knowledge they have acquired into practice.
- ✓ **Centralized place for resources:** Because educators often have demanding workloads, it is difficult for them to dedicate time to search for resources they need to enhance their cultural competence. To address this issue, the establishment of a centralized place for cultural resources and training opportunities will enable educators to engage with the current resources available to them in implementing culturally reflective child care practices.
- ✓ **Providing safe spaces for reflection and open dialogue:** The importance of self-reflection for implementing culturally responsive child care has already been highlighted. However, because self reflection activities for the workforce usually leads educators to reflect and think about their own biases, to challenge their own preconceived notions about sensitive issues, it is important to have institutional cultures that create safe spaces for educators to feel comfortable to truly self-reflect. Also, it was noted from the interviews that most self-reflection professional development sessions for educators are instructional by design. However, what is needed are more *collaborative-style self-*

reflection trainings in safe spaces that encourage educators to talk about their challenges and experiences of implementing culturally responsive child care.

“A space for educators to be able to come together and feel safe. And to inquire, to reflect and think about their own assumptions, to challenge their own biases [contributed to successful learning]. And I don’t think that the majority of professional development opportunities right now have that, it’s very instructive... check off the hours, maybe go home and write some reflection, it’s not collaborative. It’s not conversational.” – Thought Leader

Navigating resource constraints

Another hindrance to the implementation of culturally responsive child care is the lack of time and financial resources to participate in professional development opportunities. Although there are currently opportunities for educators to develop their cultural competence through trainings, these opportunities are not accessible to educators because of the financial burden and time constraints:

- ✓ **Increase the ability for educators to participate in trainings:** Offering free or paid educator trainings and professional development that are flexible and convenient will increase educator uptake of training opportunities which will in turn enhance their ability to implement culturally responsive child care.

“And they [Educators] also really emphasize on the accessibility aspect of these professional learning opportunities.... we know that a lot of educators are overworked and burned out. So, in designing these professional learning, we must think all these factors including the fees.... I think, it’s unethical and impossible to demand an already overworked and underpaid workforce to pay out of their pockets, or to have more unpaid time to attend professional learning.” – Thought Leader

Next Steps

In this report we outlined the findings from our environmental scan which included a literature review and thought leader interviews. We presented preliminary guiding principles of culturally responsive child care, key strategies to implement culturally responsive child care, and implementation considerations to support a culturally responsive child care workforce. Additionally, we highlighted some of the unique elements and considerations related to early learning and child care for Indigenous, racialized, and Francophone children and families.

The intent of this document is to serve as a starting point to initiate conversation. The guiding principles, strategies, and implementation considerations are not finalized, and open to further refinement. We will build on and contextualize the findings in the next phase of the project through engagement with strategic advisors from each cultural stream. In particular, we will look to add specific knowledge and context around the Alberta early learning and child care landscape as well as the cultural streams. Engaging with practitioners, thought leaders, and other key rights holders and stakeholders that represent Indigenous, racialized, and Francophone communities is crucial to developing a workforce strategy that is responsive to the uniqueness of each group. Individuals will be invited to form an advisory group comprised of leaders in the field of child care, culturally responsive practices, and the Alberta child care context.

We will use the information from this report as an evidence base to begin developing a workforce framework to support the implementation of culturally responsive child care in Alberta. The development and design of the strategy will be co-created with strategic advisors and incorporate their expertise, knowledge, and perspectives. The framework will be principles-based and include resources to support the child care workforce to strengthen and mobilize capacity for culturally responsive child care.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Methods

Environmental Scan

The objective of the Environmental scan was to systematically identify and consider evidence related to workforce development in the area of culturally responsive child care and contextualize it to the Alberta landscape.

The following research questions guided the environmental scan:

- 1) What does it mean to provide culturally responsive child care?
- 2) What are the guiding principles for culturally responsive child care?
- 3) What are the leading strategies (e.g., frameworks, resources, training, professional development, etc.) used to implement culturally responsive child care?
- 4) What approaches and strategies are being used to implement culturally responsive child care in Canada?
- 5) What barriers and enablers to implementing culturally responsive child care have been identified in Canada?

The two data collection methods used in the environmental scan were *Rapid Literature Reviews* and *Thought Leaders Interviews*. These methods are described below.

Rapid Literature Review

A rapid examination of peer-reviewed and grey literature was conducted to identify preliminary guiding principles for culturally responsive child care and outline implementation strategies and considerations for supporting a culturally responsive child care workforce in Alberta, with a focus on Indigenous, racialized, and Francophone groups.

