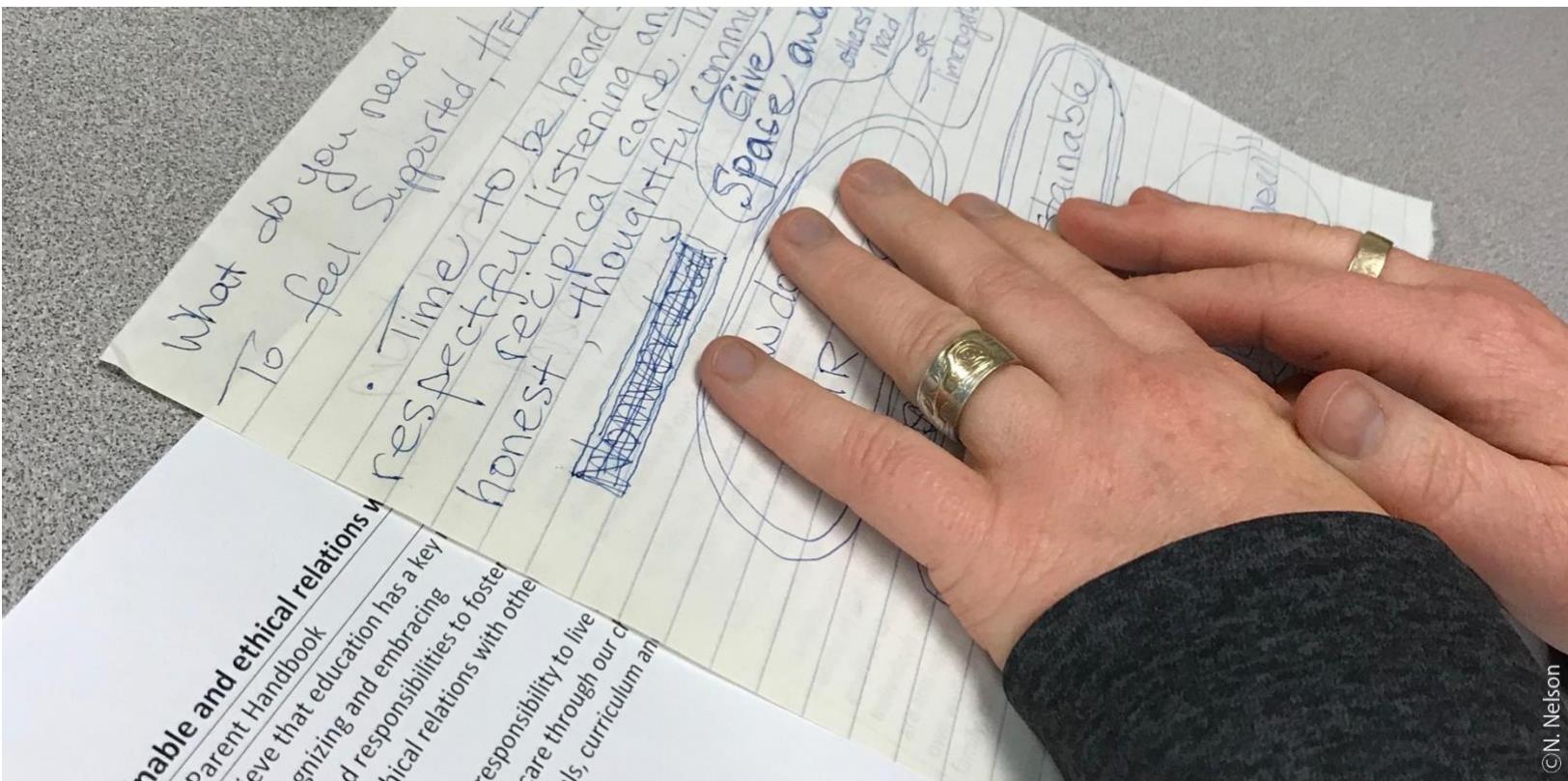




The Here and Now Reimagining Early Childhoods In Urgent Times



A Just Transition to a Publicly Funded System

On January 26th, 2022, Minister Katrina Chen hosted an [online discussion with Dr. Bonnie Henry](#) and a panel of public health experts in response to pushback by early childhood educators and operators against a lack of government and public health guidance and support for the sector during the peak of the latest Omicron pandemic wave. BC early childhood educators, childcare centre managers and owners are not alone in expressing outrage at what they feel has been a lack of respect for their position, working with the only segment of society (young children) who remain ineligible for vaccines in an already over-stretched and under-paid field. Frustration has been growing across Canada, and the United States, with an increasing number of early childhood professionals speaking out against the [failure](#) of a patchwork, market-driven system built on the backs of a largely feminized and undervalued sector of society.

It is within this political climate that the [BC Government is asking for input](#) on the critical considerations for creating a universal early learning and care system. Recognizing this moment as unprecedented in terms of political will and positive momentum at all levels - thanks in large part to ongoing work by advocates who have been pushing for an accessible, affordable, well-supported system of early childhood education and child care for years, here we offer an additional response to the BC Government's call for input.

