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The Here and Now Reimagining Early Childhoods In Urgent Times



Photo credit: Shawn Nygren, ECEBC

Create responsive pedagogical spaces: Attending to the everyday lives of children

The [Early Childhood Pedagogy Network \(ECPN\)](#) was thrilled to gather with delegates in May at the [Early Childhood Educators of British Columbia \(ECEBC\)'s](#) first face-to-face conference since the pandemic started on the unceded, ancestral territories of the Musqueam (X'Muzk'l'Um) Nation. It was powerful to hear the words of Elder Shane Pointe of the Musqueam Nation. Elder Pointe reminded us that we, educators and pedagogists, are responsible for creating spaces where children can flourish as *wonderful people* through story, language, and culture. He urged us to

carefully consider what stories, languages, and cultures are flourishing and which are silenced in early childhood centres. Elder Pointe challenged us to take our obligations to young children seriously by recognizing that they are inheriting a world that reflects the legacies of the past, both the joys and challenges of today and the unknown possibilities of tomorrow. His words resonated strongly with the [role of the pedagogist](#), who works with pedagogical commitments to respond to the current conditions and to engage in pedagogical practices that make possible more liveable worlds.

Elder Pointe's message called on us as educators and pedagogists to attend carefully to the worlds that children inhabit. As we move through June, young children in British Columbia are again facing the fires, heat, drought and other [extreme environmental events](#) brought on by climate change. [Evacuation orders and alerts](#) in Tumbler Ridge, parts of the Peace River region, Maple Ridge, Port Alberni and other areas across the province and country are being updated daily as the fires spread and recede. These alerts mean many of us are working with young children whose bags are packed, awaiting an evacuation order, or children whose homes are filled with family members and others who have been evacuated.

The role of early childhood educators is to create with children a curriculum that responds to these events that are the realities of children in ways that foster the dispositions for living well together ([BC Early Learning Framework, 2019](#)). Working with the vision of the BC Early Learning Framework (BCELF), educators consider how we can create responsive pedagogical spaces with the young children who are and will continue to be impacted by ecological challenges. It is the responsibility of educators to carefully and thoughtfully respond to the rhythms, flows, and intensities of children's collective lives so that early childhood centres are sites where children can tell the stories of their lives as they collectively construct understandings of what it means to live in this world. The stories of bags packed, the anxieties of waiting to hear what will happen next, or the frustrations of unexpected house guests need to be part of early childhood centres. The pedagogist's role is to thoughtfully pose questions, inviting educators to work collectively to nurture the conditions for young children to think, wonder, respond and reimagine their worlds.

Exactly what kind of worlds are we preparing children for in early childhood education? What types of citizens are we hoping to become together along the way? Do our teaching approaches, frameworks for understanding, and practices promote attunement to our connectedness with so many others in this beautiful, but rapidly changing, world (beyond consumer-culture preoccupations)? Are we supporting children to become capable of responding to that which is constantly unfolding in new and increasingly unpredictable ways?

([Nelson, Hodgins, & Danis, 2019, p. 423](#))

[Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw \(2022\)](#) writes that in Western society, young children are often shielded from conversations deemed adult-only topics or issues. This form of censorship removes children from the possibilities of learning how [to become in a world](#) filled with great moments of joy, times of incredible challenges and everything in between. To be wonderful people, Elder Pointe reminds us, children are, and need to be, seen as wonderful people who have the potential to tell new stories in this ever-changing world. This potential can only be realized when pedagogists and educators listen to children, to hear their theories, questions and stories of their worlds. This type of listening, which [Carla Rinaldi refers to as a pedagogy of listening](#), is more than hearing children's words. It is a pedagogical practice of attending to children's stories, drawings, songs, words, looks and so forth, and then offering back to children a response. The response provided back does not simply echo what children have said or ask a question to assess understanding. Instead, it is a response that begins a dialogue with children, opening up the possibilities for wonder and curiosity. This response creates a pause in the day, allowing for collective thinking, questioning, considering and experimentation. When listening and responding with children to the world, we do not need to wait for the smoke to recede or the weather cools down to restart the curriculum. Curriculum emerges from the moments of life that allow us to co-create new possibilities and understandings with children.