We also conducted a jurisdictional scan as part of the rapid literature review to identify similar programs and initiatives on culturally responsive child care and/or workforce development on cultural competence in other jurisdictions outside of Alberta. We noted that it was difficult to retrieve information on these programs and initiatives or find details because many programs are not well documented or lack an online presence to publicize their work. As such, we included our findings on culturally responsive child care initiatives in an earlier section of this report and then summarized our findings from the jurisdictional scan on other similar initiatives in other provinces in Appendix C below.

We used a search strategy to locate relevant literature and sources, in addition to the materials provided by Children's Services. The data sources included materials from organizational websites, government websites, and reputable agencies' websites as well as applicable academic literature. The table below shows the list of key search terms.

Project Terminology	Key Search Terms	Jurisdiction
Culturally Responsive Child Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culturally Responsive Child Care OR Culturally Relevant Child Care OR Culturally Competent Child Care 	Alberta/Canada/International
Guiding Principles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guiding Principles • Guiding Frameworks 	
Implementation Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation Strategies OR Approach OR practices 	
Implementation Considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation Considerations • Barriers • Enablers 	
Workforce Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educators OR Early Childhood Educators Development OR Training • Professional Development Training • Child Care Providers 	
Leading Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leading Practices • Leading Programs 	
Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outcomes • Gaps • Challenges • Impact 	
Indigenous Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indigenous Group OR Population OR Canadians 	
Racialized Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Racialized Group OR Population OR Canadians • Newcomers 	
Francophone Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Francophone OR French-Speaking Group OR Population OR Canadians • Linguistic Minority Population 	

Table 1. Search terms

INCLUSION CRITERIA

- From government webpages, organizational webpages, academic publications
- Published between 2010 - 2022

EXCLUSION CRITERIA

- Blogs, social media platform

EXAMPLE SEARCHES

- “Culturally responsive practices in early education”
- “Guiding Principles for Culturally Responsive Child Care”

Thought Leaders Interviews

From September 13, 2022 – January 9, 2023, we conducted 10 semi-structured interviews to contextualize and build on findings from the rapid review. Interviews were conducted with thought leaders, leading practitioners, and subject matter experts identified in the rapid review. Deliberate effort was made to engage with thought leaders who had professional experience and/or lived experiences with the three cultural groups.

A list of the Interview questions is provided below.

General

1. Please briefly describe your experience as it relates to culturally responsive child care.
2. How would you describe culturally responsive child care?
 - a. Prompt: What does culturally responsive child care look like in practice?
 - b. What is the role of the workforce in culturally responsive child care?
3. What do you think are the guiding principles (ideas and values that guide decision making and practices) for culturally responsive child care?

Practices/Strategies and Implementation Considerations

4. From your perspective, what strategies/approaches have been more effective supporting culturally responsive child care, in particular those related to the workforce?
 - a. What were the outcomes of the program / practice / approach?
 - b. Can you think of practices / approaches to support cultural responsiveness in child care that did not result in the intended outcome?
5. When considering implementation of strategies/approaches for culturally responsive child care what are the potential barriers or challenges?
6. Can you share anything that might successfully enable implementation of culturally responsive child care?
 - a. Alberta-based thought leaders: What are some considerations for implementing culturally responsive child care in the Alberta context?

Streams [Optional]

7. This project is specifically focused on three streams, Indigenous, racialized, and Francophone children. Acknowledging the diversity of children and families within these streams, are you able to speak to any unique considerations for one or more of these streams?
 - a. Guiding principles
 - b. Strategies/approaches
 - c. Implementation considerations (barriers / enablers)
 - d. Programs, trainings, professional development, or other resources to support workforce development

Conclusion

8. Is there anything else that you would like to share that is important for us to understand culturally responsive child care?
 - a. Specifically related to workforce development.
 - b. Specifically related to the Alberta child care environment.
9. Is there anyone else you suggest we speak with for this project?

Data Analysis

The first stage of the data analysis process involved a thematic qualitative analysis of the findings from the rapid literature review. Through an iterative process, discussions and validation from our internal team meetings and meetings with Children's Services, we identified preliminary guiding principles for culturally responsive child care as well as implementation strategies for the Alberta context.

The next stage of the analysis involved the analysis of the semi-structured interviews with thought leaders. Conducting and analyzing the interviews after the preliminary findings of the rapid literature review had been written was beneficial because it allowed us to identify the existing gaps in the literature and tailor the interviews with thought leaders to provide more in-depth contextual information relevant to the environmental scan questions. For example, we realized that there was limited information on practical implementation strategies and considerations for culturally responsive child care as most studies focused largely on recommendations. Thus, we had to rely heavily on findings from the interviews to identify implementation considerations. The interviews also served as a rich source of information on identifying the peculiarities and unique considerations for the three cultural groups - Indigenous, Francophone, and racialized populations.