Previously, [we proposed questions](#) in response to the government's goal to make early childhood education more inclusive and culturally safe and inclusive for all children. In this edition of the *Here & Now*, we respond to growing discontent in the field by unpacking the [issue of recruitment and retention in early childhood education](#) in reference to justice. To do so in a meaningful way requires us to rephrase the question from asking how to address recruitment and retention, to considering what educators, researchers and advocates know intimately and experience on an everyday basis as the reasons behind recruitment and retention.

Vanessa Milne, reporter for [The Local](#), succinctly summarized what those in the field have been saying for years: [Canada’s patchwork system of early childhood education simply is not working](#) and does not have the conditions necessary to support a public system without major changes. [Statistics Canada](#) reports that in 2019, 96 percent of early childhood educators are women and this gendered and highly racialized group earns less overall than most workers. Simply put, as witnessed within other contexts around the world, the current market-based system is not the answer.

“When translated into educational policy and pedagogy [neoliberal] ideas reflect a distinct shift from a group-orientation to an individual-orientation; education pivots from being a social, not-for-profit enterprise to a consumer-based, for profit movement.” ([Gupta, 2018, p. 14](#))

What kind of system do we envision as being capable of attracting and retaining qualified professionals who are committed to transformative change? [Calls for a publicly funded system](#), such as the public school system to ensure adequate remuneration for highly-trained early childhood educators, improved working conditions, and appropriate education levels for future educators are getting louder and louder, for good reason.

The ECPN stands with others asking for transparency from government as to the plan for a just transition from a patchwork, private system to a public one. By a just transition, we mean an early childhood education (not child care) system that transforms itself to account for its current injustices, as well as a system that plays a role in transforming the myriad injustices that we are currently witnessing ([racism](#), [extractive capitalism](#), and more). While recognizing private child care providers’ contributions under the previous patchwork system, as a growing number of voices in the field are saying: scaling up status quo is not enough. A just transition requires clarity and a clear vision on how we will move to a publicly-funded [national public system](#) capable of honouring the needs and realities of local communities. In BC, this means supporting early childhood educators with high levels of education and ongoing professional development to promote understandings of their important role in upholding the vision and commitments to young children and their families highlighted in the [BC Early Learning Framework](#).

As [Christine McLean](#) (2022) tells us “[t]his is a significant paradigm shift as we start to consider that child care is an important public service rather than a market commodity.” The ECPN looks forward to being a part of the process of carefully creating a just transition by continuing to support educators throughout BC to create pedagogical spaces for young children with a commitment to more livable lives for all.

Continuing the Conversation

Ongoing [Calls to Action](#) for TRUTH and Reconciliation

On January 25, 2022, the Chief and Council of Williams Lake First Nation began their preliminary search of the grounds of St Joseph’s Mission. Later that day, a statement [was released to the media](#) indicating that 93 sites of possible human burials had been located.

[Phyllis Webstad](#) was six years old in 1973, when she attended St Joseph Mission Residential School and where on her arrival, she was stripped of the orange shirt given to her by her grandma. Phyllis’s story of resilience and survival as well as the history of Orange Shirt Day can be found on the [Orange Shirt](#) website.

On the heels of this latest tragic announcement, we hope that you will carefully read and consider [Phyllis’s statement](#) on the events of January 25, 2022.

I have often thought of this day. How will our families and communities ever get through today and the days and years to come? I grieve for all who never made it — the children who never made it home and for survivors and their families who could not keep carrying the pain. Today our truths, the truths we witnessed, the truths we have always known and told, are brought to light once

again. The confirmation of children's remains found at the Mission where three generations of my family attended is traumatizing, yet it also serves as validation of the stories told.

My thoughts and prayers are with the survivors and families from the Nations who attended the Mission, which included Secwépemc (Shuswap), Tsilhqot'in (Chilcotin), St'at'imc (Lillooet), Dakelh (Southern Carrier) and Nuxalk (Bella Coola).

I ask them to support and look after one another. We will get through this together. I am so grateful to survivors who told their stories, even when no one was listening. Survivors, always remember you matter, you are important. Continue to tell your truths and what you witnessed. The world is listening. Every child matters — past, present and future.

We ask members of the ECPN community to look for opportunities take our [collective responsibility to colonization](#) seriously by familiarizing ourselves with public testimony, reports, and evidence already available.

- The [Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples](#)
- The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of Canada [Final Report](#)
- The [TRC 94 Calls to Action](#)
- The Final Report of the [National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls](#)

Visit our [website](#) and follow us on Twitter to continue the conversation:

[Join the Conversation](#)

Past Events

For a recording of ECPN's most recent public events, please follow the links below. To stay up to date with ECPN's events and news, [subscribe](#) to our website.

Early Childhood Pedagogy Network Series

"This Is So Bad!"

Conversations V Pt. 2: January 25, 2022

Led by ECPN Faculty Pedagogist, Michelle Pierce

In conversation with USCC Children's Orchard Preschool Educators, Iryna Mykhaylova and Katina D'Onofrio

[View Recording](#)

Early Childhood Pedagogy Network

Exposure

with

Nick Conbere

Using Drawing to Visualize Changing Landscapes

[View Recording](#)



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