Collective attunement to everyday, for example, spiders and their webs, or the conversations that emerge as children trace and draw their bodies, allows children educators and pedagogists to respond to moments rich with possibilities to wonder, question and experiment. Spending time getting to know spiders and spider webs was an opportunity for an educator, children, and their pedagogist in Prince George's to reimagine the curriculum as an ongoing process that values listening and collaboration. This collective thinking cumulated in the exhibit [Children's Encounters with Spiders and Spider Webs](#). In Terrace, educators, children and their pedagogist were provoked by the thoughts and ideas emerging from tracing and drawing life-sized bodies. The bodies made possible the co-creation of a curriculum that challenged idyllic notions of childhood. Their work

was showcased in [Childhoods: Becoming, Inheriting and Unbounding Bodies](#). Both exhibits celebrate the beauty and richness of the collective life of children and educators when the everyday occurrences of life are seen as holding possibilities for meaningful and relevant curricula. We encourage our readers to visit the [ECPN website](#) to engage with the work of educators, children and pedagogists across the province and to find out more information about upcoming events. We are looking forward to continuing to work with educators across the province in early years centres, in communities and virtually. As you prepare for the summer and whatever it may bring, we offer you the words of the late bell hooks (1994):

The classroom, with all its limitations, remains a location of possibility. In that field of possibility, we have the opportunity to labour for freedom, to the demand of ourselves and our comrades an openness of mind and heart that allows us to face reality even as we collectively imagine ways to move beyond boundaries to transgress. This is education as the practice of freedom. ([hooks, 1994](#), p. 207)

Continuing the Conversation

The ECPN stands alongside all who are celebrating and honouring [Pride Month](#) in Canada. Like many of you, we are aware of the [increased attacks of hate and violence on 2SLGBTQI+ people](#). As educators and pedagogists, we must work together to actively engage in pedagogical practices that celebrate difference and diversity. Heeding Elder Pointe's moving presentation at the ECEBC conference, early childhood centres should be spaces that celebrate ways of being that reflect the diversity of sexuality and gender identity. Together, we must disrupt the discourse of heteronormativity that [maintain inequities and exclusions in educational settings](#). We thank Grace Lore, the Minister of State for Child Care, for her leadership and advocacy in supporting the rights of the 2SLGBTQI+community.

This month is the perfect time to read [Jennifer Whiteside, Minister of Education and Child Care and education partners' statement on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity \(SOGI\) in education](#). The Ministry of Education and ChildCare offers all educators essential resources such as [SOGI 123](#) in creating learning spaces that are safe and inclusive for all children and their families. Disability activist [Sunaura Taylor](#) and philosopher [Judith Butler](#) take a walk and discuss

how some bodies seen are as 'normal' and of others as disabled, hence not normal, in a powerful video in [the Examine Life Series](#).

[June 21st is National Indigenous Peoples Day](#) which offers those of us who are uninvited guests or settlers on these lands the to recommit to the [Calls to Action in the report from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission](#). We applaud and honour our sister network, the [First Nations Pedagogies Network \(FNPN\)](#) in their work to the "cultural continuance and revitalization of early childhood education with First Nations children, families, cultures and communities on Indigenous terms." The FNPN invites educators to participate in the dialogues around Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care at [their online workshops](#).

The ECPN celebrates the work of [The Métis Nation of BC](#) in their commitment to early learning programs in which Métis culture is recognized and celebrated. They have introduced a new learning guide, "[Aansaambaenkiskayhtaamuk - Learning Together](#)" (Heritage Michif, translated by Norman Fleury), to support both Métis and non-Métis early childhood educators in integrating Métis content and pedagogy in their work with young children. Look for details on a workshop in the Fall of 2023.

Join the Conversation

ECPN Community Events

For upcoming and ongoing events please follow the links below. To stay up to date with ECPN's events and news, [subscribe](#) to our website.



Animate Companionship: Drama, Performance & Education

July 4th, 2023 | 6pm-7:30pm PDT | Online

In this exposure, Monica Prendergast, Juliana Saxton and Carole Miller consider Drama, Theatre and Performance Studies as companionship for thought and for our engagements with education.

[See Details](#)

ECPN Highlights

This spring we conducted interviews with educators in BC who have been working with pedagogists. We are excited to showcase how educators and pedagogists respond to the challenges of living well with others in early childhood education across British Columbia.

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