

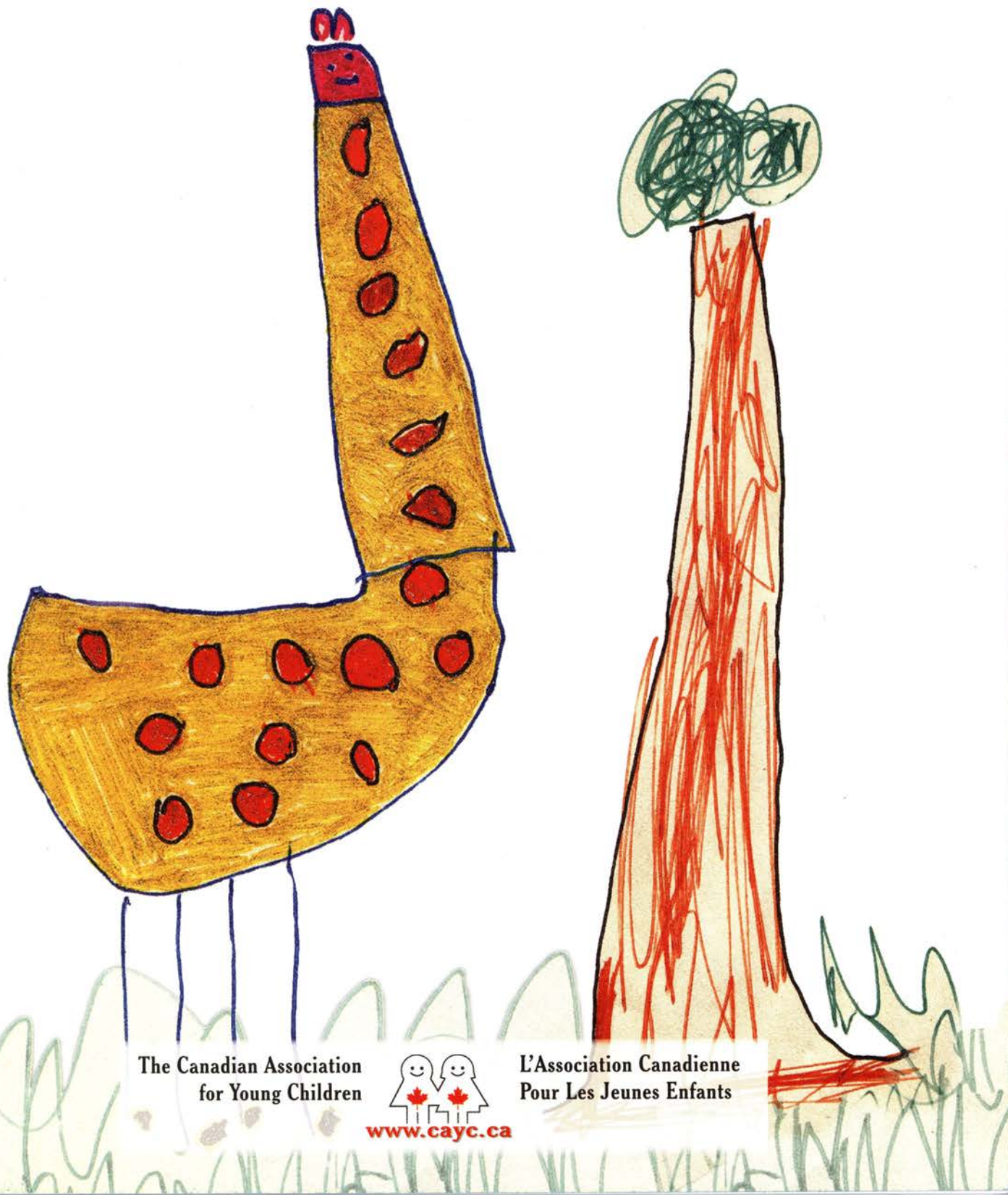
C A N A D I A N

# CHILDREN

JOURNAL OF THE CANADIAN ASSOCIATION FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

SPRING / PRINTEMPS 2007

Vol. 32 No. 1



The Canadian Association  
for Young Children



[www.cayc.ca](http://www.cayc.ca)

L'Association Canadienne  
Pour Les Jeunes Enfants



## THE CANADIAN ASSOCIATION FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

### WHAT IS THE CAYC

The Canadian Association for Young Children (CAYC) grew out of Council for Childhood Education and was officially recognized in 1974 by the granting of a Federal Charter. It is the only national association specifically concerned with the well-being of children, birth through age nine at home, in preschool settings and at school. Members of the multidisciplinary association include parents, teachers, caregivers, administrators, students and all those wishing to share ideas and participate in activities related to the education and welfare of young children.

### MISSION STATEMENT

CAYC exists to provide a Canadian voice on critical issues related to the quality of life of all young children and their families.

### THE AIMS OF THE CAYC

1. To influence the direction and quality of policies and programs that affect the development and well-being of young children in Canada.
2. To provide a forum for the members of Canada's early childhood community to support one another in providing developmentally appropriate programs for young children.
3. To promote and provide opportunities for professional development for those charged with the care and education of young children.
4. To promote opportunities for effective liaison and collaboration with all those responsible for young children.
5. To recognize outstanding contributions to the well-being of young children.

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#### 2. Provincial and Regional Events:

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## ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE POUR LES JEUNES ENFANTS

### QU'EST CE QUE L'ACJE

L'Association Canadienne pour les Jeunes Enfants, issue du *Council for Childhood Education*, a reçu sa charte fédérale en 1974. Elle demeure la seule association nationale vouée exclusivement au bien-être des enfants, de la naissance jusqu'à l'âge de neuf ans, dans leur foyer, à la garderie et à l'école primaire. L'ACJE est composée de parents, d'enseignants, de professionnels de la petite enfance, d'administrateurs et d'étudiants, ainsi que de tous ceux et celles qui sont intéressés à partager leurs idées en participant à des activités liées au bien-être et à l'éducation des jeunes enfants.

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L'ACJE s'est donné comme mandat de faire entendre une voix canadienne sur les questions essentielles ayant trait à la qualité de vie de tous les jeunes enfants et de leur famille.

### SES OBJECTIFS

1. Jouer un rôle sur le plan des orientations et sur la qualité des politiques et des programmes touchant au développement et au bien-être des jeunes enfants canadiens.
2. Créer un forum pour les membres de la communauté canadienne oeuvrant dans le domaine de la petite enfance afin de susciter une collaboration active dans l'élaboration de programmes appropriés au développement des jeunes enfants.
3. Encourager et offrir des possibilités de perfectionnement professionnel au personnel responsable du bien-être et de l'éducation des jeunes enfants.
4. Promouvoir des occasions pour une meilleure coordination et collaboration entre tous les responsables des jeunes enfants.
5. Récompenser et souligner les contributions exceptionnelles faites en faveur des jeunes enfants.

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#### 2. Les événements provinciaux et locaux:

L'ACJE encourage ses membres à organiser des conférences, des séminaires ou des congrès au niveau local et régional afin de débattre des problèmes relatifs aux jeunes enfants.

#### 3. La revue :

Publication bisannuelle et multidisciplinaire de premier ordre, la revue regroupe des articles traitant de questions d'éducation et de formation des jeunes enfants. On y retrouve également des articles écrits par des experts de renommée nationale et internationale. La rubrique *Inside CAYC* renseigne les lecteurs sur les activités de l'Association.

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# CANADIAN CHILDREN

JOURNAL OF THE CANADIAN ASSOCIATION FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

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Vol. 32 No. 1

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*Cover Photo: contributed by Isobel Dunne, 5 years old of Dublin, Ireland.*



**Canadian Children** is the journal of the Canadian Association for Young Children (CAYC), the only national association specifically concerned with the well-being of children of preschool and elementary age in Canada. The journal is published twice yearly and contains articles, book reviews and announcements of professional conferences.

**Canadian Children** is a multidisciplinary journal concerned with child development and early childhood education. Authors from across Canada, and elsewhere, are invited to submit articles and book reviews which reflect the variety and extent of both research and practice in early childhood education and child rearing.

#### CONTENT:

Submissions should appeal to an audience that includes parents, professionals in the field of childhood education and child services, as well as teachers and researchers. Most issues are multi-theme in nature and the editor will attempt to balance articles that are research-related with articles of a practical nature relating to programming, curriculum, classroom practice or child rearing.

#### FORM, LENGTH AND STYLE:

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**Canadian Children** est la revue de l'Association pour les Jeunes Enfants (ACJE). Elle demeure la seule association vouée exclusivement au bien-être des enfants de niveau préscolaire et primaire au Canada. Cette revue bisannuelle regroupe des articles, des comptes rendus de livres et des avis de conférences professionnelles.

**Canadian Children** est une publication multidisciplinaire qui traite du développement de l'enfant et de son éducation durant la petite enfance. Les auteurs du Canada et d'ailleurs sont invités à soumettre des articles et des comptes rendus de livres qui mettent en évidence la variété et l'étendue de la recherche et de la pratique dans le domaine de l'éducation au cours de la petite enfance.

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Les articles doivent s'adresser à un public composé de parents, de professionnels de l'éducation et de services à l'enfance, ainsi que d'enseignants et de chercheurs. Chaque numéro traite de divers thèmes et le rédacteur en chef tentera d'y inclure tant des articles portant sur la recherche que des articles portant sur des aspects pratiques de l'éducation comme la gestion et la mise œuvre de programmes d'études, les méthodes d'enseignement en salle de classe et les techniques utilisées pour élever les enfants.

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MABEL F. HIGGINS  
EDITOR

"... Evidence now available permits us to move beyond the debate about whether physical punishment is harmful to children ... or even effective as discipline."

See page 52

Five year old, Isobel, visiting from Dublin, Ireland, was playing with 18 month old, Stuart. She asked, "May I draw you a picture? What do you like, Stuart?" He did not respond but looked at her quizzically as she panned the room for objects of interest. Elephants, a hippo, a monkey in a tree - reflections from his father's visit to Africa, grace the space where Stuart spends his days. Her thinking settles on a giraffe - this image though, was in her mind's eye...and probably there by association. She selected from the many colours that were offered and the result has found its way from a Canadian family room to our cover.

The journal now falls under the wing of our new *Publications Chair*, *Deirdre Leighton*, who has enthusiastically worn many CAYC hats over the years. A warm welcome! To *Wayne Eastman* whose diligence and always readiness to stop what he was doing for the journal, a big thank-you as you leave this role. The sometimes quiet workings of an individual or group of professionals/authors in our field are 'seeds for the picking'. Conversations with Canadian Children's authors revealed a passionate desire to bring their investigations to others. With the help of our dedicated editorial team, we bring you these seeds - readings that we think you will find informative, provocative and inspiring in your work with young children and their families.

The *Invitational* article features a British Columbia collaborative of authors acquainting us with their project of '*thinking differently about quality*' in their work with children. The "quality" descriptor sometimes seems nothing more than the buzz word of our profession - in this investigation it takes on an elevated meaning. The authors present this as a thoughtful contribution to their Canadian colleagues who may be working on education policy.

*Reaching Children of Prisoners* was an eye opener for me - these 'hidden' children

have their story told in this article and teachers are provided with possible strategies. The words of one nine year old boy, "I wonder what my life would have been if I had normal parents", reveal the need for our attention. Another author tells us of the worthiness of the *Kind Intentions Program*... About this article, one reviewer said: "Children are bombarded with aggressive and often violent acts as ways to solve social problems. Schools mirror what society is doing. This program and the teachers are suggesting "Enough is enough"...let's see if we can make a difference! Bravo!"

*The Grade One project with Shadows* documents this teacher's active research in both word and children's detailed sketches. As a participant in this research, she provokes children to come to new discoveries and then as a guide she offers materials, space and resources to follow their intense interest in everyday occurrences. In *Magic Can Happen*, the authors tell the story of the 'flow' between adults in the classroom and how it can lead to an enthusiastic learning community. Those involved in teacher education will relate to this work.

As we learn about ongoing research for Canada's children, our federal government seems to struggle with how best to support children in their early years. Investigating a recent bi-lateral agreement with provinces and territories across Canada, this author wonders why the federal politicians have lost their way.

As we cap off this issue, I want to point out the two reviews in our professional resources section. Both authors take inspiration from their findings... one a *Cree Story for Children*... and the other, an environment-inspired CD and book, collaboration of Canada's well-known, *Raffi*. These works reveal that many people are joining forces with our profession in making this a better world for our children.



## Thinking Differently about 'Quality' in British Columbia: Dialogue with the Reggio Emilia Early Childhood Project

Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw, Laurie Kocher, Iris Berger, Karen Isaac & Janet Mort

**Dr. Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw** is a faculty member at the School of Child and Youth Care at the University of Victoria. Her research interests, writing and activities converge on issues of social justice and child care. Currently she co-directs the Investigating Quality Project and coordinates the Early Years Specialization at the University of Victoria.

**Laurie Kocher** is a frequent contributor to *Canadian Children*. She is a former coordinator of the Institute for Early Childhood Education and Research at the University of British Columbia and is currently a kindergarten teacher in an International Baccalaureate public school where she hopes to marry the IB ideas with the philosophy of the Reggio Emilia approach. A doctoral candidate at the University of Southern Queensland in Australia, Laurie is exploring pedagogical documentation as a catalyst for teacher change.

**Iris Berger** has been an early childhood educator for the past 12 years. Currently, she is the coordinator of the Institute for Early Childhood Education and Research at the University of British Columbia.

**Karen Isaac** is the Executive Director of the British Columbia Aboriginal Child Care Society.

**Janet Mort** is a former Superintendent of Schools. She is a SSHRC (Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council) award winner and doctoral candidate at the University of Victoria, where she is studying how integrated services in communities can better support young children's developmental needs.

This article is a shortened and revised version of a report written for the UBC School Leadership Centre. The original full report may be found at [slc.edu.ubc.ca/ReggioEmilia.htm](http://slc.edu.ubc.ca/ReggioEmilia.htm)

### Abstract

This article reports how a group of educators, researchers and Aboriginal leaders view the educational project of the internationally renowned municipal early childhood programs of Reggio Emilia in Italy as a source of inspiration for rethinking British Columbia's early education policies. The authors argue that in order to work towards 'quality' early education, understandings and discussions within the province need to embrace critical dialogues concerning language, the image of the child, the image of the teacher, the relationship between learning and assessment, and community participation.

### Introduction

During the last decade, early education<sup>1</sup> gained prominence as an important public policy agenda item in federal, provincial, regional and local discussions. More recently, various reports have been published that address early education policy in British Columbia (e.g., Kershaw, Irwin, Trafford & Hertzman, 2005; Elliot, 2006; Ministry of Children and Family Development & Ministry of Education [MCFD & ME], 2005). This article contributes an alternative analysis of early education policies and provides suggestions for the direction of policies in British Columbia. In particular, it explores the conditions that have made possible the success of the Reggio Emilia programs and outlines perspectives and practices from these programs that could be considered as sources of

inspiration to enhance early education in British Columbia. Although the focus of this article is British Columbia, those working in the area of early education policies within the context of other provinces in Canada might find the issues identified here of value.

This article emerged from discussions by the authors following a visit to the Reggio Emilia early childhood programs as part of a leadership study group organized by Reggio Children.<sup>2</sup> This was the first Canadian group that participated in the leadership study tour.<sup>3</sup> Previous Canadian study groups have been primarily focused on the innovative pedagogical approaches of Reggio Emilia's programs and geared toward educators, trainers, and researchers. The leadership study group came about in response to requests from educators, trainers, and

<sup>1</sup> Other valid terms include: Early Childhood Education/ECE, Early Childhood Education and Care/ECCE (OECD), Early Childhood Care for Development/ECCD (Consultative Group), and Early Childhood Development/ECD (UNESCO, World Bank, ADEA). Recent British Columbia government publications use the term early learning and child care.

<sup>2</sup> Reggio Children is "a mixed public-private company that the Municipality of Reggio Emilia, along with other interested subjects, decided to establish in 1994 to manage the pedagogical and cultural exchange initiatives that had already been taking place for many years between the municipal early childhood services and a large number of teachers and researchers from all over the world." See <http://zerosei.comune.re.it/inter/reggiochildren.htm>

<sup>3</sup> The participating working group was made up of representatives from the BC Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Children and Families, the University of British Columbia, the Human Early Learning Project (HELP), the University of Victoria, and the British Columbia Aboriginal Child Care Society. The group was chaired by Dr. Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw. Members of the group included Iris Berger, Lynne Holt, Karen Isaac, Susan Kennedy, Laurie Kocher, and Janet Mort. The visit and background work preparation of this article was made possible by the support of the School Leadership Centre at the University of British Columbia, and in particular the support and leadership provided by Mark Edwards.



researchers from around the world wanting to know what supportive policy foundations exist behind Reggio Emilia's successful pedagogical approaches.

Before proceeding, we wish to acknowledge the challenges associated with drawing lessons from other contexts. We feel excited to be able to explore the Reggio Emilia programs and consider them in relation to British Columbia's early education policies. However, we are aware of the challenges of 'transferability' of programs and policies (Grieshaber & Hatch, 2003; Johnson, 1999). Our intention is to make the contextual structures visible, and come to an informed understanding of how British Columbians might choose to look at our own early education system. Our emphasis is on the conditions that make Reggio Emilia early childhood programs successful, and consequently on the policy conditions that we need in British Columbia in order to create 'quality'<sup>4</sup> early education spaces.

#### **British Columbia's Early Education: The 'Quality' Dilemma**

British Columbia recognizes the need for 'quality' early education as one of the primary issues within its policies. The primary strategy for *assuring* 'quality' early education in the province has been through regulations that set minimum standards for improving structural factors such as group size, adult-child ratios, and training levels of caregivers, as well as levels of literacy, numeracy, and school preparedness in young children.

'Quality' *improvement* approaches have focused on the development and use of measurements and instruments to assess 'quality'. This understanding of 'quality' is underlined in the use of the well-known instruments developed by Harms, Clifford and Cryer, the ECERS (Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale) and ITES (Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale). The Canadian child care research literature includes many examples of studies that have defined 'quality' using these instruments and others like them (i.e., see Goelman, Forer, Kershaw,

Doherty, Lero, & LaGrange, 2006; Sylva, Siraj-Blatchford, Taggart, Sammons, Melhuish, Elliot, & Totsika, 2006; Doherty, Forer, Lero, Goelman, & LaGrande, 2006).

Another initiative to improve quality has focused on the improvement of children's developmental outcomes, usually expressed in terms of school readiness. The identification of 'risks' and 'vulnerabilities', for the improvement of outcomes has been emphasized throughout the province (Kershaw, Irwin, Trafford & Hertzman, 2005). Within these discussions, there is an emphasis on standards and good practice guidelines, such as the NAEYC's *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs* (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997), which specifies practices believed to produce 'positive' developmental outcomes:

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*Those working in the area of early education policies within the context of other provinces in Canada might find the issues identified here of value.*

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The effect of child care on children's social, emotional, linguistic and cognitive development depends in part on children's daily experiences in their child care program. This experience is often referred to as process quality with high-quality defined as a combination of nurturing relationships, protection of children's health and safety, and the availability of developmentally-appropriate, stimulating activities and experiences (Doherty et al., 2006, p. 297).

The primary concern is "that greater understanding of the contributors to quality will enable a more strategic approach to addressing the current concerns about the extent to which [child care programs] support and enhance children's development" (Doherty et al., 2006, p.297, p.300).

This article proposes that we might do well by broadening and deepening the province's understandings and discussions of quality, particularly the aspects that British Columbia (and North America in general) value when discussing quality. Universalist approaches might not necessarily create innovative and dynamic early education programs for British Columbia's young children. Dahlberg, Moss and Pence (1999) remind us that, "the concept of quality is about a search for definitive and universal criteria that will offer certainty and order, and a belief that such transcendental criteria can be found. It asks the question - how far does this product, this service or this activity conform to a universal, objective and predetermined standard? It has no place for complexity, values, diversity, subjectivity, indeterminacy and multiple perspectives" (p.108).

The next section outlines perspectives from the Reggio Emilia early childhood programs that we consider to have the potential to help us 'enhance' early education here in British Columbia. We believe that the following highlighted aspects of the Reggio Emilia project could enrich discussions within British Columbia as the province plans ways of attending to the rights of young children and their families and communities. In addition to our own impressions of and experiences with the Reggio Emilia early childhood programs, we draw on the interpretations of Reggio by scholars such as Gunilla Dahlberg, Carlina Rinaldi and Peter Moss.