The analysis of the interviews involved the process of transcription of the audio interview recordings, data cleaning, the development of a qualitative coding framework to guide analysis and inductive and deductive thematic coding in NVivo. An evidence table was created to collate and analyze findings from all data sources and then data synthesis was done to respond to objectives of the environmental scan.

Appendix B: Key Concepts in Understanding Culturally Responsive Child Care

<p>Cultural Competency</p>	<p>Cultural competency is integral to the implementation of culturally responsive child care. It is the ongoing process where organizations and individuals develop the capacity to respond respectfully and effectively to people of diverse social, ethnic, sexual, and religious backgrounds in a way that acknowledges the cultural value and dignity of individuals. It is important to note that offering culturally safe care does not require educators to become experts in every different culture.¹ In relation to providing culturally responsive child care, cultural competence involves holistic multi-system strategies that aim to increase the workforce’s awareness, knowledge, and practice of cultural diversity.²</p>
<p>Culturally Relevant and Responsive Pedagogy (CRRP)</p>	<p>CRRP looks beyond valuing diversity to providing insights into the translation of culturally responsive strategies to practices in child care and education. In partnership with families and communities, CRPP highlights the need for play and teaching resources and practices, interactions, and classroom environments to be developed and informed by the cultural backgrounds and needs of the children and families.³ Proponents of this approach adopt a strength-based understanding of cultural diversity and encourage educators to intentionally seek out opportunities to harness and celebrate cultural difference rather than viewing it as a challenge.⁴</p>
<p>Cultural Safety and Sensitivity</p>	<p>Cultural safety considers the historic, institutional, and systematic power imbalances that exist between cultures and how these impact child care policies and practices.⁵ This approach is particularly relevant within the Canadian context and in relation to the provision of culturally responsive child care for Indigenous, racialized and Francophone children. This approach involves the recognition of how the values and needs of dominant Western culture are prioritized in child care relation to the cultures of other ‘marginalized’ groups including Indigenous children and families. Cultural sensitivity and safety thus advocates for ‘equality’ and respect for all cultures represented in child care settings. It implies the conscious creation of child care spaces where children from diverse cultures outside of the dominant culture are treated equally, with respect, and can express and live out their cultural identities without restrictions.⁶</p>

^{1,5} Government of British Columbia. (n.d.). *Inclusive child care toolkit supporting children of all abilities*. <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/family-and-social-supports/child-care/running-a-daycare-or-preschool/inclusive-child-care-toolkit/inclusive-childcare-toolkit.pdf>

² Cameron, C., & Macdonald, L. (2015). The challenges of cultural competence: Exploring the impacts of race, culture and identity on early childhood educator practice. *Interaction: Challenging Ourselves in Our Practice*, 29(2). <http://libcat.merlin.mb.ca:8080/sites/default/files/Vol 29 No 2 Fall 2015.pdf>

³ The Education Hub (2010). *What is culturally responsive teaching?* <https://theeducationhub.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/What-is-culturally-responsive-teaching.pdf>

⁴ Ontario Ministry of Education. (2013). *Culturally responsive pedagogy: Towards equity and inclusivity in Ontario schools. Capacity Building Series*. http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/literacynumeracy/inspire/research/CBS_ResponsivePedagogy.pdf

⁶ BC Ministry of Children and Family Development. (2021). *Early years Indigenous cultural safety resource guide*. https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/family-and-social-supports/child-care/ics_resource_guide.pdf

Appendix C: Examples of Culturally Responsive Initiatives in Canada

Program/Initiative	Jurisdiction and organization	Brief description
Rotary Early Learning & Child Care	Edmonton, Alberta Africa Centre – Council for Advancement of African Canadians in Alberta	Program facilitates culturally relevant affordable early learning programs that prioritizes full family participation. In collaboration with other organizations, the program offers relevant trainings, resources, and diverse play practices to enable full participation of all children. The Africa Centre supports cultural identity and belonging through sensitivity and inclusion of cultural practices, values, arts, and cuisine. The program views the child as a part of the family unit, which is reflected in aspects of the program.
Tumiralaat Child Care Centre	Ottawa, Ontario Inuuqatigiit Centre for Inuit Children, Youth, and Families	Tumiralaat’s early learning program centres around Inuit values on the development of self, family, community, resilience, learning and respect for the environment. The centre fosters a child-centred environment positions parents are the most important teacher and supports Inuit culture and language. Program components are built around six components: parental involvement, culture and language, education, health promotion, social support, and nutrition.
Learning Outside Together	British Columbia Early Childhood Educators of British Columbia and Future Skills Centre	Learning Outside Together project incorporates learning with and from First Nations and Métis communities to increase educators’ skills and knowledge related to outdoor play and the Indigenous concept of “land as teacher.” In collaboration with Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators, knowledge keepers, and organizations an online training and mentorship program is being developed.
Indigenous Programming Grant	Manitoba Government of Manitoba	The Indigenous Programming Grant supports child care settings to invest in equipment and resources needed to integrate Indigenous cultural components into programming. The grant supports professional development opportunities for educators to expand their