#### **A Vision for British Columbia: An Inspiration from Reggio Emilia's Early Childhood Programs**

Local early childhood educators and theorists struggle to interpret and re-think the 'Reggio Emilia Approach' in the North American context. Some of the challenges stem from the fact that early childhood education, schooling and childhood are perceived differently in North America (Dahlberg, Moss & Pence, 1999). For example, in North America, early childhood programs are

<sup>4</sup> We use 'quality' in quotation marks as we acknowledge the complexities and nuances embedded in discussions of 'quality' early learning and child care. For a full discussion of these complexities and nuances, refer to Moss and Pence (1994); and Dahlberg, Moss and Pence (1999).



often viewed as preparation for school, while from a Reggio Emilia perspective children's educational experiences are valued in the here and now. In North America, language and literacy focus on children's writing and reading skills, but the programs in Reggio Emilia see children as having a 'hundred languages' of expression. The local language that is used to describe goals for programs for young children often uses the term children's needs. Reggio Emilia educators discuss the protection of children's *rights*, as opposed to *needs*, as the foundation of their approach. In North America, testing and standardized assessments are widely used and highly valued for improving children's outcomes, while in Reggio Emilia authentic assessment in the form of pedagogical documentation is used to open up new possibilities for learning (Fu, Stremmel, & Hill, 2001; Hendrick, 1997).

Why this difference? What are the values and beliefs that underpin 'quality' early childhood education in Reggio Emilia? What can British Columbia learn about priorities for early education? We explore these questions by outlining some of the aspects that we believe create a 'different' kind of education for young children, an education that is internationally recognized for its respect to children.

#### ***Language De-Construction and Re-Construction***

What has captured our attention and interest is the coherence and clarity of language and thought that the different stakeholders in Reggio Emilia use when discussing their programs for the young children. A lot of thought is given to the articulation of ideas and concepts related to children, families, and education. Words are always linked to action and change. Reggio Emilia's citizens have created a new vocabulary within which children, childhood, learning, educating, communicating, and managing are described, discussed, and reflected upon. This language is neither a scientific language, nor a developmental language.

Rather, it is a language that reflects what children, educators, parents, and the community collectively value for children in their town. We saw in Reggio Emilia a commitment on the part of the community to engage in dialogue, to discuss in depth and to debate the education of the community's children.<sup>5</sup>

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***in North America, early childhood programs are often viewed as preparation for school, while from a Reggio Emilia perspective children's educational experiences are valued in the here and now.***

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Topics of discussion include questions such as: Who is the child? What image of childhood do we want to promote? What is education? What constitutes an educational experience? How does education relate to the past, present and future? Who is responsible for the education of young children? How can we collaborate to maintain a high quality educational system that embraces differences and diversity? What is family participation? How do we welcome families into the educational system? Who will support and guide the teachers? How do young children learn? What evidence do we see that children do learn in our programs? In Reggio Emilia, these questions are reflected upon by *all* stakeholders, including children and parents, in a meaningful and inspiring way.

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***it is a language that reflects what children, educators, parents, and the community collectively value for children in their town.***

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An example of the importance placed on language can be found in Rinaldi's (2006a) book, *In Dialogue with Reggio Emilia*. She describes how, at the beginning of the early childhood educational project, a discussion started with regard to what term should be attached to the preschools of Reggio Emilia: Should they be called 'municipal schools of early childhood,' or 'schools for early childhood'? A decision was made to say each school is *of* (belonging to) children, and therefore the schools are called 'Scuole comunali dell'infanzia'. Again, the question is not simply one of language - in the Reggio Emilia context language leads to and informs action. Another example of the importance of language lies in the terminology that has been chosen to refer to those who work with children. 'Practitioner' is a word that is not favored by educators in Reggio Emilia, because it implies that teachers (educators) assume responsibility only for the classroom practice without consideration of an underlying theory of education.

In British Columbia, we need to begin to pay attention to the language we use and consequently its implications that often times might be disrespectful to the children we are trying to embrace. We rarely specify the meanings of terms that we use in early childhood education - terms such as 'quality,' 'standards,' 'outcomes,' 'at risk,' 'school readiness,' 'vulnerability,' 'early literacy,' and many others. Who defines these terms? What is assumed by these terms? How are children contributing to these definitions? How are parents contributing to the construction of language? What image of childhood are we constructing through these terms? Reggio Emilia starts from a very different place than mainstream North American approaches: rather than believing that knowledge originates from the answers, the people of Reggio Emilia believe that knowledge comes from the questions asked, questions that are essential to ensuring that programs have 'authentic roots' and reflect the values and realities of the people.

<sup>5</sup> Reggio Emilia's early childhood programs originated right after WWII with a desire to reconstruct the community. See historical background.



Dahlberg, Moss and Pence (1999) remind us that, "the creation of a crisis in thinking and a struggle over meaning can produce opportunities, opening up the possibility of viewing children, early childhood institutions and early childhood pedagogy in new ways" (p. 122). We need this "crisis in thinking" in British Columbia to open up discussions of policy, training, practice, and research in relation to 'quality'.

### *Critical Dialogue Concerning the Image of the Child*

In Reggio Emilia, citizens speak of the centrality of childhood (to the Italian culture) and the rights of children. A 1999 OECD report about Italian early childhood education and care policy states, "What seems to have remained constant amidst the newly negotiated roles of adults is the intrinsic value of children in twentieth century Italy" (OECD, 2001, p. 2). In 1968, the Italian government passed Law 444 providing national funds for early childhood programs and proclaiming the right of Italian children to early childhood education. "The 1968 Law marked Italy's changing cultural interpretation of ECEC as a response to children's needs and rights rather than solely as a form of assistance for working mothers" (OECD, 2001, p.15). Children are viewed as citizens with rights from the moment that they are born, not merely as citizens of the future (Rinaldi, 2006b, February).

In Reggio Emilia, educators, parents, city officials, commissioners of education, and members of the community all discuss children as possessors of rights, respected and valued for their unique identities. They talk about children as interpreters of reality, children who are competent at formulating hypotheses, building theories, and imagining metaphors as possibilities for understanding reality.

The language used by the Italian government describes early childhood programs as an *educational right of young children and their families*. This stands

in stark contrast with our use of language in British Columbia — language that attempts to separate 'early learning' and 'child care,' implying that the first is an educational opportunity while the latter is a service for working parents. We would be well advised to embrace a broader notion of *education*, to include aspects of learning and care for young children, based on children's rights and the rights of families. This will, of course, involve us in discussions to specify those rights in our own contexts.

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### *Children are viewed as citizens with rights from the moment that they are born, not merely as citizens of the future*

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In British Columbia, we tend to see children as having 'needs' and 'vulnerabilities,' mostly defined through developmental lenses. Children are seen as having emotional needs, social needs, language needs, cognitive needs, and physical needs.<sup>6</sup> However, from the Italian perspective, the child is full of rights, capabilities, potential, and possibilities. These two contrasting views have produced very different educational programs. The programs rest on different values. The Reggio Emilia programs have many of the features that are part of North American definitions of 'quality.' In British Columbia, we continue to struggle with the question of how to 'reach' or 'accomplish' 'quality' early education.

Among the many lessons we can learn from Reggio Emilia is the need to reconsider our assumptions about children and childhood, and the purposes and goals of early education. Once we have considered those issues, we will be in a better position to understand how to design our early education approaches and systems to ensure that they reflect our values and visions.

### *Critical Dialogue Concerning the Image of the Early Childhood Educator*

In Reggio Emilia, educators are recognized as researchers, not only knowledgeable about pedagogical theories but also, and more importantly, as builders, or constructors of educational theory. Teachers are empowered to act as researchers.

There is perhaps no better reason to continue our examination of the Reggio Emilia approach than the fact that it presents an image of the teacher as one who enjoys learning as much as teaching, who appreciates questions as well as answers, and who views alternative points of view as opportunities for discussion and observation. The Reggio Emilia approach to professional development provides dramatic illustration of the benefits of enlarging the focus from what works best for children to consider what it is that teachers need to inform, improve, and inspire their practice. (New, 1994, p. 35)

Any serious initiative to improve early education in British Columbia must include recognition of the need for more and better education and professional development opportunities for our early childhood education workforce, accompanied by significant improvements in wages and working conditions. The content and philosophical approach underlying the education of our early childhood educators needs thoughtful analysis and reconsideration. In their pre-service education and in-service professional development early childhood educators should be encouraged to reflect on language, on assumptions about children and childhood, and to gain the skills needed to establish productive, respectful collaborative relationships with all stakeholders. A minimum of 3 years of post-secondary education is required if these issues are to be introduced to pre-service educators. Additional education is essential if the goal is to provide candidates with the knowledge and skills

<sup>6</sup> See Dahlberg and Moss (2005); Moss and Petrie (2002); Rinaldi (2005) for an analysis of the image of the child.



required to begin working as reflective researchers, work in partnership with parents, and work with diverse children and families. In the Reggio Emilia programs, some of the most important competencies of the teachers include:

- their perceptive understanding and awareness of the implications of what they are observing;
- their ability to hypothesize regarding what is appropriate and helpful to each child's learning;
- their ability and inclination to constantly examine and reexamine their assumptions, understandings, and knowledge;
- their ability to recognize when and how to improvise, to propose, to encourage and to engage in the experience of the child's search for meaning.

#### *From Assessment and Evaluation to Meaning Making*

Reggio Emilia has chosen to create 'quality' programs by focusing on its pedagogical project. To focus merely on the creation of regulations and standards of quality for evaluating early education programs would be too narrow a strategy in the pursuit of quality (Dahlberg, Moss, & Pence, 1999). Quality systems require more than the application of standards. The citizens of Reggio Emilia have devoted thought and time to the creation of successful, vibrant, and dynamic programs with a global reputation for excellence. Pedagogical documentation has been key in achieving this excellence.

In addition, pedagogical documentation, as opposed to developmental assessments, provides new ways of supporting children's learning. It offers a flexible approach in which teachers make initial hypotheses about classroom activities but these are subject to modifications and changes of direction as the activities unfold. This approach to teaching and learning with young children offers an alternative to models with predetermined outcomes and standardized assessments. Dahlberg and Moss (2005) explain that

through documentation "the child is no longer understood as lacking or incomplete but, as they say in Reggio Emilia, intelligent: intelligent, that is, as a person capable of making meaning of the world from his or her own experiences, not as a person who scores more than so many points on an IQ test" (p. 102).

Meaning making also offers alternative ways of responding to and celebrating the diversity that characterizes British Columbia's children and families. "Meaning making requires very precise, demanding and public conditions that create an interactive and dialogic process in which prejudices, self-interest and unacknowledged assumptions, with the distortions and limited vision that they produce, will be confronted and challenged" (Dahlberg, Moss, & Pence, 1999, p. 108).

#### *Meaningful Community Participation*

The capacity within the Reggio Emilia educational culture to recognize and respond, not only to teachers, but to all stakeholders as valuable contributors to the project is an essential and distinguishing characteristic of Reggio Emilia. Viewing these contributors as 'bringers of knowledge' is one of the foundational elements that holds together the various sectors of the system.

We should reconsider the tendency among North American educators to view parents from a deficit perspective, as receivers of our 'expert' ideas and knowledge about what their children need, as interfering with or counteracting our own work with their children. Reform of the British Columbia approach to early education should involve parents and communities as valued co-participants. British Columbia has yet to create formal structures to negotiate these possibilities. When these structures are put in place, they should be designed with the assumption that parents are competent individuals, able to participate meaningfully in all aspects from governance to delivery of services for children and families. We need to

work on the concept of 'listening,' which Reggio Emilia has embraced as a critically important element of their project (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005; Rinaldi, 2006a).

We cannot assume that this will be an easy task. As Carlina Rinaldi (2006a) explains, in Reggio Emilia "it has not been easy, there have been extremely difficult moments, but it has been a marvelous training ground for democracy. Learning the value of divergence (differing opinions), of the construction of consent (agreement), of negotiation was a long, complex exercise which is not finished" (p.155). In our opinion, early childhood educators in British Columbia are ready for this challenge.

#### *Structures that Embrace Stability and Multiple Perspectives*

The Reggio Emilia schools are supported by a range of strong structures that are critical to their longevity and success. These structures have acquired a significant role in the life of the community and, most importantly, reflect the most important values and beliefs of the community. The structures that have been created around Reggio Emilia programs highly support the values and beliefs about children and the pedagogical project that Reggio has chosen to embrace. Those structures clearly provide the conditions of possibility for successful, high 'quality' programs.

Related to the notion of participation and the commonality of language underlying the Reggio Emilia system is a deep respect for a plurality of ideas and viewpoints along with willingness to discuss opposing points of view. New perspectives are valued as new knowledge. "Schools see themselves as a plurality of individuals, adults and children, all of whom are recognized as bringers of knowledge, all involved in one public space for growth and learning and the construction of a new culture linking generations, people, and linking groups of different origin" (The Charter of the City and Childhood Councils, 2002, p.



29). It is acknowledged that the kind of participation and collaboration with the best results are those that accommodate and welcome many different personal contributions. Yet, cooperation does not mean sacrificing one's individuality; rather the goal is to seek solutions collectively. The respect shown to differences is reflected in the organization, professional development, and communication patterns among stakeholders. Systems are created to allow many opportunities for exchange of ideas, concerns, and reflection.

British Columbia could begin to reflect on the development of structures that would support an educational system for young children and families. These structures should not be imposed by governments, but rather shared by communities' stakeholders. Early education could be created as a project that each community owns as their own, in which a multitude of perspectives are heard and valued.

#### ***Valuing Communities' Ways of Knowing - The First Nations / Aboriginal Community***

The Reggio Emilia Approach fits well with how First Nations/Aboriginal communities want to develop systems of education and supports for young children. The Reggio Emilia experience confirms First Nations/Aboriginal understandings of the importance of looking within our families, communities and cultures to find our own visions for young children (BC Aboriginal Child Care Society, 2002). The long-term success of this way of educating young children shows Canadian policy/decision-makers its validity.

While some degree of consensus is slowly emerging among policymakers and those who provide services to young children and their families, there is still considerable debate about the role of government in early education. This means that there are still opportunities for Aboriginal communities to inform and influence the discussion, drawing upon the strength of their traditional and

holistic understanding of child-rearing as a shared family and communal responsibility. It is also very timely for Aboriginal leadership, communities and families to come together to define their own visions for children, develop their own community early childhood plans and design their own services (BC Aboriginal Child Care Society, 2002).

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### ***The Reggio Emilia experience confirms First Nations / Aboriginal understandings of the importance of looking within our families, communities and cultures to find our own visions for young children***

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Today First Nations/Aboriginal communities want to return to the traditional concept that caring for young children is a sacred communal responsibility (BC Aboriginal Child Care Society, 2002). All First Nations/Aboriginal children have a right to nurturing care, support and learning opportunities that meet their needs, develop their gifts and help them to reach their full potential, within the context of First Nations/Aboriginal extended family systems and cultural traditions (BC Aboriginal Child Care Society, 2002). Much can be learned from the example of the citizens of Reggio Emilia who built a system that is focused on improving the quality of young children's lives, rather than simply promoting school readiness and preparation for the labour market.

First Nations/Aboriginal families, communities and leaders consistently identify cultural and linguistic continuity as the primary goal of early education (BC Aboriginal Child Care Society, 2002). This is defined as the most important goal because the history of relations with non-Aboriginal society has been defined

by oppression, deception and the theft of lands and resources, the dismantling of political, economic and family systems, the imposition of foreign structures and systems, the introduction of alcohol and the resulting alcohol abuse, and public policies that caused the loss of cultural traditions and languages (Blackstock, Clarke, Cullen, D'Hondt, & Formsma, 2004).

An effective early education approach for First Nations and other Aboriginal Peoples must necessarily address these realities. Although early education programs are limited in their ability to eliminate child poverty, programs have to be responsive to the realities and impacts of poverty and they must ensure the continuation and revival of Aboriginal languages and identity as urgent priorities. There must also be parallel strategies focused on the elimination of child poverty through a combination of social and economic policies and initiatives. Successful First Nations/Aboriginal early education approaches will draw upon the enduring strengths of cultural traditions and family systems in designing programs that are appropriately responsive to their particular realities (Aboriginal ECD Roundtable, 2004).

Strong support for, and investment in, community-based ECD research controlled by First Nations/Aboriginal communities is an essential element of an improved system of early education. Currently, there are limited research resources and the research that is being done is undertaken by outside researchers, on research agendas determined outside the First Nations/Aboriginal communities.

The possibilities for change illustrated by the success of the Reggio Emilia approach to early education are intriguing, encouraging, and exciting. First Nations/Aboriginal communities hope to find innovative collaborators within the existing early childhood and child care system to support this vision for change. Considering the vision will require a financial commitment from all levels of



government as well as support from the private business sector and the non-profit organizations of civil society. It will be expensive to work with First Nations/Aboriginal families and communities to plan and deliver high quality locally developed early education. The investment required to support young children and their families must be a priority. Financial support is needed to enable the application of the lessons learned from Reggio Emilia and thereby enrich and strengthen the research and service-development processes that are currently underway in First Nations/Aboriginal communities.

The concept of the *pedagogista* is particularly exciting for First Nations/Aboriginal communities. First Nations/Aboriginal communities propose collaboration with a British Columbia university or college to create a post-secondary education program for First Nations/Aboriginal pedagogical consultants (Aboriginal ECD Roundtable, 2004). This training could serve as the catalyst for the development of new early education programming approaches incorporating lessons learned from Reggio Emilia.

Respect for First Nations/Aboriginal world views, values, authority and jurisdiction, and collaboration among the elected and service-delivery leadership within British Columbia's political, economic, health, education, social service and early childhood sectors are essential to the development and creation of a comprehensive, holistic, and equitable system (Blackstock et al., 2004). A strong commitment to, and investment in, research, education, training and professional development will ensure that programs for First Nations/Aboriginal children can be informed by the lessons that the people of Reggio Emilia have learned over more than 50 years of reflection and innovation.

### **Moving Through Multiple Paths**

This article outlined how the Reggio Emilia experience might provide lessons

for the creation of an early education system in British Columbia that is solidly grounded in the values and realities of communities and is respectful of and meaningful for young children. Reggio Emilia's successes at articulating and delivering an alternative approach to early education gives British Columbia policy makers confidence that a new early education project, inspired by Reggio Emilia, might succeed in the province.

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*...we propose that British  
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children to politicians.*

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Early education in British Columbia can change from being a site of social and cultural reproduction to become a site of social and cultural transformation. Our own conversations with children, parents, and early childhood educators suggest that all groups are open to exploring new approaches. There are many impressive initiatives that can be used as starting points, both in Canada (e.g., Ball, 2004a, 2004b; Ball, Definney & Pence, 1999; Ball, J. & Pence, A.R. (2006). Supporting Indigenous Children's Development: Community-University Partnerships. Vancouver: UBC Press; Pence, A., & Pacini-Ketchabaw, V. (2006). The Investigating Quality Project: Challenges and possibilities for Canada. *Interaction*, 20(3), 11-13; Pacini-Ketchabaw, Elliot, & Berikoff, in press) and internationally (MacNaughton, 2005; Dahlberg, Moss, & Pence, 1999; Dahlberg & Moss, 2005; Swadener, 2000; Swadener & Wachira, 2003). While these initiatives have not had wide visibility in British Columbia and Canada, they serve as starting points for a new and exciting journey.

The change that is required in British Columbia's early education field will be a complex task that will involve time and careful consideration. Who will be involved in the change? How will change be created? Many educational researchers are turning their attention to the growing prominence of the view that communities need to be active partners in a change process. Hargreaves and Fullan (1998) state unequivocally and elaborate on the position that "the full solution lies outside the schools as well as within" (p.13) and that "school reform should not be separated from wider urban reform" (p.12). Change cannot be mandated from above because the people involved in the change must be motivated and committed, skilled, and have the capacity to make discretionary judgments about local issues based on immediate priorities (Fullan & Miles, 1992). Lasting macro-change, involving major policy and funding issues, involves staggering complexities. It is essential that we not confuse changes in symbols with changes in substance.

Many of the political and policy-making bodies are concerned with symbols; they want to appear to be doing something bold and new. Political time lines are often at variance with timelines for educational reform. This difference often results in vague goals, unrealistic schedules [and] a preoccupation with symbols of reform (new legislation, task forces, commissions, and the like). (Fullan & Miles, 1992 p. 746)

We also wish to note that the transformation suggested in this article requires, in the words of Moss and Petrie (2002), "rethinking - thinking differently - about policy, provision and practice for children".

This construction foregrounds: a child who is competent and rich, a co-constructor of knowledge, identity and culture, a social agent and a citizen with rights, and a member of a social group; the childhood that children are living now; a holistic rather than an atomized, approach towards the child and the provisions made



for children; the importance of a rich network of relationships (with other children and adults) and of an ethical concept of relationships which respects the alterity of the Other; and public provision for children being sites for ethical and democratic practice (p. 165).

This rethinking of policies and practices can never be final and fixed. Rather, it needs to include a "continuous rethinking and provisionality, as new understandings arise in new social circumstances" (Moss & Petrie, 2002, p. 166). And it is this constant rethinking in response to local circumstances that situates Reggio Emilia programs outside of the mainstream. So, we cannot 'do' Reggio, but we can begin to 'think differently' about our own ways of doing and thinking about early education.

To end, people in Reggio Emilia have understood 'quality' early childhood education within a framework of ethics, as opposed to a framework of technicality. 'Quality' for Reggio Emilia has not been about "establishing conformity to predetermined standards" [or] providing "an objective statement of fact based on a technology of measurement" (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005, p.88). Rather than being understood as techniques or strategies for implementing standards, we propose that British Columbia's journey toward quality be a continuous process of ethical negotiation among all participants, from children to politicians.

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# Acknowledging and Reaching Children of Prisoners

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## Abstract

Referencing the current literature, this article explores the difficulties and life prospects of the children of prisoners and contrasts their futures with those of other “high risk” children. The children of prisoners have largely been ignored in the child welfare and education systems. As a result their normal social function is gravely diminished and the likelihood of their later involvement in the criminal justice system is extraordinarily high. Some helpful strategies to recognize and engage with them are provided by the author to ameliorate their futures.

## Introduction

Those who work with children know that early life experiences can have a profound effect on their future. Teachers are well aware of the broad issues: poverty, addiction, family dysfunction, and neighborhoods of lower socio-economic indicators. The role of a teacher or other professionals working with children in their early years is therefore particularly important. It is important for a teacher not only to identify children who may struggle with the transition to formal schooling, but also to address their particular problems in order to avert or minimize a child's difficulties.

Within Canada, a particular group of children, the children of prisoners, have epidemic poor life outcomes, and these children — unlike their counterparts in the United States, the United Kingdom, India, Australia and a host of other countries — have not been recognized as a dis-

## *In failing to recognize these children we condemn them to increased risk.*

tinct group. Researchers have identified these children as having much higher than normal incidences of lower academic achievement, truancy, gang involvement, substance addiction, mental illness, crime, and incarceration (Stanton 1980; Baunach 1985; Gabel, S. 1992; Dressel and Barnhill 1994; Gabel and Johnston 1995; Seymour 1998; Ascione and Dixon 2002; Murray and Farrington 2005). The primary source of their risk is hidden through labels which place them within broader social pathologies. In failing to recognize these children we condemn them to increased risk.

In order to more effectively assist the children of prisoners it is necessary to consider that children of prisoners are affected by their parent's imprisonment and that within this group of children those whose mother is imprisoned are at even greater risk. Moreover, while there is limited research on the subject, existing studies

**Note: All article quotations in text boxes are from confidential sources.**

“I tell ‘em to make sure Grampa keeps his pecker in his pocket. He's old now. He won't ... I don't ... I don't suppose I have to worry.”

*Mother, serving three years, with two children, ages 5 and 7, who live with her parents.*



Contributed by Tom Bottolene, CircleVision.org

suggest that the children of imprisoned mothers tend to be placed in informal care agreements with family and friends (Gabel and Johnston 1995, 106-107). As a consequence, these children do not come to the attention of government services. Instead, the problems and needs of the children of prisoners are most likely to be recognized by their teachers, rather than other professionals in the child welfare or medical systems. It is important therefore that teachers understand the unique problems of these children, and understand what they can do.

## The Big Questions

Anyone working with children of high risk is always concerned that their actions do not in any way diminish a child's potential. There are three key questions to keep in mind when considering the children of prisoners.

Are the children of prisoners at any greater risk than children without a parent in prison who face similar risk factors?

Does acknowledging and identifying the children of prisoners increase their risk factors?

What is it about the lived experience of the child of a prisoner and a parent in prison that is important for those working with these children to know?

Keeping these questions in mind, it is possible to reach out effectively and reduce the risk that children of prisoners face.



### Inside Prisons

Typically people in our prisons are poor and struggle with related issues such as addiction. There is another characteristic, however, that has not been well recognized. A disproportionate number of prisoners come from families where at least one other family member was incarcerated. In the US, the Center for Children of Incarcerated Parents conducted a study of incarcerated women and found that 33% of the women had a parent who had been incarcerated, approximately 80% had a member in their immediate family who had been incarcerated, and 59% had multiple family members who had been incarcerated (Gabel and Johnston 1995, 47). The Center also reported that over one third of incarcerated men also had an immediate family member who had been incarcerated (Gabel and Johnston 1995, 4).

For over fifty years studies have looked at the effect on the family of a parent going to prison; other studies have looked at how children from dysfunctional and separated families are at risk of antisocial and delinquent behaviours when compared with children from intact homes. However, only a limited number of studies have considered the effect of incarceration on the children of prisoners. Most studies are small, and are of male prisoners and their children. Of the studies that do exist, few are longitudinal. Further, the children of prisoners face multilayered problems, and it can be difficult to isolate the impact of incarceration from other factors such as abuse, poverty, limited education, and addiction, to name a few. Thus, as Kazdin has noted, "[O]ver time several risk factors become interrelated because the presence of one factor can augment the accumulation of other risk factors" (Kazdin 1998, 68). There is a need, therefore, for further research. Yet, the existing research literature demonstrates unequivocally that the risk factors mentioned above significantly predispose a child to criminal behaviours, and that the accumulation of risk factors only exacerbates the likelihood of criminal justice involvement.

### Separation from Parents: Differing Outcomes Identified

One recently published longitudinal study, the first of its kind, does provide significant information regarding the effects on children of having a parent incarcerated (as opposed to the child being separated from their parent for other reasons). Murray and Farrington (2005), using longitudinal data from the Cambridge Study in Delinquent Development, examined socioeconomic conditions, schooling, friendship, parent-child relationships, extracurricular activities, school records, and criminal records. They controlled for individual, parenting, and family risk factors that previously had been shown to predict boys' antisocial behaviour and delinquency. They found that boys who experienced separation due to parental incarceration have poorer life outcomes. The boys demonstrated greater antisocial and

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delinquent behaviour than their peers who had either not experienced parental separation, or had, due to hospitalization, death or other reasons (such as divorce). Further, these boys had poorer life outcomes up to the age of 32, when the study followed up with them.

"I don't talk about it. What would you say? My mother killed my dad? I tell them my aunt is my foster mom."

*Boy, age 13.*

Thus, Murray and Farrington were able to answer the question whether the children of prisoners were affected differently from their peers who were separated from a parent for other reasons (2005, 1273). In addition, they found that the effects of parental incarceration were not accounted for by official labeling of prisoners' families. Thus, it is clear: acknowledging children of prisoners is not the risk mechanism that leads to their antisocial behaviours and poor life outcomes — an important consideration for professionals working with these children.

### Gender Differences

Women charged with offences differ significantly from their male counterparts. Women commit fewer crimes than men, have a significantly lower rate of incarceration and their collective profile differs significantly from that of men.

Typically, in 2004, of all offences committed, only 18% were committed by women. In addition, women are consistently more likely to be charged with property offences rather than violent offences (such as homicide, assault or robbery). The large majority of property crimes women are charged with involve either theft under \$5,000 or fraud. In 2004, 31% of all criminal code charges against women were for these offences, compared to only 17% of charges against men. Men were more likely than women to be charged with break and enter or other types of personal theft (Statistics Canada, March 2006, 169).

Overall, for both the provincial and federal offences for which women are charged, only 17% are for violent crimes. The majority of these are charges related to simple or common assault, the least serious form of assault. Examples include slapping, pushing, or threatening to harm someone. By contrast, a full 81% of all male offenders have committed a violent offence. One in three is serving a sentence of more than 10 years (CSC 2005,2). So it is fair to say that female prisoners commit fewer serious



crimes than men, for which they are incarcerated for short periods of time.

The average male offender has a higher level of education, a better standard of living, and a lower incidence of mental illness, addiction, and historical abuse than his female counterpart. In contrast, a special Human Rights Commission report (Canadian Human Rights Commission 2003) documented that the average female offender is between the ages of 20 and 34 with an education of less than Grade 9. Two-thirds of these women are mothers and two-thirds of them are the sole caregivers of their children. Similar percentages of women have unaddressed physical or mental health problems. A full 80% of women prisoners have suffered physical and/or sexual abuse, and the same percentage reported being unemployed at the time of their incarceration.

Gender differences are even more disturbing for Aboriginal women. Only 3% of the female population in Canada in 2003, Aboriginal women represented 29% of the women held in federal prisons. In contrast, Aboriginal men represented 18% of males in federal correctional facilities. According to a 2006 report from the Office of the Correctional Investigator; "between 1996 and 2004 the number of First Nations people in federal institutions increased by 21.7%. This is a 34% difference between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal inmates. Moreover, the number of federally incarcerated First Nations women increased a staggering 74.2% over this period" (Sapers 2006, 1-2).

With all of the problems these women have, most will be released from prison in less than five years and become a part of our communities and the lives of their children.

There is one other overwhelming difference between male and female prisoners and that relates to their children and the implications of parenthood. Studies in the US, Canada, and the UK all report that a significant proportion of prisoners have children. Female prisoners have more chil-

dren than other women, and their incarceration has huge implications for them. In contrast to male prisoners, these mothers tend to be the sole caregivers for their children. Thus, as Gabel (1992) reports, when men are incarcerated, their children's lives are disrupted far less than the children of women prisoners. This is largely because, unlike the children of incarcerated women, the children of male prisoners almost always have caregiver continuity.

An American survey reports that 90% of the children with incarcerated fathers live with their mothers. In contrast, approximately one-quarter of the children of incarcerated women live with their fathers, half live with their grandparents, and the remainder live either in foster care or familial (or otherwise arranged) housing. Thus, children of female prisoners in the US live in circumstances predominantly unrecognized by social agencies (US Department of Justice 1992, 10). Families providing kinship care for children are not usually eligible for additional funding, such as that provided for children in foster care. Thus the families taking these children, and often the children themselves, feel the impact of a drop in family income. These children often come from living in poverty into situations with further pressures. For example, retired grandparents, or those nearing the end of their working lives, are faced with increased financial burdens and the responsibility for raising children. Unsurprisingly, studies since the late 1920s have documented the financial impact of parent incarceration, and have found severe problems and adjustment in the face of reduced family income.

"I know I could be somebody. I want to go to school... It's my sixth one.

*Girl, age 10.*

Due to the limited number of female prisoners, there are few prisons for women in Canada. There are five prisons for women serving sentences over two years. Incarcerated women are often transported away from their home and children. For example, in Correction Service Canada's Prairie Region (consisting of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, Northwestern Ontario, and the Northwest Territories), there are 11 male institutions and two institutions for women. In that vast geographic region, most women serving more than two-year sentences are sent to Edmonton (CSC Correctional Profiles 2006). Thus, in addition to the disruption of caregiver continuity initiated by a parental prison sentence, the children of incarcerated women often face increased traveling distances and a reduced ability to visit.

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### *Disruption of the attachment*

*bond between mother and*

*child is particularly*

*detrimental for children*

*between the ages of*

*six months and four years*

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Children of prisoners suffer from separation anxiety, expressed through isolating behaviours and sleep disorders, as well as displays of aggression and excessive anger. They experience other emotional problems, including feelings of fear, abandonment, shame and guilt, and have an increased risk of lower academic performance, truancy, gang participation, and substance abuse (Stanton 1980; Baunach 1985; Gabel, S. 1992; Dressel and Barnhill 1994; Seymour 1998; Ascione and Dixon 2002). Unsurprisingly perhaps, given the data,



children of incarcerated parents have substantially higher levels of delinquency compared with other children (West and Farrington 1977; Gabel, S. 1992; Moses 1995; Rowe and Farrington 1997).

Most alarming, the number of children affected by incarceration is increasing in Canada, particularly for those of incarcerated mothers. The population of female prisoners is growing disproportionately when compared with males. Corrections Services Canada research on the number of women incarcerated between 1981 and 1998 (serving sentences over two years) indicates that there are approximately one and a half times as many women incarcerated now as then. By 2009, CSC anticipates that the population of incarcerated women will have increased by 31% (CSC 2001, 6).

#### **Female prisoners and their children**

The significance of the profile of a female offender and the reasons for which she is incarcerated are important factors in the composite of circumstances that affect her children. More women than men have incomes below the poverty line. Indeed, the rate of poverty for single-female-headed families is higher today (56%) than 30 years ago, when the Royal Commission on the Status of Women issued its ground breaking report calling for change (Townson 2000, 2).

For women who are the sole caregivers for their children, it is virtually impossible to raise children on a low-paying job. So they are often forced out of employment completely and onto social assistance. Women consequently face cycling through welfare, poverty, and the erosion of employment skills as they are forced out of the labour market for a period of time. They are then further impoverished by the denial of job opportunities. For example, in British Columbia, where the minimum wage on June 1, 2006 was \$8 an hour, amongst the highest in Canada (Government of Manitoba 2006), a single parent with two children living in Kamloops or Victoria would have to

work over 65 hours per week, every week of the year at minimum wage in order to reach the poverty line of \$27,386 (Canadian Council on Social Development, 2006). Women on welfare in British Columbia are even more disadvantaged and live well below the subsistence level. As of January 2005, a woman in Kamloops or Victoria with two children would receive \$10,566.96 per annum — a full \$16,819 below the poverty line (Government of British Columbia 2005). Single-parent families live in the midst of numerous stressful and disruptive circumstances. Children who live in a household with one parent are considerably more likely to live below the poverty line than are children who live in a household with two parents (Moore & Halle 2000). In addition, single parents move more often than intact families (Caldwell 1998, 7-17), and studies show that children who move frequently are more likely to have problems at school. Moves are even more difficult if accompanied by other significant changes in the children's life, such as death, divorce, loss of family income, or the need to change schools (American Academy of Child and Family Adolescent Psychiatry 1999). Moreover, children of single mothers suffer economic disadvantages because women in Canada still earn less than men (Statistics Canada March 2006, 135). Weak social supports and programs further erode a parent's ability to cope with stress, while highly stressed parents tend to be psychologically unavailable to their children. According to the American Psychological Association (2004), single-parent families deal with many more pressures and potential problems than the nuclear family does.

"I wonder what my life would have been if I had normal parents."

*Boy, age 9,  
both parents imprisoned.*

In short, the environment of children in single-parent households often correlates strongly with a life of poverty and crowded dwellings, conditions that have been demonstrated to be significant predictors of juvenile criminal involvement (Weatherburn and Lind 1997). Moreover, these same factors frequently correlate with parental substance misuse.

The incidence of prenatal exposure to drugs or alcohol among children of prisoners appears high. In her 1992 Children of Offenders study, Denise Johnston found that "over half of the children of women who had been arrested, and 77% of the children of currently or previously incarcerated women, had been prenatally exposed to drugs or alcohol" (Gabel and Johnston 1995, 68-69). Parental substance abuse therefore multiplies the dangerous factors already affecting a child.

When mothers go to prison, the effects on their children can be profound, and the consequences more severe than for the children of male prisoners (Richards et al. 1996; Caddle and Crisp 1997). A number of studies have examined the effects of maternal incarceration. Specifically, the abrupt and prolonged separation of a mother from her children has been found to be detrimental to both mother and children (McGowan and Blumenthal 1978; Henriquez 1982; Fessler 1991, Fletcher et al. 1992). Disruption of the attachment bond between mother and child is particularly detrimental for children between the ages of six months and four years (Fuller 1993, 41-47). As well, it is recognized that the impact of the separation of mother and child is particularly profound for older children (Johnston 1995, 59-82).

The experience of parental detachment brings about several significant life changes that occur within discreet periods of time. During parental incarceration, the children generally change homes more than once, change schools and caretakers, and are separated from siblings. These changes, combined with the separation from their primary parent, contribute to nightmares, aggressive



behavior in school, and feelings of rejection, anxiety, anger, and confusion (Hunter, 1985). Additionally, children whose mothers have been incarcerated are subject to peer ridicule and mockery, which exacerbates their feelings of loneliness and alienation (McGowan and Blumenthal 1978). These effects can be long-lasting or temporary depending on the child's age, the relationship of the mother and the child, the caretaker's relationship with the child, and the way in which the mother's incarceration has or has not been explained to the child.

Parental incarceration is only one of many factors that may influence children of prisoners. The literature suggests that the children of incarcerated parents may have been exposed to other risks such as poverty or parental substance abuse or mental health problems prior to their parent's incarceration. How children respond to those circumstances is also affected by their personal resilience, where they are placed when their parent is incarcerated, the nature of their relationship with the substitute caregiver, and the multiplicity of traumas they have experienced.

The crucial point is that parental incarceration serves to flag the risks and accumulation of factors most likely to plague children of prisoners in the future.

People who go to prison, particularly women, are predominantly poor and consequently face the myriad of problems associated with poverty. A strong social bias against prisoners presumes that they cannot be good parents. Raising these issues is not to advance the argument that prisoners are unable to be good parents, but rather to acknowledge both the challenges they face as parents and the needs of their children. Nor does identifying children of incarcerated parents assist in identifying all the children who will be affected. As Loeber and Dishion argue, "the very fact that a father possesses a criminal record, one established before the birth of a child, will enhance the child's prospect of developing his or her own antisocial career" (Loeber and Dishion 1983, 94).

It is also worth noting that studies on children who were provided help or intervention all reported better outcomes for the children who remained in the family home — even where there was substances abuse, neglect or physical abuse present — than for those children who were removed from their home (National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse 1999; US Department of Health 1999).

### **Building Prison Populations**

No one knows for certain how many children have incarcerated parents or how many children have been affected by incarceration. The question has only been considered within the last decade in other countries and more recently and only partially in Canada. It is, however, an important question, and one that is possible to closely approximate.

The number of incarcerated parents with children, and the number of children they have, is strikingly similar in the US, the UK, and Canada (Foran 1995). It is possible, therefore, to use, with a degree of confidence, the formula postulated by Denise Johnston in 1995 to estimate the number of children with incarcerated parents in the US (Seymour 1998, 469-494). The formula has been corrected to provide for the gender differential (93.2% men versus 6.8% women) for those incarcerated in Canada.

In 2004-2005, 150,024 people were imprisoned in Canada. Based on the formula, given their incidence of having children (56% of men and 67% of women) and their birth rates (2 children for men and 2.4 for women), it is possible to do a rough calculation predicting the number of children they have: 173,605 children.

Canadians have more than a one-in-ten likelihood of having a criminal record (10.93%). In reality, however, certain groups are significantly overrepresented. Aboriginal people are 3% of the population but 20% of incarcerated males and 31% of incarcerated females within provincial and territorial prisons (Statistics Canada March 2006, 171). Aboriginal people are almost 18.5% of the total federal prison population; Aboriginal women represent 32% of

women in federal prisons (Sapers, Howard 2006, 1). Blacks are 2% of the population and 6% of federally incarcerated inmates (CSC June 2004, 29).

Add the additional factor of a parent incarcerated and, unless changes are made, it is possible to see the number of inmates as second-generation prisoners continuing to grow. For women, the small variable increase in the number who are parents, coupled with their higher birth rate, makes a huge difference. Crime replicates itself through the children of male prisoners at the rate of 72 % of the population base, while women replicate their number at the rate of 86.4 % of the population base — without even considering prisoners coming from the remainder of the population. So it is easy to see why Corrections Services Canada predicts a 31% increase in the number of female prisoners by 2009 (CSC 2001, 6).

### **Recognizing Children of Prisoners: Strategies to Support them**

Countries such as Australia, India, the UK, and the US formally recognize the children of offenders and provide funded programs and systemic supports, including educational strategies and manuals for teachers, and courses on the subject in university curricula for teachers and social workers. Within Canada, however, there is virtually nothing for teachers, either directly for the children of prisoners, or information for professionals who will come in contact with these children. Nevertheless, teachers may become aware of the incarceration of a child's parent through the child, through classroom "gossip" from other children or parent-teacher conferences. They have the opportunity to offer assistance to these children who suffer from anxiety and depression at alarming rates. The shame and fear (wanting to protect their parent from the judgment of others; not knowing what is happening to their parent; feeling "Am I bad, too?") condemn these children to isolation and silence.