		knowledge of Indigenous culture and traditions to incorporate within their curriculum.
Data Systems for Early Childhood Development in Atlantic Canada: A Collective Discussion to Build Aspirations for the Future	Nova Scotia Early Childhood Collaborative Research Centre – Mount Saint Vincent University	The Early Childhood Collaborative Research Centre’s goal is to ensure policy and practice are supporting families across different learning environments. Key areas of focus include: (a) high-quality, inclusive, and culturally responsive early childhood education, (b) child well-being through responsive feeding, social and emotional learning, and outdoor play, and (c) building connections for early childhood development.
Early Childhood Francosphere Training	Canada Commission nationale des parents francophones	To increase the number of French spaces and accessibility to quality child care in Francophone minority communities, Commission nationale des parents francophones developed innovative resources and training programs for educators. In addition to the four-part training modules, educators are provided management software to help manage registrations, financial transactions, and administrative tasks.
Indigenous ways of knowing in early childhood education language and literacy training	Vancouver, British Columbia Langara College	The project aims to Indigenize the Langara College’s early learning curriculum by embedding Musqueam content, the TRC Calls to Action, and information on the impact of colonization. Educators’ increased knowledge and appreciation for Musqueam history, culture, and Indigenous ways of knowing will better inform their practice in early learning settings.

Appendix D: Conscious Competency Matrix

<p style="text-align: center;">Level 3 - Consciously Competent <i>I know that I have this skill.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The practitioner achieves 'conscious competence' in a skill when she can perform it reliably at will. • The practitioner will need to concentrate and think to perform the skill • The practitioner can perform the skill without assistance. • The practitioner will not reliably perform the skill unless thinking about it. The skill is not yet "second nature" or automatic. • The practitioner should be able to demonstrate the skill to another but is unlikely to be able to teach it well to another person. • The practitioner should ideally continue to practice the new skill and, if appropriate, commit to becoming "unconsciously competent" at the new skill. • Practice is the single most effective way to move from level 3 to 4. 	<p style="text-align: center;">Level 4 - Unconsciously Competent <i>I don't know that I have this skill. It just seems easy.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The skill becomes so practiced that it enters the unconscious parts of the brain - it becomes "second nature." • Common examples are driving, sports activities, typing, manual dexterity tasks, listening, and communicating. • It becomes possible for certain skills to be performed while doing something else, for example, knitting while reading a book. • The practitioner might now be able to teach others the skill concerned; although after some time of being unconsciously competent the practitioner might have difficulty in explaining exactly how he does it. The skill has become largely instinctual. • This arguably gives rise to the need for long-standing unconscious competence to be checked periodically against new standards.
<p style="text-align: center;">Level 2 - Consciously Incompetent <i>I know that I don't have this skill.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The practitioner becomes aware of the existence and relevance of the skill. • The practitioner is aware of deficiency in this area, ideally by attempting or trying to use the skill. • The practitioner realizes that by improving her skill or ability in this area her effectiveness will improve. • Ideally the practitioner has a measure of the extent of his deficiency in the relevant skill and a measure of what level of skill is required for his own competence. • The practitioner ideally makes a commitment to learn and practice the new skill, and to move to the "consciously competent" stage. 	<p style="text-align: center;">Level 1 - Unconsciously Incompetent <i>I don't know that I don't have this skill or that I need to learn it.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The practitioner is not aware of the existence or relevance of the skill area. • The practitioner is not aware that she has a particular deficiency in the area concerned • The practitioner might deny the relevance or usefulness of the new skill. • The practitioner must become conscious of his lack of the new skill before development of the skill or learning can begin. • The aim of the coach or evaluator is to move the practitioner into the "consciously competent" stage, by demonstrating the skill or ability and the benefit that it will bring to the practitioner's effectiveness.