The awareness and strategies that teachers often have for sole-caregiver families are often transferable to the children of prisoners. Additional strategies include:



- not asking about the parent's crime,
- being non-judgmental toward the child (they have done nothing wrong),
- avoid treating the child as a victim, and avoid being over-protective.

At a minimum, teachers have the opportunity to:

- promote social acceptance and inclusion through modeling and challenging any prejudicial comments or behaviours by other students, just as they would address bullying in their classroom.
- encourage a child's confidence simply by saying, "It must be hard to have your (mommy/daddy) in jail," and continue the conversation if the child pursues the verbal cue.
- restate the comment (if the child doesn't pursue the conversation) a number of weeks later to let the child know that he or she isn't being judged and that the adult is open to talking with the child if desired.
- draw upon examples of adults who, as children, had parents imprisoned. History is full of examples from Charles Dickens forward. Current examples include actors Charlize Theron, Woody Harrelson, Keanu Reeves, Milla Jovovich, and social activist Heather Mills McCartney, all of whom had a parent in prison and have spoken publicly of the effect it had on their lives.
- provide storybooks written about children with a parent in prison such as *Visiting Day* (Scholastic Press, New York 2002) and *Moma Loves Me from Away* (Boyd's Mills Press, Honesdale, Pennsylvania 2004). Such examples

can provide powerful role models for children of their own potential to achieve and thrive.

Teachers will also need to:

- understand that prisons often allow visits only on weekdays and thus children may miss school. Providing children with school work they can share with their parent is normalizing and fosters the parent-child bond, in addition to providing an opportunity for teachers to remediate the effects of children missing school.
- provide activities that include an understanding that certain items are not allowed into prison visiting areas. A teacher may need to have a discussion with the child's caregiver to understand the limitations on items that can enter the prison. Activities during a visit could include the child reading aloud to the parent from a school book; reviewing his school notebook, and completing corrections or activities with paper and pencil (pens are almost always restricted). Further, teachers who take the time to prepare this work for a child demonstrate their openness and support of the child.

*One minimum security visiting area is devoid of opportunities for parents and children to interact in a normative way or to play. Prison procedure limits food and other items that may be brought into the prison (other than that purchased from a vending machine, most of which is poor nutritional quality). Closed visiting areas in medium or maximum-security prisons require families to visit separated by glass. See [http://www.csc-scc.gc.ca/text/photofile/index\\_e.shtml](http://www.csc-scc.gc.ca/text/photofile/index_e.shtml)*  
Credit: Correctional Service Canada

The sensitivity that teachers display regarding Mother's or Father's Day school activities for children who don't live with or have a parent, (for example, children apprehended or surviving a parent's death), can also be extended to the children of prisoners. For those activities, teachers can say, "Mother's Day is coming and we are going to make cards for mothers, grandmothers, foster mothers, or any other woman who's important in your life." Teachers might also pursue discussions or drawing and painting activities about "people we miss." Children of prisoners will be interested to hear that others also miss people in their lives, such as those who have died or moved away, to hear similar feelings, and share the solidarity of missing people with other children in the class. Similarly, activities of writing or drawing that allow the child to express her feelings and experiences are helpful, for example, asking children to "tell a story (through a picture or words) about what has happened to you in your life."

The challenge for a teacher is to recognize the totality of a child's life and to pull out the threads that reveal their feelings as normal — that others have similar feelings, and that feelings they have about their parent's incarceration like shame or grief aren't reflective of the child's worth or abilities. In this way teachers may provide the means through which the isolation and silence that children of prisoners experience can be broken. And, if we are to assist these children to have the bright futures they deserve, this is the first step toward breaking the generational bonds which entrap them.

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# Canada's First National Bi-Lateral Agreements on Early Learning and Child Care Cancelled: Implications for Children, Families and the Economy

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## Abstract

Changes in Childcare policy at the federal level have implications for children, families and the economy. In 2005, Canada's federal party negotiated bi-lateral agreements on early learning and childcare with its provinces and territories, pledging \$5 billion over five years to begin building their own childcare systems. These systems were to be based on a shared vision, adhere to specific principles and objectives and be accountable to a national quality framework.

This article argues that by terminating these commitments, the current government will drive more families into unregulated childcare arrangements of questionable quality. Although income support, in the form of a \$100 per month/child under six, benefit, may be welcome, it should not be considered social policy and it doesn't provide the institutional framework that this author argues is crucial. Canada's spending on early learning and care lags well behind most countries in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Canada spends more than \$6,000/child, per year, on K-12 education, but spends less than one-sixth of this amount for 0-5 year olds. Public spending on early learning and care should be considered an investment, not a consumption expense. It is unfortunate that a change in philosophy at the federal level puts the foundation for a national system of early learning and childcare at risk.

## Introduction

The role of government, as it relates to child care, has implications for children, families and the economy. The previous government was committed to establishing a national system of early learning and care. Their vision regarded affordable, accessible, developmentally focused, and regulated early learning and child care services as integral to the health and well-being of Canadian families and a strong and productive economy. To make this vision a reality, they believed that, like health and education, early learning and care is a public service that deserves broad taxpayer support. In 2005, they negotiated bilateral agreements on early learning and care with the provinces and territories. They committed to transferring \$5 billion over five years to the provinces and territories to begin building their own child care systems. These systems were to be based on a shared vision, adhere to specific principles and objectives and be accountable to a national quality framework.

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*As part of the collaborative process, including input and advice from the child care community across Canada, the provincial and territorial partners developed a guiding set of principles known as QUADI.*

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Despite criticism from the childcare community, the new government of the day, has put these agreements on hold and introduced what they call their "Choice in Child Care Benefit". This benefit is a new form of direct financial assistance to be paid to parents in monthly installments of \$100 per month per child under the age of six. Recently announced in the 2007 budget is a new \$2,000 tax credit that will provide up to \$310 of tax relief for each child under 18 years of age. According to the government, more than three million Canadian families are eligible for this credit. The government is also offering Canadian employers a non-refundable investment tax credit equal to 25% of eligible expenditures on child care infrastructure to a maximum credit of \$10,000 per child care space created. You can read further about this at, <http://www.canada.gc.ca> - the government's website.

This article will highlight the implications of abandoning the former government's early learning and child care agenda and provide support for the recognition of publicly funded child care as a cornerstone of early childhood development. Further, the article aims to draw attention to the limitations of the current 2007 child care plan and illustrates how this alternate plan will, in all likelihood, drive more Canadian children into unregulated care arrangements. Unregulated child care is fraught with quality issues and provides no guarantee of developmentally appropriate experiences for young children (Gillman, 2001; Zinssar, 2001; Lowe, 2003).



### Bi-Lateral Agreements: A Framework for a National System

This plan set in motion a framework for a national system of early learning and care. By entering into the bi-lateral agreements, the provinces and territories committed to participate with their federal, provincial and territorial partners in a multilateral process to create an overarching early learning and child care framework for all Canadians, which would meet the unique circumstances and priorities of each jurisdiction. It encapsulated the notion that children can be cared for and educated at the same time, establishing the foundation skills for a lifetime of learning. A key recommendation coming out of the *Early Years Study*, was to bridge the barriers between the early years and the public school system, encouraging a blending of the two streams of child care and education (McCain & Mustard, 1999 p.176). As part of the collaborative process, including input and advice from the child care community across Canada, the provincial and territorial partners developed a guiding set of principles known as QUADI. These are principles of Quality, Universality, Accessibility, Developmentally Appropriate Programming and Inclusion.

### Cancelling the Agreements: Implications for Children and Families

#### *Quality control is a serious issue in unregulated child care settings:*

A large, and growing body of evidence suggests that the early years, from conception to age six, have the most important influence of any time in the life cycle of brain development and subsequent learning, behavior and health (McCain & Mustard, 1999; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). Given its importance, society should give at least the same amount of attention to this period of development as it does to the school and post-secondary education periods of human development. The message is out there that the early years are crucial to the healthy development of children, yet

the resources and supports to help parents along the way are either unavailable, or an impossible maze of services to navigate. Every parent wants what is best for their child, however, without access to high-quality regulated care, many parents find themselves in compromised care situations for reasons of economics or convenience. With only one in five children in regulated care, too many children are in unregulated care. This figure implies an enormous degree of variation in terms of quality and programming within the child care system. Some families decide to hire a nanny, either live-in or live-out, to care for their young children. A committed and nurturing nanny can be a great asset for a young family. Nannies may be the answer for some families, but they may be an expensive option and the quality of the care arrangement is purely "hit or miss". Too often nannies are recent immigrants who may not be able to provide essential communication skills in the child's language at a critical stage of children's language and literacy development (Rick & Franklin, 2002).

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*...without access to high-quality regulated care, many parents find themselves in compromised care situations for reasons of economics or convenience.*

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Economic factors play a major role in the use of relative care (i.e. grandparents, aunts etc.) (Scarr, 1998). Having a relative care for a child is generally less costly than other types of care. The higher the family income, the less likely parents are to choose relative care (Blau & Robbins, 1990). While these arrangements can provide care in a loving and nurturing environment, they can raise

questions with respect to the developmental needs of young children, particularly if they do not participate in early childhood programs such as nursery schools or drop-in centers (NLSCY, 1996; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). If a relative has been pressured into the arrangement because of the financial needs of the parent, resentment may affect the quality of the care given. Also, advancing age may limit a relative's ability and/or energy to engage in appropriate outdoor play activities with their charges or provide stimulating indoor activities. Regardless, many do not have ready access to family. Even children in regulated family (private home) child-care arrangements cannot be guaranteed good quality care. There are virtually no training requirements for caregivers and while they are theoretically "regulated", supports are limited and monitoring is sporadic (<http://childcareadvocacy.ca>). Unregulated family care poses enormous quality issues (Gillman, 2001; Zinsner, 2001; Lowe, 2003). Often adult-child ratios exceed the levels set by such standards as the day nurseries act. "Drop-ins" can increase those ratios even further, often without the parent's knowledge. Very often, caregivers in these situations are untrained and lacking in resources or supports (Gillman, 2001). This can result in less than optimal care and inadequate or inappropriate developmental experiences for young children. Of course, not all unregulated care arrangements are of substandard quality. Having a child in a family-like setting has considerable advantages. However, unless parents are well-informed and have appropriate choices, care arrangements can become compromised out of real or perceived lack of alternatives. Shift-workers and lower-income families who do not qualify for subsidized day care are particularly vulnerable (Scarr, 1998). While the child care allowance will ease the burden financially for some of these choices, it does nothing to alleviate some of the quality issues inherent in unregulated care. In fact, without funding for more regulated child care



spaces, the number of children in unregulated child care settings will likely continue to increase.

***Children from all socioeconomic backgrounds benefit from quality early childhood development programs:***

In the past, the patchwork of services available to young children has been mostly targeted towards "at risk" children or communities, or have a treatment-focus when difficulties already exist (Doherty, 2001; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2001). One of the pivotal findings in the *Ontario Early Years* study, (McCain & Mustard, 1999) is that in terms of absolute numbers, children from middle-class families represent the largest group of children experiencing at least one serious learning or behavioral difficulty. This is simply a function of the size of the middle class. Although proportionally, children in the lowest socioeconomic group experience more learning and behavioral difficulties, there are still a significant number of children having difficulties at each step of the socioeconomic ladder, including the top one. There is no socioeconomic threshold above which all children do well; i.e., socio-economic factors, alone, do not guarantee the best possible environment for young children (Macintyre, 2004; Keating & Hertzman, 1999). This finding highlights the need to provide quality early childhood experiences for all children, and not just those in communities or families deemed at risk. Children from all socioeconomic backgrounds can benefit from quality early childhood development programs (Offord, Kraemer, Kazdin, Jensen & Harrington, 1998; Lipman, Offord & Boyle, 1995).

***Barriers to access: Navigating early childhood programs can be challenging:***

Affordability and concerns about quality are not the only barriers to access when it comes to early development programs. In Ontario, all four and five year olds have access to junior and senior kindergarten within the public school system.

However, apart from the Francophone board, kindergarten only operates for 2.5 hours per day, leaving parents to make alternative care arrangements. Less than 10% of this age group is enrolled in childcare programs that coordinate in some way with their kindergarten programs, i.e. sharing facilities, information or complementary curriculums. This means that many children in this age group experience several out-of-home environments at different times of the day (McCain & Mustard, 1999). These environments can vary in terms of quality, culture and expectations, which may place undue stress on children (Coffey & McCain, 2002). For parents, navigating their options can be an enormous burden.

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***During these years, children acquire the essential skills to form relationships, handle stress, interact socially, and regulate their emotions...***

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Living in a rural community can also pose problems for parents regardless of whether they are in the paid work force or not. Long commutes to schools can pose unique challenges. Many Ontario boards have tried to accommodate parents by offering full-day kindergarten on alternate days rather than five half-days. However, parents must still organize childcare arrangements on alternate days with limited services and often at great distances (Coffey & McCain, 2002). Regardless of their degree of participation in the workforce, all parents need help in caring for their children. Stay at home parents need, and should be entitled to, respite or relief care within a flexible, affordable and regulated environment. Shift workers also have unique needs and require more flexibility and extended hours to accommodate their working schedules (Scarr, 1998). Too often families are divided with husbands

and wives seeing very little of each other as they juggle childcare arrangements between them (Forbes, 1997; Clark, 2001). Once again, income support may ease the financial burden of child care to a limited degree, but it does nothing to ease the burden of arranging child care when the barriers to access are real and hard to navigate.

***Quality is highly variable in many early childhood settings:***

A substantial body of evidence confirms that a child's experiences with caregivers during the first six years of life, creates the foundation for subsequent learning, emotional health and behavior (McCain & Mustard, 1999; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). During these years, children acquire the essential skills to form relationships, handle stress, interact socially, and regulate their emotions (McCain & Mustard, 1999; Shore, 1997; Cyander & Frost, 1999; Perry, 1996; Tremblay, 1994). Language and cognitive skills needed for a lifetime of learning are also being developed (Doherty, 1997). At present, quality is highly variable in both child care and education settings (Goelman, Doherty, Lero, LaGrange & Tougas, 2000). In terms of childcare, quality is often viewed from a structural, rather than a service, perspective. In other words, elements such as staff-child ratios, group size, quality of physical space, facility conditions etc. are given more emphasis than program delivery in terms of curriculum or developmental experiences (Goelman et al, 2000). In purely structural terms, provincial regulations mandate an adequate level of quality, however, in service oriented terms, childcare quality varies widely, is often sub-standard, or mediocre at best. A national study, *You Bet I Care!*, conducted by a team of Canadian researchers studied staffing and quality in childcare centres and regulated family childcare (Doherty, Lero, Goelman, Grange & Tougas, 2000). To measure quality, the researchers used standardized observation scales and child assessment measures, such as the Early Childhood



Environments Rating Scale (ECERS). The findings were not encouraging. On a seven-point rating scale where 1 = inadequate and 7 = excellent, mean quality ratings did not approach excellent in any province or territory (Doherty et al, 2000). While high quality child care has been shown to produce positive results, poor quality child care has been reported to put children's development at risk for poorer language and cognitive scores and lower ratings of social and emotional adjustment (Scarr, 1998).

***Developmentally appropriate programming: foundation skills for a lifetime of learning:***

With the explosion of research in the area of early brain development, the child care community has begun to shift their philosophy from custodial care to developmentally focused programming, incorporating learning goals (Doherty et al, 2000; Goelman et al, 2000). It is not just the child care community who has shifted their thinking on the early experiences of young children. There is now greater awareness among parents, and society in general, that learning begins well before entry into the formal school system (McCain & Mustard, 1999). In the recent past, it was felt that children from "good homes" acquired the foundation skills for learning through the course of being raised. It was children from disadvantaged backgrounds who needed intervention programs or "early enrichment". This deficit model speaks to the popularity of "Head Start" type programs in many communities. However, the research tells us that all children, regardless of background, can benefit from developmentally appropriate and enriching experiences in the early years (McCain & Mustard, 1999; NLSCY, 1996). Children can be cared for and educated at the same time. The previous government's vision of a national early learning and child care system reflects an understanding of this simple concept. In Ontario, the *Best Start* plan aimed to direct new federal funding towards integrating child care and early learning,

addressing quality issues such as appropriate developmental experiences, wages and working conditions and professional standards for early childhood educators (<http://www.children.gov.on.ca>). The *Toronto First Duty* Pilot project, which had been receiving public funding, combines the three early years streams of kindergarten, child care, and parenting supports, into a single program for four and five year old children and their families (<http://www.toronto.ca/firstduty>). A coalition of early learning and care experts including members from the Centre for Early Childhood Development at George Brown College, and the Atkinson Centre for Society and Child Development at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) at the University of Toronto applauded the new directions outlined in the previous agreements and commended their provincial counterparts in Ontario for their commitment to allocate all of the federal funding to early learning and care programs. You may read further at, <http://www.acscd.ca>, the Atkinson Centre for Society and Child Development.

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***Children can be cared for and educated at the same time.***

***The previous government's vision of a national early learning and child care system reflects an understanding of this simple concept.***

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***Presence of trained staff: one of the key predictors of quality:***

A key quality issue identified under the QUADI principles was the need to develop training, education and supports for early childhood educators and child care providers, as well as recruitment and retention strategies for a qualified workforce (<http://www.socialunion.ca>). Research has indicated that the presence

of trained staff is one of the most important predictors of quality in both child-care and kindergarten settings (Goelman et al, 2000; Beach, Bertrand., & Cleveland, 1998). Since child care and kindergarten fall under two separate provincial jurisdictions, qualification requirements and remuneration vary widely between the two (Goelman et al, 2000). Kindergarten teachers are required to have university degrees and teacher education credentials and certification from provincial teacher's colleges. Many complete courses on early child development during their undergraduate studies or have acquired ECE qualifications prior to pursuing teacher education. The education requirements for staff in licensed childcare centres are much less rigorous. Only one third of the mandated staff in these centres is required to have a college level ECE Diploma or equivalent and certification is voluntary (Doherty et al, 2000). There are no additional training requirements for supervisors with the licensed care system, despite their ever increasing responsibilities, nor is there any requirement for on-going professional development in Ontario (Doherty et al, 2000). The average annual salary for a full-time ECE working in a community, not-for-profit childcare centre in Toronto was approximately \$29,000 in 2003 (Cooke, Keating & McColm, 2004). In comparison, the salary for a kindergarten teacher in Toronto in 2003 was over \$50,000 (<http://www.fairfunding.ca>). Given the difference in educational requirements and wages between kindergarten teachers and childcare workers, it is little wonder that childcare workers are not valued in our society. Too long viewed as "babysitters" rather than "developmental experts", child care has been stigmatized by society as "low paying women's work". As a result, chronically underpaid and under motivated childcare workers have left the field in droves to seek other employment opportunities (Beach et al, 1998). Many childcare centres have difficulty just maintaining minimum numbers of qualified staff and the



"revolving door" scenario is the norm rather than the exception. Staff turnover is one of the most critical issues in early childhood care and education (Beach et al, 1998; Doherty et al, 2000). Given the importance of stable, nurturing adult figures in the early years, this trend is alarming (Bowlby, 1969; Ainsworth, Bell & Stayton, 1974; Brazelton & Greenspan, 2000). With the cancellation of the agreements, initiatives to address the inequities in qualifications and salaries among early childhood workers and raise the profile of early childhood development as a legitimate, valued and professionally rewarding career path have been sacrificed.

***Canada has a severe shortage of regulated child care spaces:***

In many European countries universal child care is considered a "right", not a privilege. Access to full-day care with a developmental purpose is practically the norm for children of three and over. The OECD reports child care participation rates of over 80% in the majority of European OECD countries (<http://www.childcarecanada.org>). In contrast, Canada has a severe shortage of regulated child care spaces. For every 100 Canadian children, only 12 licensed child care spaces are available for their care. In many communities, waiting lists range from a low of 50 in rural areas to over 5000 in the largest urban centres (Coffey, 2004). The OECD referred to Canada's child care system as a "fragmented, money-wasting patchwork of programs that provides babysitting for working parents" (<http://www.childcarecanada.org>). A publicly funded system of child care that entitles access to all children, including services for special needs and Aboriginal children was a key recommendation in their 2004 report.

As discussed earlier, Canadian families face numerous barriers in their search for quality child care. Kindergarten programs tend to run for only two and one-half hours per day. Families in rural communities often need to commute long

distances to access child care services. Shift workers are understandably challenged with respect to their child care options. Without access to good quality, affordable, regulated care options, many families resort to less than optimal care arrangements because they may be flexible, convenient or relatively inexpensive. It is estimated that over 2.2 million children are placed in unregulated care each day (<http://www.cccf-fcsge.ca>). There is no governing legislation with respect to unregulated child care providers. There are no requirements for professional qualifications and the monitoring of care is the responsibility of the parent.

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***Child care is an essential service in a robust and progressive economy and should not be regarded simply as a business expense for working families.***

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The cost of child care poses a significant financial burden on many families. At \$40 per day in many areas of Ontario, licensed centre-based child care for a two year old could cost some families upwards of \$10,000 annually (<http://www.cccf-fcsge.ca>). Child care costs can push some families below the poverty line. The financial squeeze is particularly painful for a growing number of single-parent families. Although fee subsidies are available for low income families, eligibility requirements are strict and waiting lists are long.

***Cancelling the Child Care Agreements: Implications for Women and Families***

***Child care and issues of gender equality:***

Gender equality is problematic without access to good quality, affordable child

care (Scarr, 1998). And, without a strong female workforce, this country cannot reach its economic and political objectives. Prior to WWII, female participation in the workforce was predominantly for the working poor. Societal pressures kept the vast majority of women at home (Scarr, 1998). The need for working women during the war sparked a social and economic trend that has grown ever since. Today in Canada, approximately 71% of women with children under six years are working outside the home. (<http://www.flis-ntf.gc.ca>). It is clear that women are in the workforce to stay. There was little question or debate in 1943 when emergency legislation was passed to establish child care for women working in war related industries. It is ironic that with so many more mothers in the workforce today, the current government does not see the need for additional child care spaces. One cannot underestimate the implications that child care has on a woman's career decisions. Clearly, a mother's decision to work is based on vast individual differences in priorities, family circumstances and financial obligations. However, most women find it difficult to embrace their careers without the assurance that their children are left in caring and quality learning environments. More and more, women with financial means are making the decision to stay at home while their children are young. This, unfortunately, is a luxury not available to low income families or single mothers and giving mothers more money for child care that does not exist seems rather pointless.

***Workforce participation is influenced by available child care:***

To illustrate just how influential affordable child care can be on workforce participation, consider the examples of Quebec and Alberta. Today, Alberta is facing a severe labor shortage. It is overheated economy has prompted employers to scour the country for workers, even recruiting at local prisons (Globe & Mail, June 16, 2006). It is surprising, therefore, that during the last ten years,



Alberta has gone from having the highest proportion of working mothers in the workforce (second only to Prince Edward Island) to one of the lowest. Alberta has the smallest share of children in regulated daycare in the country at 43%. The province has fewer than 48,000 daycare spaces for 163,400 mothers of preschoolers (Globe & Mail, June 16, 2006). Alberta also has the lowest public funding of early care and education in Canada. Quebec, on the other hand, has seen the largest increase in working mothers of any other province in the country. Within the last ten years, Quebec's participation rate for working mothers has increased by 21%, and is now well above the national average (Baker, Gruber & Milligan, 2006). In just ten years, Quebec and Alberta have traded places, with Quebec having the highest proportion of working mothers and Alberta having one of the lowest. Quebec introduced a near universal, publicly funded system of child care in 1997. With regulated child care available for just \$7 per day, Quebec mothers are able to work if they wish to without child care being an often insurmountable barrier. Stable, reliable child care of acceptable quality is related to mothers returning to work and staying in the labour force. This is especially true of middle and high-income mothers (Collins & Hofferth, 1996; Phillips, 1992). Economists predict that Canada will be facing a shrinking labour force as babyboomers retire and the population ages (Dodge, 2003). In the coming decades, a strong female workforce will become an even greater necessity just to keep the economy growing. Governments would be wise to consider the learning from Alberta and Quebec. Affordable child care is not just another costly social program. Child care is an essential service in a robust and progressive economy and should not be regarded simply as a business expense for working families.

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***Ironically, those who need financial assistance the most are the ones who will benefit the least from the child care allowance.***

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***Child care allowance favours affluent, single-earner families with one parent at home:***

The importance of women in the workforce notwithstanding, it is critical not to undermine the role of stay-at-home mothers in our society. While the decision to stay at home is an intensely personal one and the degree of sacrifice to do so is as varied as the women themselves, most would argue that investment in their children's lives should be valued and respected. Meeting the constant demands of young children is not an easy role and these women should be entitled to societal and governmental supports as are their working counterparts. Stay-at-home moms need access to respite care as well as programs that offer developmentally appropriate experiences for their children (McCain & Mustard, 1999). Under the current government's plan, all parents, regardless of their employment status, are entitled to the child care allowance. In fact, it is stay-at-home mothers who will benefit most from the plan. In theory, every family receives \$100 per month for every child under six years of age. However, the allowance is counted as taxable income in the hands of the lower income parent. This means that most single-earner families, with one parent at home realize more of their allowance than do two-earner parents and single parent earners. Ironically, those who need financial assistance the most are the ones who will benefit the least from the child care allowance. Modest income two-earner families and single parent families will be left with the least amount of money after tax (Zuker, 2006). The Caledon

Institute estimates that a two-earner family with a combined income of \$30,000 will be left with an annual allowance of a mere \$199, a combined income of \$100,000 will realize \$778, whereas a single-earner with an income of over \$200,000 will keep \$1,076. Most families receiving social assistance payments such as those in Ontario, will not benefit from the child care allowance, as those cheques are currently reduced by the amount of any federal benefits a person or household receives. Once again, the needy are penalized. Financial independence is so important to the health and well-being of the working poor. Poverty is one of the biggest risk factors for a host of social, academic and emotional challenges (Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997; Henricson, 2006; Blanden & McNally, 2006; Bodenhorn, 2006). Single parents are particularly susceptible (Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997; Bauman, Silver, Ellen & Stein, 2006). These are the families who so desperately need subsidized regulated child care spaces. Not only is the creation of these spaces now at risk, but the income support promised in its place benefits wealthy single-earner families with a parent at home, far more than the modest income working parents who need the help. Without access to subsidized, regulated child care spaces, modest and lower income families will be more likely to turn to unregulated care options for economic reasons. The potential exists for the creation of a two-tier system of child care in this country. Quality, regulated care costs money, and without the proposed government funding and more subsidized spaces promised under the federal-provincial agreements, regulated care will become available to more affluent families who can afford the fees, or to those families below the poverty line who will qualify for government subsidies. Low and middle class earners, who comprise the majority of families, may be financially pressured into finding arrangements other than regulated, quality, centre-based care.



### **Cancelling the Child Care Agreements: Implications for the Economy**

#### ***Canada's spending on early learning and care lags well behind most OECD countries:***

Child care is an economic issue. Economists estimate a \$2 return on every \$1 invested in quality early childhood services. The return is substantially higher for vulnerable children (Cleveland & Krashinsky, 1998). A growing body of global research indicates that educating preschool minds provides lifelong dividends (McCain & Mustard, 1999; Meisels, 1999, 2000; Willms, 2002; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). Developmentally healthy and well-adjusted children place fewer demands on the health, education, social welfare and criminal justice system (Health Canada, Early Childhood Development Strategy Paper, 2000). The OECD has been critical of the investment Canada makes in its youngest citizens. The OECD calculates that Canada spends roughly 0.2% of its annual GDP on pre-primary education. This percentage lags well behind most industrialized nations (<http://www.child-carecanada.org>). The OECD recommends that Canada boost its spending levels to 0.4% of GDP. This would represent approximately \$4 billion per year. The previous government's plan promised a total federal spending commitment of \$5 billion over five years. This number should put into perspective just how under-funded the early learning and care sector is in this country. In comparison, several European Union nations, particularly the Nordic countries, spend roughly 2% of GDP on early childhood services (<http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca>). To put that number in perspective, public spending on education for Canadian children over six years represents about 6% of GDP. It is reasonable to assess the costs of the period 0-5 of a child's life as a proportion of this budget, so that at a minimum, 1% of GDP could be spent directly on early childhood services.

Publicly, Canada spends more than \$6,000 per child, per year on K-12 education, but spends less than one-sixth of this amount between 0-5 years (<http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca>). *Code Blue*, a campaign funded by the Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada, and initiated to protect the agreements, collected 50,000 signatures in an open letter to the Prime Minister asking him to honour the federal-provincial agreements on child care.

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***Developmentally healthy and well-adjusted children place fewer demands on the health, education, social welfare and criminal justice system (Health Canada, Early Childhood Development Strategy Paper, 2000).***

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#### ***Investing in young children promotes economic productivity and global competitiveness.***

The economy functions as a result of human capital. A country's human capital depends largely upon the education and well-being of its citizens (Heckman, 2000; Keating & Hertzman, 1999). Economic productivity and competitiveness requires an investment in people. Education and skill level determine earning potential (Becker, 1964; Heckman, 2000). Investing in young people boosts productivity in two ways:

- labour participation and retention of the current workforce, consisting of parents
- developing future productivity by improving positive outcomes for children (Dodge, 2003).

In the first scenario, if parents are confident that their children are well cared for, they are able to focus on their job and career commitments. As mentioned earlier, female participation in the workforce is clearly influenced by the availability of good quality child care (Scarr, 1998). Companies interested in attracting, cultivating and retaining talented employees would be well advised to make child care a strategic priority. Workplaces that offer child care centres on or near-site, after-school programs and services to support parents such as flex-time or extended parental leave show higher worker retention rates and employee satisfaction (Galinsky & Johnson, 1998). It is estimated that work-life conflicts cost Canadian organizations roughly \$2.7 billion in lost time due to work absences (Galinsky & Bond, 1998). A recent survey conducted by the Gandalf Group, coined the C-Suite Survey, (<http://www.gandalfgroup.ca>) reports that almost two-thirds of Canadian executives believe that child care policy is linked to productivity. Those who support this view see connections between child care and more labour participation, and fewer distracted parents. However, the majority of those surveyed were skeptical of the current 2007 plan to use employer tax credits to create daycare spaces, even though they felt that access to good quality daycare is important to hiring and keeping people. It seems that relying on corporations to fund childcare through tax credits may not work. However, childcare policy matters to corporations. Perhaps it's time to communicate this message a little more forcefully to the business community.

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***...several European Union nations, particularly the Nordic countries, spend roughly 2% of GDP on early childhood services.***

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Returning to the second case for investing in young children - they are the workforce of the future. Public spending on early learning and care should be considered an investment, not a consumption expense. How well children will function in society as adults has much to do with the quality of their early childhood experiences (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000; Doherty, 2001; Erikson & Kurz-Reimer, 1999). If the first few years of life include support for growth in cognition, language, motor skills, adaptive skills and social-emotional functioning, the child is more likely to succeed in school and later contribute to society (NAEYC, 1986; NRC, 2001; Bennett, 2004). If developmental challenges are identified early, interventions are far more effective, and cost efficient, at a young age, than remediation at a later stage of development. Early enrichment programs such as *Head Start*, *Right Start* and *Highscope/Perry Preschool* have consistently shown improved outcomes for "at risk children" (Coffey, 2003). However, as the *Early Years Study* (McCain & Mustard, 1999) pointed out, targeting only "at risk" children deprives too many others of the opportunity to reach their full potential too. Recall that this study showed that in terms of absolute numbers, children from middle-class families represent the largest group of children experiencing at least one serious learning or behavioral difficulty. High quality early childhood education produces better outcomes for all children, regardless of socio-economic status (Doherty, 1997; Health Canada, 2000)...

Better outcomes mean improved school performance, reduced special education placements, lower school dropout rates, and increased life-long learning potential (Heckman, 2000).

Better outcomes mean less demand on social programs, the courts and the health care system (Health Canada, 2000).

Better outcomes mean more community engagement and healthier neighborhood environments.

Children learn from birth, and the everyday aspects of their life are their classrooms. Therefore, good, stimulating environments that support their development should not wait until they enter the formal education system at six years old.

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***After decades of demanding a better system, the foundation for a national early learning and care system had finally been laid.***

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***Learning is a life-long process beginning at birth:***

David Dodge, Governor of the Bank of Canada, has emphasized repeatedly that, from an economist's perspective, the returns to investment in human capital appear to be highest for the very young (Dodge, 2003). He argues that the returns to investment in young children of relatively lower cognitive ability are about the same as those for children of higher cognitive ability. This is not the case for post secondary education, where the returns are clearly higher for those of higher cognitive ability. He believes that governments should be shifting their focus from post secondary education for some to preschool education for all. This requires a philosophical shift recognizing learning as a life-long process beginning at birth and a blurring of the boundaries between the preschool period and the primary period of schooling. Given its relative importance, David Dodge questions why an institutional framework for the delivery of early childhood services has been plagued by broken promises and under-funding. At the primary and secondary level of education, ministries of education, local school boards and schools themselves provide

frameworks that are well established and robust. At the post secondary level, ministries of higher education, research councils, ministries of finance, the private sector and post secondary institutions all interact in a well-organized way to provide support for post secondary education and research (Dodge, 2003).

As mentioned earlier, Canada is faced with a shrinking labour market. The cohort of 65 years and older will grow rapidly after 2011, while the population of labour force age will decline as a share of the total population. Moreover, during the current decade, the growth rate in the 0-12 age group will be negative (Dodge, 2003). This means that there will be a small cohort of children to replace those retiring over the next two decades. It is more important than ever that these children be developed as fully as possible to bolster the productivity of a future smaller labour force.

**Conclusion**

Families and particularly, young children, deserve a better system of early learning and care than is currently available to them in this country. Income support may be welcomed, but it is not a social policy and does not provide the institutional framework, or the infrastructure, to allow children and families access to the quality early learning and care services they so desperately need. Without access to affordable, developmentally focused, regulated care, too many Canadian families are turning to unregulated care arrangements that may or may not meet the developmental needs of their children. From a societal perspective, it is counterproductive to separate the requirements of the child from those of the parents. Families require access to services that meet the developmental needs of children, while simultaneously allowing parents to work, study and engage in their community. They need the resources to fully participate in their children's early learning and development. After decades of demanding a better system, the founda-



tion for a national early learning and care system had finally been laid. There was reason to celebrate. It is regrettable that a change in philosophy at the federal level puts that foundation at risk. Now, more than ever, Canadians should be informed of the consequences of denying young children adequate investment in their care. It is time for the Canadian public to understand the implications of chronically under-funding this vital stage of human development and demand that we turn this thing around!

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# The Kind Intentions Program: An Early Childhood Innovation

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## Abstract

A new program element, the Kind Intentions Program (KIP) was developed by, and incorporated into, an Early Childhood setting. This article will address the impetus for the program and describe the program itself. The author describes the guiding principles, goals, and methodology developed to foster the inclusion of this new facet of the program. Issues discussed include the child's developing skills in observing the behaviours of others and the emerging capacity to take another person's perspective. Developing morals are considered along with the importance of including each child in the program. The reactions of the children, parents, and staff to the program are expressed, along with a report on the current status of the program.

## Introduction

In an Early Childhood program for 48 children, aged three to six years, in a mixed aged group, Peter is moving through the classroom watching the other children at play. He notes that the large waffle blocks are scattered about the floor, left there by others who forgot to clean up at the end of their play. Peter begins to pick up the blocks, of which there are many - 62 all together. He picks them all up and moves on to work with a puzzle.

A few moments later, Kisha notes that the shoelace of one of the staff members is untied. "I'll tie your shoe for you," she states, and proceeds to tie the shoelace. The staff member gives Kisha a hug and a "Thank-you" to which Kisha replies with, "You're welcome!"

Still later, Sylvia is having difficulty getting her coat on for outside play. One of the children goes to her, sits her down, and helps to get the coat on. All the while, Sylvia hears comforting words of encouragement such as, "I'll help you. Coats are hard. There you go."

These behaviours demonstrated by the children were not prompted by one of the Early Childhood Educators. They were acts taken upon independently by each of the children involved. The children were demonstrating their participation in new curriculum content called "Kind Intentions" (KIP).

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## The Genesis of KIP

The genesis of the program lies in a much different aspect of programming ~ "Show and Tell". After several months of "Show and Tell" the staff noted that the negative aspects of the event were far outweighing the positive. Children were routinely fighting over, losing, and breaking the special something they had brought to show their friends. Indeed, even with the best efforts of the staff to maintain the peace, the number of tears over the event was increasing. The staff noted and recorded several negative incidents amongst the children (pushes, yelling, and taking another child's toy) that were directly related to "Show and Tell." There was a definite need for change.

During a staff meeting, the concerns surrounding "Show and Tell" were brought up for discussion. The overwhelming opinion of the staff members was that "Show and Tell" needed to be replaced. In the dismantling process it was recognized that there was a need to place emphasis on kindness to combat against the contentiousness which had arisen. The result was the staff determined that a new program element, which would be called the Kind Intentions Program (KIP), be introduced. The staff was excited about the new idea and was soon forwarding ideas for inclusion of the program.

A discussion followed, during which the staff voiced their perceptions of the daily



interactions amongst the children and the responses of the staff to the behaviour of the children in our program. It was recognized that in our program value was being placed upon kind behaviours displayed by the children. However, the reinforcement of the display of kindness was informal and individual. The children were being recognized throughout the day for displaying kind behaviours, but the group as a whole was not actively recognizing the performance of kind acts.

The staff determined that the children would be acknowledged for their acts of kindness during circle in the space of time vacated through the elimination of "Show and Tell". The children and staff would be invited to report acts of kindness that they had observed. The kind act of the child would be acknowledged by the whole group. At the end of the day, staff members would congratulate the parents on the kindness of their children. KIP was to serve in our efforts to provide an opening for the children to display and recognize kindness. As Paley (1999) states, "They are not always kind, as we know. They are, however, on the edge of kindness, ready and waiting for an opening" (p. 89). However, as with *Roots of Empathy*, it "does not target difficult children or aggressive children. It raises the floor of . . . kindness for all of the children" (Gordon, 2002, p. 243).

One of the significant aspects of the program is the method for reporting kind acts. Since the children are invited to report an observed act of kindness, they are required to become active observers of their own behaviours, and the behaviours of others. According to Selman (1976), moral development may be dependent upon the ability to take a differentiated view of the interactions between oneself and others, of being able to take another person's perspective. The reporting process of the Kind Intentions program (KIP) meets this need through the encouragement of children to recognize the actions, and situations, of others.

### Young Children's Development and KIP

The recognition of positive actions by the children was important for the development of an ability to appreciate the actions of others. This is certainly not a novel idea in early childhood education. Indeed, the recent development of *Roots of Empathy* by Mary Gordon (2001) highlights the continued support for young children's growing sense of moral understanding. Similar to *Roots of Empathy*, the children participating in the Kind Intentions Program would need to consider the actions of others and begin to assess the value of behaviour. This ability to make accurate judgments of others is essential for children who are, and will continue to be, strongly influenced by their peer group. In Santrock's (1992) discussion of Piaget, it was detailed that:

*Jean Piaget argued that as children develop, they become more sophisticated in thinking about social matters, especially about the possibilities and conditions of cooperation. Piaget believed that this social understanding comes about through the mutual give-and-take of peer relations. In the peer group, where others have power and status similar to the individual, plans are negotiated and coordinated, and disagreements are reasoned about and eventually settled. Parent-child relations, in which parents have the power and the child does not, are less likely to advance moral reasoning because rules are often handed down in an authoritarian way. (p. 290)*

While the acknowledgement of kind acts would take on a new dimension, the positive response accorded to children as a part of the daily interactions between children and staff continued. The recognition and verbal reinforcement for displays of kindness by the children was maintained as a part of the daily interaction between the staff and children. The staff was clear that these informal moments of encouragement for the chil-

dren needed to continue since the acknowledgement for positive behaviours is foundational in the development of a sense of moral responsibility to others and their environment. KIP would be presented as an extension of the current support offered by the staff for the display of kind acts by the children.

The program was addressing the children's developing moral values. Developmentally, Gilligan and Wiggins (1987) identified two separate aspects of the moral evolution of a child:

*Thus, we locate the origins of morality in the young child's awareness of self in relation to others and identify two dimensions of early childhood relationships that shape that awareness in different ways. One is the dimension of inequality, reflected in the child's awareness of being smaller and less capable than adults and older children, of being a baby in relation to a standard of human... Focusing on the constraint of the young child's situation, psychologists have defined morality as justice and aligned development with the child's progress toward a position of equality and independence. But the young child also experiences attachment, and the dynamics of attachment relationships create a very different awareness of self ~ as capable of having an effect on others, as able to move others and to be moved by them. (p. 280)*

As the children interact with their environment, they will seek not only to achieve power in the development of new skills and the accumulation of knowledge, but also strive to please those with whom they hold attachments ~ their caregivers, parents, and peers.

Since kindness can be expressed in varied ways, the recognized acts of kindness would be independent endeavors of the children, not suggestions or requests of staff. It was felt that this would provide occasions to act kindly in their own way, not just in ways that they had been



directed to be kind. The children would have the opportunity to explore as many different possibilities for kindness as they were capable of contextualizing.

Given that children in the program are unique in their abilities with an independent history and understanding of kindness, the program promoted was to be inclusive. There was a recognized concern that those children identified as shy or quiet may not be routinely recognized. The staff would keep track of those children in their primary care groups to ensure that each of the children was included and acknowledged routinely. In our program, each staff member made notes that recorded the participation of each child in their primary care group.

For the young child, recognition for kind acts is a vital reinforcer of kindness. As detailed by Shore and Shore (1995), "Kindergarten children considered intentional helping as kinder than accidental helping . . . The view that anonymous helping is kinder than non-anonymous helping appears to be acquired quite late by most children" (p.10). Categorically, the young children of preschool age are in need of the recognition as a reinforcer of kind behaviours. They have yet to develop the capacity to achieve satisfaction through anonymous acts of kindness. Equally, the acts of each child are unique in their materialization.

The staff recognized that the acts of kindness would vary from day to day and between each child. As Lamborn, Fischer, and Pipp (1994) detail, "During early childhood, children's definitions of honesty of kindness are situation-specific, focus on concrete qualities or overt actions, tend to be egocentric, and provide only preliminary elaboration of the context surrounding the action." (p. 495 - 496). Certainly, the component of the kindness to be recognized in the program would be directly observable behaviour. The acts to be recognized would not be the internal, or covert, thought processes.

However, the staff felt that the recognition of the acts of the children should be

on a personal, internal, level. Stickers or other concrete rewards would not be introduced in an effort to assist the children in the development of an internal capability to achieve satisfaction through their actions. It was determined that verbal recognition from the staff, children, and parents would serve as the reinforcers. The focus on internalized rewards for the children was highly valued by the staff members. As Vivian Paley (1999), stated in an interview with Pat Wingert, "Acting out kindness makes us realize what we're capable of. It feels good to be in power, but it feels terrific to see yourself as the giver of kindness." (p.1). The act of acknowledging the behaviour of the children serves as an internalized reward and an opportunity for the child to feel good about their actions.

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*... "Acting out kindness makes us realize what we're capable of. It feels good to be in power, but it feels terrific to see yourself as the giver of kindness."*

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While the staff would be encouraging self-satisfaction through kind acts, they would not be making interpretations of altruism. According to Damon and Hart (1988), the development of altruism follows a sequence not unlike the developmental stages of physical growth or the accumulation of language skills. For the preschool aged child, moral behaviour such as sharing is not altruistic in origin, but rather a practical or obligatory means for getting what they want (i.e., praise from adults or a turn with a special toy). While this may make the acts of kindness program seem reward orientated from the position of the child, according to Damon and Hart, this is precisely what the child should be encouraged to do. The child, who is able to display kind

behavioural traits, is formulating a foundation for the internalizing of genuinely altruistic characteristics that will materialize during their adolescence and early adulthood.

### Families and KIP

In our program, families are informed of any changes to curriculum content. The program was outlined in the monthly newsletter and the staff promoted the program by reporting the kind happenings to the families each day. The communication of the program continued on a daily basis as the staff shared the kind happenings. It was felt that the encouragement of positive acts by the children would be furthered by the participation of the families. As Leeper, Witherspoon and Day (1984) detail, "The involvement of parents in early childhood education attempts to provide opportunities for parents to have a more significant role in the development and education of their children and themselves" (p. 421).

With each of the guiding principles in place and a method developed for the inclusion of KIP, the staff presented the program to the children. The only miscalculation of the staff in their planning was in underestimating the spectacular response. The children grasped the idea and incorporated kind acts the very first day. If a child fell, six children would dash to their aid shouting to the staff to bring ice and bandages. Should a child's bike wheel become caught in the wood chips, a strong young child was quick to lend a helping hand.

Perhaps most importantly, the children were talking with each other about kindness; they were praising each other for being kind. However, children have been learning kindness down through the ages without this program. Certainly, the inherent growth and development of the children within our program may have resulted in an increased occurrence of kindness without the inclusion of the program. Further research, such as introducing the program to a group of children to compare with a matching control



group, would aid in determining how influential KIP is in the development of an understanding of kindness for the young child.

### Initial Results

KIP has been in operation in our program for six months. While the initial enthusiasm has leveled, the kindness of the children is still a dynamic part of the program. The children continue to display the kind acts that were recognized just three days after the start of the program. It is still far too early to determine if KIP will result in significant long-term changes in the behaviours of the children. Nevertheless, the inclusion of the program has resulted in a positive beginning and has produced some encouraging results.

Since the introduction of the program, the staff noted a marked difference in the climate and atmosphere; the program is a more kind-hearted place to be. It is not clear whether the changes were due to the inclusion of the program or perhaps simply from the elimination of "Show and Tell". We named our new program "Kind Intentions" and were pleased to see that the intentions did indeed materialize.

Of the 48 children, aged three to six years, who are enrolled in our program, we noted diversity in their ability to grasp the concept of 'kindness'. The five and six year olds proved to be the vanguards of the program for the group. They regularly recognized and reported kind acts and promoted the program amongst each other through their interactions as they encouraged each other to perform kind acts. The four-year-old children participated to a lesser degree as demonstrated when, at times, they would report an act that they had performed. The three-year-old children often reported the same act several times or made up an act to report. With these resulting variations in the ability to grasp the concept of reporting an act of kindness, it would appear, for the children enrolled in our program, the most appropriate age range is four to six years.

The staff in our program recognized that the program might not necessarily continue indefinitely. Should the enrollment of the children change in such a way as to become predominately three-year-olds, we may choose to adapt the program. Alternately, should the children become disinterested, we may choose to close the program. Clearly, there is a need to continuously evaluate and evolve the program through regular observations of the behaviour of the children and assessments of the abilities of the children to participate in KIP.

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### Conclusion

The Kind Intentions Program was designed by us to meet the needs of our program. While the program staff is excited and encouraged by the program, it is not known how transferable the program would be. Facilities in different geographical areas may experience different results. The size of the program and variance in enrollment may influence the success of the program. For example, a program with an enrollment of predominantly three-year-olds would likely experience far different results. Additionally, larger or smaller programs may experience differing conclusions as to the effectiveness of the program due to changes in the numbers of children participating. There are many variables that need to be explored before this program can be considered to be of universal value.

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## Shadow-Catching ~ Dancing with the Sun: A Grade One Long-Term Project about Shadows

Paula Pastor-Schonberger

**Paula Pastor-Schonberger** teaches and works with diverse communities of children and families. Her Masters of Education and Early Childhood Education Diploma program work at York University, focuses on democratic classrooms and "best" practices. Paula is currently working on her MRP from the Inspired Reggio Emilia Approach on "projects". She hopes her work will communicate a view of children's rights, potentials and resourcefulness, promote the complexity of children's thinking and strengthen relationships and teacher research in the classroom. Her latest writing has appeared in *Innovations in early education: the international Reggio Exchange*.

### Abstract

This article documents an emergent curriculum on "shadow play" with grade one students and their teacher inspired by the Reggio Emilia Approach. Substantive focus is placed on key moments of the approach's principles: purposeful play, symbolic representation in communicative languages, and the inquiry orientation to "shadows". Insisting on the integrity of children as persons with rights transforms the roles of children and teachers in the learning process. What is found is that we must rethink children's learning to highlight their intellectual potential, ongoing reciprocal relationships and interactions and the pedagogic context in which this might be accomplished.



*When the sun shines on you, you have a shadow.  
But, if you go to a shadow you don't see yours because  
your shadow is black. When it's morning the sun is on  
the side of my body. When it is afternoon, the sun moves  
so your shadow is on another side.*

*Vali, age 6*

### Introduction

Vali talks to Malandi, Vladamir, Alexander, Armin and Kim Sung, during a project about shadows. My story describes the 3-month project, working with a diverse and multicultural group of six-year olds in a Canadian suburban elementary public school, guided by a teacher and a professional artist. My role as educator is to gain knowledge about how children learn, offer a forum for interactions and multiple points of view within an inclusive community of learners and document children's conversations and findings on panels and through technological media (Gallas, 1995). The authentic conversations, drawings and actions of students use pseudonyms throughout the project experience for the purpose of this article.

Inspired by educators in Reggio Emilia, Italy, I use the work of the children to share my interpretation of the teaching practice, with students, parents, colleagues and the public. I also use documentation, guided by the principles of the Reggio Emilia Approach, to "make visible the learning process" (Project Zero, 2001) of children. This will provide information for presentations and workshops for educators and college students.

The shadow project, a learning experience responding to the grade one children's interests and inquiries, is an example of "emergent curriculum" (Rinaldi, 1993, p.1). My intention is not to view the shadow project as a "model" (Rankin, 1998, p.217) for teaching children but as a guide to facilitate their learning. My purpose is to reveal the complexity of children's thinking, the power of conversation, the sharing of knowledge, the understanding of a topic in depth and the collaboration between these children as they "co-construct knowledge" (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997, pp.13-14).



### An Interest Unfolding

On a clear morning in the last week of September, the children and I go outdoors. A six-year-old boy, Robert, runs into the sparse playground and sits hunched over a patch of green grass. He picks the grass while children around him engage in chatter. The boy moves his head and notices a darkened area. His gaze shifts to the sky. Alexander and Muhammad approach and with outstretched arms, point at a soaring seagull. The bird lands close to the boy's feet. "Look! Look! Robert shouts, jumping up and down. His loud shout draws the attention of the other children in the playground. They run to see. Eleven small bodies move towards the bird and they scream.

**Robert:** A seagull... The seagull, the seagull!

**Alexander:** Oh ... There's the bird's shadow!

The bird's shadow intrigues all the children in the class. They wonder how seagulls land so quietly. Can they touch the bird's shadow? Will the shadow disappear from the bird?

Standing a few feet away, I observe children's interest in the bird's shadow and take photographs. To my surprise, the children do not notice my camera or pay attention to the clicking of the lens. I wait to see what they will do next.

### Playing Games

A few minutes later, the bird flies away. Alexander and Robert run fast down the field chasing the bird soaring high above them. Armin, M.J. and Vladamir, giggling, follow the boys and all stop at the playground adjacent to the side of the school. Pieces of long wooden boards outline the playground and dry sand covers the ground inside the area.

Last to arrive, I join the children walking around the playground apparatus. Kim Sung and Sang-Su point a finger at the slide. From under the slide, a long, dark shape appears on the ground across from where Armin, M.J. and Vladamir stand – a shadow. The boys notice short shadows, hugging play equipment - four circular scruffy tires, a bright rounded tunnel and a rectangular bridge about four inches off the ground. Children move towards the equipment. Vali and Muhammad push sand with their shoes and large mounds of sand move across the playground. Kim Sung, Sang-Su, Federico, Nicky and Rizetta laugh and join the fun, shoving sand on top of the shadows.

Beside a heap of sand, Sang-Su, Jungsook, Sun Jin and Akasma notice another shadow. It is different from the shape of the playground objects – wide, long and curvy. The shapes puzzle the girls. "What is this?" says Akasma. All the children hear Akasma's question and move towards the girls. Sang-Su, Jungsook, Sun Jin lock hands and step towards the field. The girls watch as their shadows merge. In front, is one gigantic dark figure. Akasma runs behind the girls. She begins to stretch her arms, flapping like a seagull. The girls imitate the seagull by

spreading their arms and a bird-like shadow forms on the ground. The other girls join in with her. It looks like a bird is passing over the field as their shadows pass over the grass. "Look at us, we're flying!" shouts Akasma.

The children in the class follow the girl's lead as they step out of the playground and onto the field, forming small groups. Throughout recess and into the late morning children together find more ways that shadows disappear.

As I walk in close proximity to other groups, children describe their shadow games to me.

**Muhammad:** Try this! Muhammad crosses his right leg behind to show his shadow.

**Vali:** Our shadows are still with us. We can't get rid of them. Vali, Alexander, Robert run past Muhammad down the field laughing.

**Sang-Su:** mm...Sitting next to Vladamir, Sang-Su lifts the garment and exposes her shadow.

**M.J.:** Look, we're together. Sun Jin stands on top of M.J.'s shadow.

Children taught me how their shadows disappear. Vladamir sits on a cotton sweater, and Armin lies down on the grass next to Federico and says, "I made my shadow disappear." Akasma wants her silhouette to disappear and picks stones from the ground to cover her shadow: Muhammad attempts to make his shadow vanish by performing cartwheels, legs wavering in the air.

I thought the children would look for the bird in the playground as they ran toward the slide but instead they play hide and seek with their shadows. I am fascinated to see how easily children's interests shift from searching for the seagull, looking at shadows in the playground, to discovering their own shadows. During the morning activity children are "building from one idea to another" (Duckworth, 1996, pp.6-7) as they co-construct ways that shadows disappear during the morning activity. Their interest is sustained for two hours! Smiling faces and boisterous laughter indicate children's thorough enjoyment with the experience as they keep playing games and "mastering" (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997, p.14) ways to trick shadows into disappearing.

### Building Curriculum - Drawings

In early October, what began as an outside experience continues inside the classroom. Sitting around a large table with a group of students, I ask, "Where do shadows come from?" Silence...but after a few minutes Akasma offers an idea and says,

"From our hands, head, arms, legs." Jungsook replies, "Outside - grass, slides and tires." "Don't forget the trees and leaves", says Vali.



The children's immediate responses to my question are offered with a confidence not demonstrated during class work. The morning recess bell rings, but we do not stop. Throughout recess the children and I continue with our discussion on shadows.

**Sang-Su:** When it is night you can't see the shadow. When it is light you can.

**Kim Sung:** If you want to see shadows you can see them at home.

**Vali:** With light.

**Teacher:** What kind of light?

**Akasma:** Sunlight!

**Kim Sung:** Shadows from class, from the projector on to the screen.

**Armin:** From light bulbs. That is electricity. The bulb is light and is shining behind you.

**Kim Sung:** Sometimes you don't have shadows, because of the clouds or moon.

**Armin:** You can't walk away from the sun.

**Kim Sung:** No, it can go away from the sun.

**Jungsook:** The moon even follows you where you go.

**Armin:** You always have a shadow.

**Alexander:** Shadows are in my mind....I don't want to forget it.

**Teacher:** What can you do so you will not forget your shadow?

**Kim Sung:** Draw a picture!

**Alexander:** Let's draw our shadows!

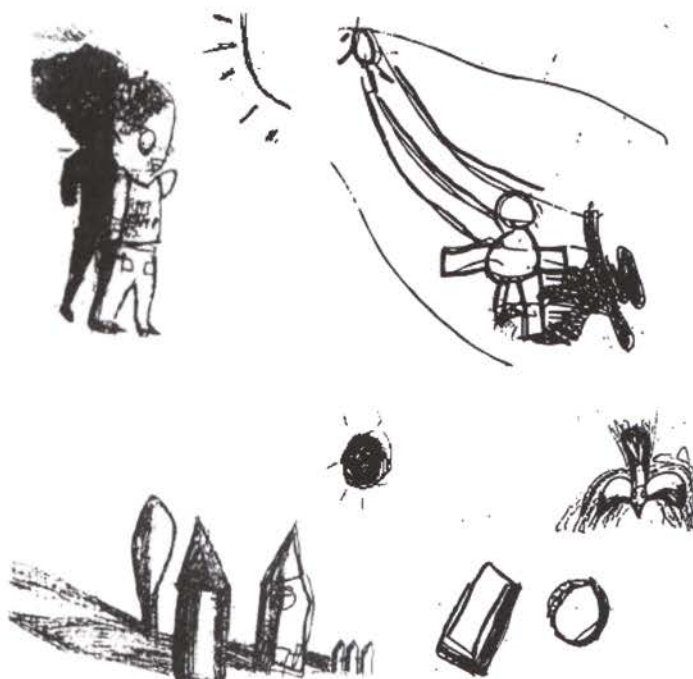
I am caught off guard by Alexander's comment. We are talking about how shadows project, but Alexander wants to draw. I infer that he wants a reference point, and possibly a "plan for future investigation" (Forman & Fyfe, 1998, p. 241) or a reminder of knowledge attained on the shadow topic. Alexander's classmates are fascinated by his intention to draw shadows. Most students in the grade one class can hardly read or write in October, but by using symbolic representations, to explain their thoughts, it keeps the learning experience alive. The students draw shadows on paper using plain lead pencils for thirty minutes.

Over the course of a week, every morning students take out sketch books and eagerly draw while talking to a partner. They erase parts of a drawing and sketch it again.

Children use their classmates' opinions and reflections, but in the end rely on their own images and understandings. I notice changes in their drawings and attitudes towards art. I observe their appreciation for sketching as I find their sketches have increasingly more recognizable objects and softer more delicate lines in them. The children's ideas are organized and mapped onto paper. One child draws a bird soaring through the air, beak down, layers of wings outstretched; others sketch shadows of a classmate, pencil, house, tree or bush (Figure 1).

**Figure 1:**

Students draw shadows and sketch objects discovered in the playground.



### Shadow Theories

The following Monday morning, children look at drawings and books on shadows in the sparse class library. Nicky asks, "Why are there shadows?" Muhammad, shrugging his shoulders, walks away. Nicky sighs, closing the book. I pose her question to the rest of the class. Students gather around Nicky. I "wait for an answer" (Vecchi, 1998, p.189).

**Vladimir:** The sun moves. In the morning the sun is in the left but in the afternoon the sun is on the right. The spring has longer days and the shadow is longer.

**Alexander:** Sometimes the sun is following you. Your shadow is on the right side of your body. Sometimes the sun is back of you. If the sun is not there with you, you do not have a shadow.

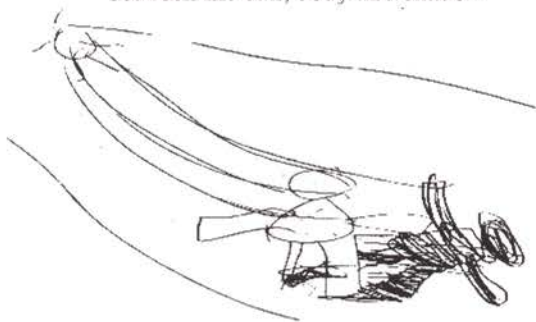
**Armin:** Shadows can be seen in the light. A shadow is something, like a dark spot. Shadow moves when the sun moves. In



the morning, your shadow is wide. If there were no sun, we would not have a shadow. You cannot see your shadow in the dark. (Figure 2)

**Figure 2:**

Armin explores the connections between the sun, body and shadow



Waiting for a few moments allowed the children to think about Nicky's question. Rizzetta, a quiet child reluctant to speak in small groups, shouts out in a convincing voice,

In the morning there is sun and shadow but afternoon there's moon and shadow. If you put light on our hand you can see your shadow everyday at night. The day has the sun for light.

I am relieved other students "catch" (Filipini, 1998, p.181) the question. Together, the group searches for possible solutions. Vladimir concludes that the sun's movement changes his shadow in the morning and in the afternoon as Alexander adds, "shadows are in back of you."

Vladimir uses measurement terminology, "long" and Armin follows with the term "wide".

Vladimir proposes a comparison between an image and colour, offering a metaphor, "A shadow is like a dark spot."

Other questions emerge:

How do shadows stay in one place?

Why do shadows change?

What is the location of a shadow in the morning, afternoon and evening?

After a lengthy discussion, children write extensive theories about shadows.

Preceding the written task, noisy voices are heard from individual children voicing possible theories.

### Projections

The second week in October, Muhammad, Vali, Alexander and M.J. enter the classroom. Looking around the room, heads turn towards an overhead projector sitting on a rectangular table.

Walking briskly towards the table, these boys who had never used the equipment before placed their hands on top of the projector's glass face. They change their hand positions to look like animals. Muhammad bends two fingers and on the projection screen appears two monkey ears. An outstretched finger becomes a spider; two smaller fingers are top teeth and two larger fingers are fangs of a Pterodactyl Dinosaur. In the midst of the transformation of the human body to animal shapes, a story develops.

### "Shadows are Not Only Black but Coloured Too."

That same October morning, ten children in the class take chairs from round tables and comfortably surround the boys watching their performance. Noticing the play is over, Rizzetta pushes herself through an opening of children towards the projector placing a short, pink, coloured ruler on the surface of the overhead. Sang-Su puts a blue piece of coloured paper onto the screen. Vladimir hurries to the back of the room to get scissors from a glass container. He cuts an array of distinct shapes in various parts from the paper, tossing them, on top of the overhead projector. A striking design of colour appears on the screen. The children gasp! Children stand attentively around the table without touching the equipment. Jungsook appears in front of the screen and announces, "The holes are blue. There is no shadow, the paper has a colour." For the first time, children realize a link between light and colour. All the children move closer to the screen and multiple hands appear touching the holes on the paper. Light from the screen disappears and appears. Children are enthusiastic with these new discoveries and distinguish between objects that have a shadow and objects that do not.

**Valil:** Plastic ruler didn't have a shadow because there was a blue colour.

**Akasma:** The small ruler is light because the colour is light and the big ruler is dark. The light goes through the ruler but when your hand is on the light it's dark because your hand is not see through.

**Sang-Su:** The plastic ruler didn't have a shadow because it is transparent when you put coloured paper close to it.

**Rizzetta:** When something is transparent or translucent the light from the overhead projector goes through the object that was transparent or translucent and that's how colour shows on the screen.

**Sang-Su:** Transparent means you can see through very good and translucent means you could see through a bit.

Akasma observes that the lighter the object, the easier you can see through the item. However, the darker the object the more difficult it is to see through. In comparison Gina clarifies that the dark object does not have a shadow on the screen but looks dark.



Books we had read earlier provide the language the children use to explain that objects are transparent and not resonant on the screen. As children's curiosities about the light from the projector continue throughout the day, they explore theories about shadows. I propose a "question to further guide the children's thinking and gain knowledge" (New, 1998, pp.270-275), "What are other sources of light?" One hypothesis stands out more than the other, "The sun shines on people. If there were mirrors everywhere, everything should have shadows." The children connect shadows and reflections from the sun and mirrors. This idea initiates another possibility where their inquiry might go.

### Portraits

At the end of October, an artist joins the classroom to further facilitate these inquiries. Children intently watch Mrs. Rotstein place a wooden mannequin on the table.

She switches on a hand lamp and the light bulb reflects a dark figure onto the projection screen. "Ooooh" murmurs Vladamir sitting next to her. "Hey, the light shows the shadow on the screen."

The artist moves the light to different positions around the statue; some body parts are not seen while others are. The artist then asks for a volunteer and flashes light on the side of Sang-Su's face so a shadow appears on the screen. Each child is smiling as if they are watching a magic trick. "I want to do that too", says Vladamir beginning to get up from the floor. Children take a turn standing next to the screen to see their reflection from the hand-held lamp.

The artist challenges children to sketch their face on manilla paper using charcoal.

She provides them with a small piece of charcoal and a few pieces of tissue. Two hours later children wipe their stained hands. Mrs. Rotstein and I observe black blotches on paper and cartoon-like drawings. During the weekend children use mirrors at home to study facial features suggested by the artist - length of face, type of hair and thickness of the mouth.

The next day of school, Mrs. Rotstein presents small hand mirrors to each child to keep for two more weeks. I notice children's sketches look different by the end of the week. Cartoon like drawings with large noses and ears are more refined and details of well-formed outlines of faces are visible, thicker uneven eyebrows, smaller shapely mouths and layered hair now grace the paper. Throughout the week, the artist and the children reflect on their sketches. She says, "Keep looking in the mirror. When you look in the mirror, is your mouth the same as what you've drawn?"

Sometimes smiles come across children's faces. Several times during the week, children rub out their sketches leaving torn paper. Children's frustration is enormous!

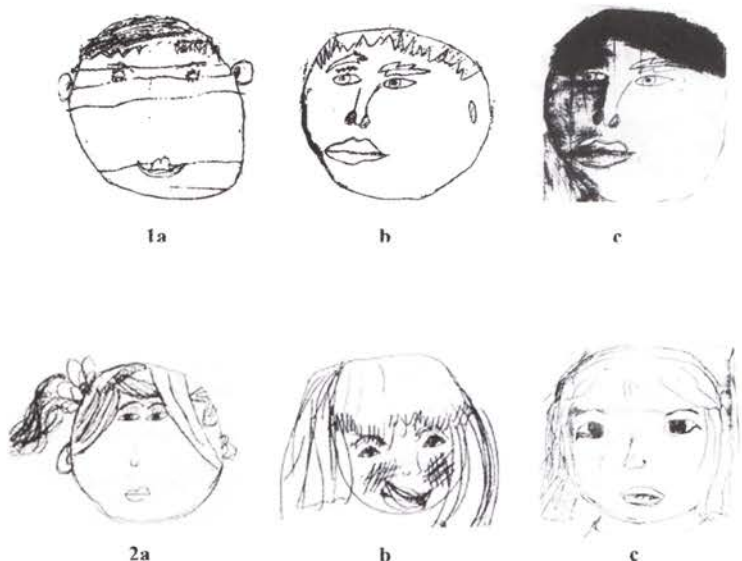
Sang-Su slams her hand down on the table, "I can't do this," she says. Vali rips his paper into tiny pieces and leaves his seat.

I feel terrible about how disappointed the children are feeling, but notice a "renewed interest" (Strozzi, 1998, p. 58) in face drawing as the artist provides a lesson on charcoal techniques. The outlined facial shapes on the portraits become better defined - a variety of rough, smooth, light or dark lines are deliberate and light and dark tones are softly blended and shaded by smudging or blending the charcoal with a finger.

By the end of three weeks there is a high level of satisfaction from the children on completing their sketches. Robert, smiles holding his portrait in his hand, turns to Alexander and says, "Look at me!" Sang-Su, Kim Sung and Vali want to display their pictures on the wall outside the class for all the students in the school. It is not surprising Vali and Sang-Su are the first students to hang their pictures on the wall outside the classroom door. Other children follow. For the next fifteen minutes children explain to other students and teachers how their picture became "real".

What I was not prepared for was the hours children spent on revisiting, reflecting and revising (Moran, 1998, pp.409-410) a piece of work and the quality and details of the children's drawings (Figure 3). Any problems children encountered during the project were untangled and they also discovered another way to communicate information about shadows and light.

**Figure 3:**  
Process of sketching children's faces



### Morning Shadows Are Wide

In November Armin and Alexander hand me a piece of paper. "This is for you. I went to Armin's and we wrote a poem."



On the rocky ground, my shadow stood straight, black and short. The morning shadow was wide next to my side.

I read the poem and an uncontrollable tear runs down my face. I am moved by the beauty of the descriptive words and the boys' desire to work on shadows outside the school environment. The poem illustrates another communicative language used by the children to express their understanding of shadows and their grasp of poetic language.

Listening to children's words ultimately reveals ideas for potential learning and shadow work takes us outside the classroom. By the middle of November, grey and white clouds threaten the sky. Leaves blown along the ground snuggle around the objects in the playground, and along the wire fence between the school yard and a row of houses. It is an unusually warm November and the sun is beating down on our clothes. Smoke coming from a backyard and burning leaves, fills the air. Standing next to the fence children look at the shadow of the canister filled with burning leaves. "Something has changed out there", mentions Akasma, nodding her head.

Looking down at the children's shadows we notice they are longer and thinner. Vali kneels down to pick up three rocks and another smaller pebble, placing them on his shadow. Armin and Vladamir come closer to him, choose rocks, and throw them on Vali's shadow. After counting the number of rocks, I suggest that groups of children look for other materials on the ground. A long piece of string found by M.J. is placed carefully around Vali's shadow. He continues to stand in the same spot for a few minutes gazing at the sky and then at his classmates. He steps out of the spot, swiftly turning, runs toward the back door of the school and disappears. Rizetta and Jungsook follow him and minutes later return with rulers and markers. Groups of children choose a ruler or a few oversized markers and take a spot on the massive field. Partners measure the distorted shadows. How extraordinary! Children use tools to measure in non-standard and standard units and compare shadows. A tough wind thrusts children forward and papers begin to blow. "We can finish measuring tomorrow", I say. Each group starts walking towards the school.

The following day, Alexander and Min Jae want to continue shadow measurement and groups of two and three children pick up small wicker baskets left on tables inside the classroom. The clear plastic bins filled with one hundred popsicle sticks and another fifty empty crayon containers are preferred objects. A few pieces of recycled paper, pencils and boards are retrieved from open shelves. Over the next few days, children use objects to measure shadows. They draw pictures and scribble numbers for length and width of body parts (Figure 4). I am amazed by the children's initiative, persistence and eagerness continuing activities from the day before.

Figure 4: Measurements of Gina's shadow



### Artifacts

By the end of November, reminiscences of the shadow project are in full view inside the classroom. Six "panels" (Wien, 1997, pp. 33-35) line the walls, one on beginning-shadow games, one on portraits, another on the dinosaur story, shadow theories, paper patterns and shadow measurements. Children's photos, drawings, conversations, teacher reflections and words illuminate the panels plastered across empty brick walls. The photos are a memory of the children and adult's world in a grade 1 classroom. I remember the overtures of the children and the seagull, the smells of fall leaves burning, small coarse pebbles stacked and opaque mirrored images and darkened areas from children's shadows.

Looking at the documentation I see an emerging project develop into an integrated science study on shadows that incorporate movement, language-oral, writing and reading, mathematics and visual arts. At the beginning, I am concerned where the project would go after the bird flies away in the playground. However, the children's fascination with shadows keeps the project going. For children it is a [desire to search for answers to their questions and for teachers it is a reflective journey following the students' curiosities, investigations and discoveries as together they explore answers] (Rinaldi, 1997, p.86).

Each time I take part in a project, I am surprised at what children are interested in and their immense prior knowledge on the topic. Sometimes, it is their intelligent conversations, willingness to share ideas, listening to different opinions or the resourcefulness of children that surprises me.

Yet, I am always "uncertain before a project begins" (Malaguzzi, 1997, p.73). There is no definite lesson plan. There are discussions with colleagues, parents and the artist on possible directions for the project. During teacher planned lessons, I give control to the children who become active participants in their own



learning. When more control lies with the children, they have increased enthusiasm to learn, a greater respect for objects, materials, and classmates and an ability to stay on task for longer periods of time. I was happy to give control of teaching to the children and play a different role as observer, participant and guide (Gallas, 1995). I find as an observer, that children teach me about a childhood culture that I am not familiar with as an adult. As a participant I provoke children to come to new discoveries and as a guide I offer materials, space and resources so the children's interests and curiosities are followed. Teachers inspired by this approach, believe that each child has the capacity to inquire, problem solve, and create their own learning.

### Epilogue

The wind is getting stronger, light snowflakes scatter on the playground and field where children compared their shadows. It is late November and like the changing of the sun's position, sunny days are fewer and bitter winds intensify. The light sweaters children wear are replaced with a layer of heavier wool clothing. By morning recess, children carry measuring tools inside the school and gradually move towards the classroom. I notice Muhammed placing his arm around M.J.'s shoulder. Vali, Sang-Su next to the boys are laughing and smiling and Robert and Alexander are hopping down the hallway. I hear voices muttering next to me. Akasma, Armin and Jungsook speak with a "voice of authority" (Forman & Fyfe, 1998, p.248) as they discuss the cold weather, and the diminishing sunlight during the day. I "catch the ball the children throw" me (Filipini, 1998, p. 181) and reaching into my jacket pocket write the children's conversation on a torn piece of paper. I am uncertain where the conversation will go. But together the children and I will develop, "perhaps other games as we go along" (Filipini, 1998) "to invent, to discover and dream" (Malaguzzi, 1998).

There are many possibilities when we listen to the children's invitation.

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## Magic Can Happen...

Enid Elliot, Sukhvir Sidhu, Toni Tata

**Enid Elliot**, PhD, has been an instructor of Early Childhood Education for many years. Finding theory in our practice and practicing our theories is a current interest of hers. At present, she is a post-doctoral fellow with University of Victoria's School of Child and Youth Care and recently her book, *We're not robots: The voices of daycare providers* was published by SUNY Press.

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**Toni Tata** is an Early Childhood Educator working in a preschool in Sooke, BC. She collaborated on this piece while completing her Early Childhood Education certificate.

### Abstract

Practicum provides learning opportunities for students, supervisors, and instructors as theory and practice come together. In this case study, we share the experience of one student and one supervisor. Working together and with the children, they supported and inspired each other. A memorable practicum for the three of us occurred and the children had an unforgettable summer learning experience.

### Introduction

Working with students over the years, I have accumulated a fund of stories - tales of success and failure, humorous stories and sad stories. Sometimes, they are inspiring and illuminating, even magical, such as the following one. A year ago I worked with a student and practicum supervisor who supported and inspired each other; their synergy becoming more than the usual student-supervisor dynamic. Watching their story unfold inspired me to write this article with the student, Toni, and her on-site supervisor, Sukhvir.

Practicum is at the heart of early childhood education programs. Students put into practice the theories they have read about and discussed; real children and situations challenge those theories. At the same time, students challenge themselves and the on-site supervisors. Betty Jones says, "Learning is in large part a function of relationships. This includes relationship with the subject matter" (Jones, 1986, p.37). Students create rela-

tionships with children, connect with staff, and the supervisor; as an instructor, I connect with the student, the supervisor and often other staff. We bring ideas into discussion and into our relationships.

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*Sometimes government  
policies aimed at creating  
different programs or saving  
money create work  
environments that undermine  
and discourage early  
childhood educators.*

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When learning is shared among all these people, everyone is affected and transformation is possible (Gonzalez-Mena, 2007). As Hooks (1994) reminds us, when we "open our minds and hearts so that we can know beyond the boundaries of what is acceptable, so that we can think and rethink, so that we can create new visions" (hooks, 1994, p.12). When we think together and plan together, we can indeed transform ourselves and create new visions for our programs. As Ada and Campoy (2004) explain, "Transformation can be a mere physical change brought about by age, but it can also be a profound change born out of learning and experience" (p. 138).

Toni was an experienced preschool teacher who had not completed the requirements for licensing in British Columbia; she was working with Pacific Rim Early Childhood Institute to com-

plete her basic level ECE certificate. Challenging her final practicum last summer, she was doing the final six-week course in only three weeks. Living outside of town she traveled in from Sooke, a bus ride of an hour, to work in a childcare program in Victoria.

Sukhvir, the director of Centennial Daycare Centre, and other staff members, welcomed Toni for her three-week practicum. As Toni said, "Sukhvir was welcoming, generous, and supportive." Indeed Sukhvir was encouraging, recognizing an energy and creativity in Toni that inspired her own; together, they created a magical time for the children.

**"Pots and pans started it."** By the end of the **first week**, through observation and interaction, Toni was aware of how much the children were enjoying their time outdoors. Inside, the centre was divided into small rooms that were cozy and created intimacy on a rainy afternoon, but on warm summer days, the inside seemed to constrict a free flow of open-ended play. In summer, the outdoors offered more space, more light, and more possibilities. Toni decided to enrich the sand box. By watching the children, she had found her cue.

On the **Monday** of the **second week**, the children painted three large cardboard boxes outdoors, as part of an art project, and began using them there as stoves, microwaves, ovens, and refrigerators. Toni decided to add utensils and dishes to extend the play.

**Tuesday** - Even though she traveled on the bus, she managed to bring with her



two teakettles, eight plates, eight cups, eight bowls, some loaf pans, a cake tin, a stewing kettle, trays, muffin tins, and ladles. She wanted plenty of utensils to allow for all the children to participate. Planning for tactile diversity, and aware that the centre served a variety of families, she also introduced wooden rice paddles, steel woks, silver soup spoons, spatulas with plastic handles, serving spoons, big steel and aluminum pots and a few frying pans. All of this she transported on the bus.

As Toni tells it, she put the kitchenware in the sandbox "with the help of a young lad who lined up all the utensils, pots, pans, dishware, etc, end to end on the lip of the sandbox to practically surround the entire sand area. He stood back with seeming pride and with a sweeping gesture announced there were 36 items. Keeping him from diving in until his classmates came out to join him and see what a great job he had done was an effort. Luckily, it was only a minute or two." The children were thrilled.

As sometimes happens, energy and enthusiasm at this time was at low ebb in the centre. Staff felt discouraged by the recent program cuts, reflective of what was happening provincially. Sometimes government policies aimed at creating different programs or saving money create work environments that undermine and discourage early childhood educators. Child care staff can be valiant in the face of low wages, few resources, and little societal recognition, but governments at all levels need to consider what impacts their new policies have in light of the effects at the human level.

Toni was a fresh influence in the centre, focused on her practicum and full of ideas. Paying particular attention to the children, she had detected their need for some new materials and approaches, thus she had decided that a large supply of kitchenware in the sandbox might encourage play and co-operation.

At first, co-operation among the children was difficult because everyone wanted to

play with everything. One little fellow, seeing all the fabulous "new stuff", lined up eighteen utensils on the sandbox seats and considered them "mine!". Toni spent time the first day explaining that the kitchenware would be there for many days and that there would be lots of time to play with it. She suggested children select the items they needed at the moment, and reminded them that everyone could get a turn. This was indeed a provocation for them. The children's skills in the art of negotiation, talking, and listening took a huge jump as they arrived at a number of interesting deals and schemes.

**Wednesday** - Sukhvir began to expand on Toni's ideas the next day. Under a big tree, she brought out the pots and pans and the idea of a restaurant began to grow. It became a beehive of activity as the children began to co-operate with each other. A table was placed underneath the tree to create the restaurant, now called *The Tree house Restaurant*, complete with a sign placed on the tree, the children began to plan and write menus. . .

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*The children's skills in the art of negotiation, talking, and listening took a huge jump as they arrived at a number of interesting deals and schemes.*

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Sukhvir stated that the children began to classify the jobs that were needed at the restaurant. One child said, "I'll be the cook." Soon there were waiters and waitresses. One girl said, "I'll be the manager." Another child announced that he was not working; "It's my day off." There was lots of discussion about food and favorite recipes. Menus were written and used in the restaurant. The children began to describe recipes to Sukhvir, who ran inside to get paper so that she or the children could write the recipes down. There was a great deal of fun,

laughter and learning. Sukhvir said the energy and intensity with which the children undertook this play was difficult to describe, but that she could not have generated it; the impetus came from the children and the energy grew and expanded as did the ideas.

**Thursday afternoon** was hot. Sukhvir wrote:

Staff placed the wading pool outside for the children to splash and cool off in. Some children asked me if they could bring the cooking dishes to the pool area as they had so much fun with them in the morning. We brought the dishes and a small picnic bench to the pool area. In one small pool some children were playing with plastic fish and crabs. One girl was busy playing with the dishes - she then spotted the fish and crabs. She said excitedly, "We have to have a barbecue. We are going to cook fish and crabs."

A couple of the other children joined her. They started picking out fish and crabs and putting them into the cooking utensils. One girl said, "We need some sauce for the fish." She started picking grass, leaves, and dirt and put them in a container and then shook it. Another child said, "You need mint in the sauce." Nearby a boy was mixing dirt and water in a bucket. I asked him what he was making. "Chocolate sauce!" was his answer.

There was a lot of enthusiasm and energy as food was being prepared. Suddenly one girl said, "We need a pool party." A couple of other children said, "Yes, we need a pool party."

They asked me if they could decorate the place. So I provided them with streamers and dry hydrangeas from my garden. Soon they were decorating the tree branches with streamers and flowers. One girl said, "We need music." So we brought music outside. One child said, "We need to make a sign for the pool party." I asked them what they wanted to write on the sign.



**Pool party**

*Bring your swim suit  
and sunscreen and a hat.*

*Also bring your own towel.*

*Maybe bring some extra clothes.*

*You will get fish, crabs,  
and chocolate sauce.*

They invited the children from the pool to join them. We had a wonderful pool party with decorations, music and great food!

Toni and Sukhvir had discussed the possibility of including the morning snack in a "restaurant".

On the **Monday** of the **third week** the theme moved indoors where a room was set up as a restaurant. *The Tree house Restaurant* sign was taped on the door of the room with the addition of a sign which read "today's special – rotis". Sukhvir came with dough prepared and showed the children how to make rotis. The children chose toppings of cream cheese, jam, peanut butter or fresh fruit for their rotis, and then became the waiters, waitresses and the maître d' who seated folks.

There was an energy and excitement in the air that the children and teachers could feel. Toni and Sukhvir were picking up on the children's ideas and expanding on them. The two were sparking each other and enjoying the synergy. Everyone was enjoying this, which then sparked more ideas.

*Today's Special - starfish cookies* was the sign for **Tuesday**. During the previous week there had been discussions of the beach and beach life, and Toni, in addition to the kitchen utensils, had brought in beach material, shells, rocks and starfish to share with the children. She used these beach materials to create a display on the science table and Sukhvir followed this interest when she added the toy fish and crabs in the wading pools that led to the "barbeque" of that week. Staying with the beach interest Toni

chose to make starfish shortbread with the children from scratch. Wanting all the children to have an opportunity to make the cookies, she did it five times with five children each time. While the children started with a starfish shape for the cookies they went on to create whales and other shapes that fit the beach/sea investigation along with some shapes of their own creation.

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*With incredible delicacy he  
tentatively touched the  
blossoms with fingertips and  
exhaled the words, "these are  
beautiful".*

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Meanwhile, Sukhvir and Toni had the idea of turning the block room, where the science table was set up, into an undersea garden. Sukhvir began to plan a mural. One five year old girl in their program particularly loved the wide expanse of paper on which to paint, and this brought a passion to her painting. Children helped her with creating the ocean mural inspired by the book *Swimmy*, one of the children's favorites. The mural hung on the wall and other staff members helped the children hang sea creatures that they had made, including jellyfish, sharks, seaweed, and other marvels. Two children wanted the recipe for the cookies to take home. One of these children was new to the centre and with the recipe this boy was able to share his day and his centre with his family.

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*Jones and Nimmo (1998)  
remind us, "there is no magic  
except the magic we create  
for ourselves"*

---

*Today's Special - Pancakes!* On **Wednesday**, pancakes were on the menu. Sukhvir and one of the children

(the girl who had been instrumental in the mural painting) made the room look beautiful by covering the tables with easel paper for tablecloths, putting out place settings of plates and forks and a vase of flowers in the middle.

As Toni describes this scene, "There was one young boy in particular, large in stature for his age, who loved to wrestle, run and 'play large'." He rolled into the room, grabbed a chair and stopped, seemingly in awe of those flowers with their lovely fragrance. With incredible delicacy he tentatively touched the blossoms with fingertips and exhaled the words, "these are beautiful". I am constantly reminded by small episodes like these not to pre-judge and slot... children surprise you every time!

*Today's Special - Pizza. Friday* was the last day of Toni's practicum. Having pizza in their classroom restaurant, Sukhvir decided a follow-up visit to a pizza restaurant was a possibility for the following week. Toni was sad to be leaving, as so much had happened in three weeks. Besides a field trip, there were now plans for a recipe book of the marvelous meals concocted by the children. Sukhvir said, "We made a recipe book with the children's recipes. The recipes were exotic but very unhealthy, with lots of sugar, butter, and chocolate. We can't publish them as they might harm your health." Toni remembered an example of a recipe, "One bowl of candy, add ketchup, put them in the microwave for two minutes, and then eat them up."

The interaction between Toni and Sukhvir as they inspired and informed each other created a wonderful experience for the children. These two teachers were at "play" in their collaboration and planning (Jones & Nimmo, 1998). Sukhvir felt that she and Toni were "doing a dance with the children." Both agreed that the ideas and process had a flow. Csikszentmihalyi speaks of "flow" in a way that explains the creative process of this practicum. Both Toni and Su were able to challenge each other to a



level where their skills were fully utilized. When challenge is too high and skills are not adequate to the task, people experience anxiety, while not enough challenge for the skill level creates boredom (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). The children and the relationship between Toni and Su helped to create a situation where each educator used her skills to encourage the skills of the other.

The ideas came from the children, but she and Toni acted on the ideas and expanded on them. During the three weeks I looked forward to my weekly visit to get caught up in the excitement and creativity which was being generated. As Toni acknowledges, "had they [the children] not embraced and been open to the ideas placed before them, we could not write this article."

It is a gift for all when sparks of creativity and excitement elevate a practicum to the level of dance or "flow". Jones and Nimmo (1998) remind us, "there is no magic except the magic we create for ourselves" (p.3). Because of careful observation of the children, responsiveness to the children's interests, and being present to the emergence of the children's excitement, magic happened. But there was an added element in the way that Sukhvir welcomed Toni's participation and ideas; the conversations between supervisor and student showed an enjoyment and celebration of the children. This shared joy in the children and their capabilities created an excitement that was magical. Toni wanted the children included as co-authors on this article and indeed the magic resides in the children.

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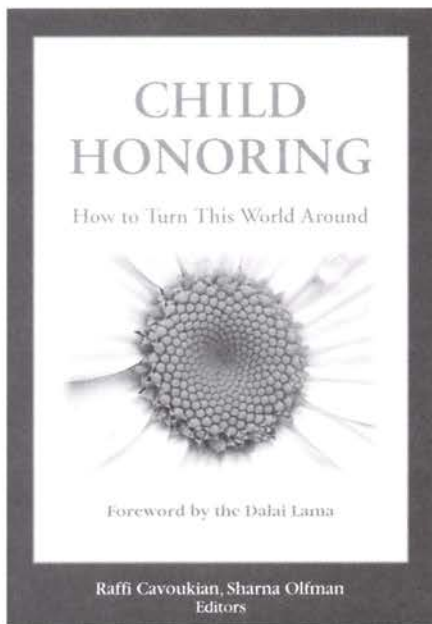
## Do it for the Children... and the Belugas

### Raffi Brings Child Honouring to the Forefront in Two New Works:

**Child Honouring: Turn this World Around**, Raffi & Sharna Olfman, Editors  
**Resisto Dancing: Songs of Compassionate Revolution**, by Raffi with Guest Voices

*Reviewed by Darcy Higgins*

Darcy Higgins is an Environment & Resource Studies graduate of the University of Waterloo, where he was recently elected, Federation of Students - Vice President Internal. His latest research explores effective change in campus and institutional sustainability. He is a founder of the Young Greens of Canada and is Submissions Editor of The Understory, an online Green youth magazine.



*"If we don't use the child honouring lens we won't go far enough, bold enough. The present moment is a defining moment in the future of the species."*  
**Raffi Cavoukian**

Raffi's earlier songs made an impact on many of us. You may have given them to your children, and you may still pass them on to your grandkids. Adults in my age group had the books and sang along with his tapes in childhood. But after some time, we had to move on from singing about Mr. Sun and brushing our teeth at odd hours of the day. As our generation moved onto adult issues, Raffi has come along with us.

Raffi sees children as the missing link to sustainability. Sustainability – best described as... moving towards a state in which, "Demands placed upon the environment by people and commerce can be met without reducing the capacity of the environment to provide for future generations. Leave the world better than you found it, take no more than you need, try not to harm life or the environment, make amends if you do" (Hawken, 1993).

But oftentimes environmentalists and politicians overlook child development and the early years when thinking about the sustainability equation. And, according to Raffi, early childhood educators too, can forget within the importance of the natural environment. "We estimate there are between three and ten million beluga grads in Canada and the U.S.," said Raffi, referring to his term for today's young adults who were active participants in his songs, such as *Baby Beluga*. "Reading *Our Stolen Future* in 1997 may have brought about the vision I woke up with one day at 6am, when the term 'child honouring' came into my

head...after years of deep reflection on ecology and children...child honouring connects the two", Raffi explained.

Raffi Cavoukian now resides on Mayne Island - a place that was inhabited by First Nations people 5,000 years ago - now just a one hour ferry ride from Victoria, B.C. *Child Honouring* is the name of a new book he edited with psychologist Sharna Olfman. It includes chapters from experts in fields of child development, economics, business, ecology and the social sciences. "It's an interesting but simple idea isn't it", I asked Raffi, "If we put children first, then all our policies and laws will be good for people?" "I really like how you've explained that," he said, "You know, we, being developmental creatures more than any other animals - our early experience after birth gives us the choices we have."

Raffi believes that it only makes sense to allow the early years to guide society, which will "develop the intelligence of the species". "When you tend to the infant ecology – set out to detox the infant ecology, renewal of society and restoration of ecosystems will happen at the same time," Raffi explained. "You can't have a sustainable society that is not a humane society. The children become the missing link."

What does he mean by this? There are few references to "infant ecology" in academic literature. But it becomes clear that Raffi's main thesis, through the melding of concepts and his sort of cross-literation



is really trying to convey a holistic approach in the way we act and teach. Take as example the period before human birth. The child in the womb soaks up the conditions of that environment. If that environment contains the financial anxieties of parents or the chemical pesticides from their neighbourhood lawn, the child soaks that up too. He uses the term 'sustainability' because it encompasses the broad work we each need to do to reach a more durable future, recognizing the interconnections between society, ecology and economy.

It seems that some politicians may be hearing the message. As I write this, the premier of Ontario is announcing his priorities of tackling child poverty and climate change, as well as increasing environmental education in elementary curriculum. "We're focusing next on our two most precious resources. The children we raise and the environment we share", premier Dalton McGuinty said in remarks about the upcoming Ontario budget.

Asked if it was important to have Olman edit the book to bring the psychological integrity, he responded, "It was important - our sense of self comes from our early experience because it impacts our whole lives...it's very hard work to change your sense of self, very demanding, very preferable to start out with a positive self-image. Shana is a brilliant scholar who has done a couple of anthologies and was a wonderful partner to work with; she has a connect-the-dots view of children."

Raffi's CD *Resisto Dancing* contains 13 songs of "hip hope" all related to a hope-filled future for children. And his latest song, "Cool it", can be found on Youtube.com, a piece written for David Suzuki's recent cross-country "vote for the environment" tour. "Resistance is fun, that's what *Resisto Dancing* is all about. What we're resisting is the pop culture that just counts the money", he said. When we do this, we honour our core self and our reasons for living. If one lives without compassion and community, Raffi believes we miss out on why we're here.

"Child honouring is a new lens through which we see the world...the priority must be the needs of the very young. The most valuable players are also the most vulnerable - the most impressionable to family dynamics, susceptible to cultural values, and planetary issues. When we consider that every child born today is born with a load of toxic chemicals... it opens your eyes," Raffi said. "[The plight of] children will have more of an impact than animals, although if people knew that washed up bodies of belugas in the St. Lawrence are treated as toxic waste, that would likely have an emotional impact on people who have heard the song Baby Beluga."

Raffi has had many notable leaders collaborate in his work...when asked about his meetings with various individuals, he sounded humbled and inspired by the work of many. "Nelson Mandela is one of the world leaders who gets it for children. In 2000 at a Say Yes for Children campaign, he and his wife Graca Machel said that it is not enough to have empty rhetoric, but we need to turn this world around for the children." Graca has a chapter in his book entitled *From Rhetoric to Action*. Mandela's statement inspired his song, "Turn This World Around." Raffi was chosen as the top children's entertainer of political leaders Stephen Harper, Paul Martin, Jack Layton; and Elizabeth May recently used this song in her leadership campaign. His message to policy makers is to put children at the centre. "It behooves every party to look at these ideas for the very young...I take my hat off to any politician who thinks long-term."

Raffi was also influenced by Dr. Fraser Mustard, an advocate of child honouring who he views as a foremost expert in child development. He particularly appreciates the recommendations from "The Early Years Study", a report co-written by Mustard and the Honourable Margaret McCain in 1999. "Can you imagine if new parents didn't feel alone or if every neighbourhood had a centre for parents to come to and for infants to hang out in quality care? It would be such a support. "He [Mustard] inspired one of the songs in the CD, It Takes a Village, so he's had quite an impact on me."

He continues - other prominent contributors who provide spoken vocals on one of his tracks include Jane Goodall and the Dalai Lama. "The Dalai Lama and I met first in 1999 in Dharamsala," Raffi said. "So I had two conversations with him on child honouring and the second conversation was allowed to be filmed, which is when the audio was recorded for the Covenant." The second track on *Resisto Dancing* is Raffi's Covenant for children, read by a number of influential individuals. Raffi hopes that others like Bill Gates, Oprah Winfrey, and J. K. Rowling will take up his call.

Until then, Raffi will continue to be an inspiration for all of us to build better community and a brighter future. "The present moment is a defining moment in the future of the species," he said with confidence. "We need a compassionate revolution. The principle of 'first do no harm', can be the nonviolent mantra of our time. It doesn't have to be just for physicians." ... "Every beluga grad is needed, and let's make some noise."

You will want to share these new works with the children and your colleagues as Canada embarks on this environmental turnaround. As well you may want to consider these links:

View "Cool it", and get more information about Child Honoring and *Resisto Dancing* at: [www.raffinews.com](http://www.raffinews.com)

GPI Atlantic, an organization dedicated to the Genuine Progress Indicator (GPI), in consonant with Child Honouring at: [www.gpiatlantic.org](http://www.gpiatlantic.org)

David Suzuki Foundation  
[www.davidsuzuki.org](http://www.davidsuzuki.org)

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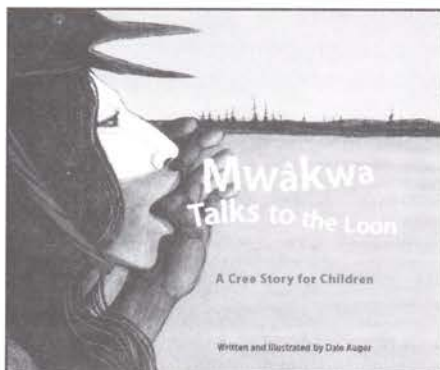


## Mwâkwa Talks to the Loon: A Cree Story for Children

By Dale Auger

*Reviewed by Larry Railton*

**Larry Railton, MA**, is a faculty member in Aboriginal Studies at Langara College in Vancouver. He is a Métis citizen of Cree heritage and has just completed a term as Director of Education for the Métis Nation British Columbia. A consummate advocate in Early Care and Education, Larry has a regarded perspective on Early Education in his home community and internationally.



*Mwâkwa Talks to the Loon* is an opportunity for children to learn some of the basics in the daily routine in a Cree village. At the same time, Auger, a Sakaw Cree from the Bigstone Cree Nation in northern Alberta, promotes the Cree language throughout the story and provides an opportunity of phrases and pronunciations, through a glossary at the end of this fine book. Auger's promise to his culture, the Cree, is that the voice of the Cree language "be heard over the land, powerful and strong once again". This visual artist uses own illustrations to enhance his telling of this story.

The story is a lesson of boasting and how one can lose their way very quickly. It promotes a lesson in humility, recognizing the errors of our ways and how one can find support to get through difficult times. Drawing on the wisdom of Elders and tradition, the issue is quickly resolved, through the power of indebted-

ness, negotiating, and honour. Auger's illustrations are compelling, focusing on the richness of culture and tradition, including the power of a sweet grass smudging ceremony.

Kayâs the young hunter, whose name means "Long Time Ago," was given the gift of hunting by the creator. Kayâs used this gift to provide the village with food from the land. Kayâs was able to talk to the four legged, the winged ones and those that swim below the water until one day when he lost his gift of talking to the animals.

Kayâs, listening to the village community who constantly spoke well of him "loved the attention more than he loved hunting". Kayâs stopped hunting and listened to the people in the village speak well of him until they all went hungry. The people stopped praising him and wondered why Kayâs stopped hunting. Kayâs returned to the hunting grounds but did not do well, and the villagers continued with their hunger. Kayâs sat quietly with the Elders; they did not greet him when he came, as they knew he had lost his way.

After some time an Elder said, "Nôsisim. Tân'si. Grandson, hello." The Elders invited him to sit with them; they prayed, offering the power of the Loon. Kayâs followed the instructions of the Elders and went to the lake to talk to Mwâkwa, the loon. Mwâkwa dove down to talk to the fish, the fish soon agreed to help

Kayâs but he needed to promise two things. One was to hold a big feast in honour of onipîwâcihîwak, the water beings and that the people of the village will continue the harvest celebration every year from this time on. The second promise was to sing a song that would honour the spirits of kinosîwak, the fish.

Mwâkwa disappeared, Kayâs returned to the village to tell the Elders what he had promised and that the fish would be plentiful. That night a great feast and celebration took place in honour of the onipîwâcihîwak. From then on, the people of the village kept the promise of Kayâs, and year after year they continue to honour the spirits of the kinosîwak, those that swim below the water, onêwokâtiwak, the four legged and the pêyisêsak, the winged ones.

A brilliant book, an easy read for young learners, it provides a challenge with Cree words woven throughout the story, providing the reader an opportunity to get a better understanding of pronunciations in the Cree language. I would recommend *Mwâkwa Talks to the Loon* for school libraries, early care and education programs and programs that promote Aboriginal studies. This book is also a great introduction for adults who are eager to learn some words and short phrases of the Cree language.

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Deirdre Leighton

PUBLICATIONS  
CHAIRPERSON

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*I wish to take this  
moment to thank  
Dr. Wayne Eastman  
for his many years  
of diligent work with  
our Journal*

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As the new publications chair I wish to take this moment to thank Dr. Wayne Eastman for his many years of diligent work with our Journal — he will be missed as he moves on to something new (CAYC Board of Director's President). And so as we say farewell to Dr. Eastman in this role, a quote from Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807 -1882) comes to mind. "All things must change to something new, to something strange." Dr. Eastman, we wish you the best of luck in your something new and something strange.

My name is Deirdre Leighton and I come to the National Board as the new Publications Chair with over 30 years experience in the Early Childhood Care and Education field. My experience includes years with young families and educational programs while operating a Day-home in the City of Calgary, by raising two wonderful (now grown) daughters and working as a Nanny. It is because of my strong beliefs in promoting 'equality for all young children and families' and being part of a team with 'a voice regarding critical issues of all young children and their families' that I became involved with CAYC, and most recently served as the CAYC Alberta/North West Territories Director.

This past fall CAYC Labrador and Newfoundland hosted our Annual General Meetings in St. John's. It was an inspiring few days and I was elected by the board to assume Dr. Eastman's responsibilities as Publications Chair. As

the new chair I am excited with my new role and look forward to assisting our editor of Canadian Children, Mabel Higgins with her work. I look forward to my new position and ask you —

Are children not wonderful? They enrich us, they enlighten us, they make us laugh and at times they bring us to tears. They can turn themselves on and off in an instant, often leaving our heads spinning as we try to understand what just happened. I believe children are professionals — professionals of their domain, their world. And their work is to diligently explore, master — no; conquer it! Our role as early learning professionals is to do our very best to provide children with a variety of safe learning opportunities to encourage and engage their minds, bodies and souls and to promote development through positive guidance techniques and learning environments. Through my professional readings, I have discovered what I believe to be a common thread of interest — *how can we as professionals promote positive guidance within our organizations, professional institutions, schools and care settings?*

We invite our readers to submit original research outlining their inquiries and experiences with guidance and behaviour. Through this dialogue with others, we too change 'to something new and something strange'. Please forward your original research to Mabel Higgins, Editor of Canadian Children. We look forward to hearing from you.

*Please welcome Dr. Harriet Petrakos to our Editorial Review Team. She is a school psychologist and an assistant professor in the Department of Education at Concordia University in Montreal. Among her research interests are the reciprocal influences of home and school on children's development, where she examines parent-teacher interactions, teacher-child relationships and peer socialization experiences as promoting resiliency or risk for children and their families.*





*Newly named president, Dr. Wayne Eastman of Cornerbrook, Newfoundland.*



**CAYC Board Members from across Canada meet in St. John's Newfoundland**



## *Friends of Children Award*

### Patricia Breen



Patricia Breen earned her Bachelor of Education degree from the University of Calgary and began her teaching career in Alberta. For the many years she was involved in the early childhood field both as a classroom teacher and a college instructor in Vancouver. When she returned to university to pursue a master's degree in Early Childhood education she became involved in the UBC Child Study Centre, first as a graduate student and later as a teacher. With the closure of the UBC Child Study in 1996 she was a founding member of the Vancouver Child Study Centre where she is presently employed. Pat first became acquainted with the Reggio Emilia approach to early childhood education through the visit of the Hundred Languages Exhibit to Vancouver in 1994 and since that time she has been actively engaged in understanding and implementing this approach to early childhood education. To gain further insights to guide their incorporation of Reggio principles, Pat and her colleagues at the VCSC joined the Canadian delegation study tour to Reggio Emilia in 2002. Over the years the teachers of the VCSC have mentored many practicum students and have presented numerous workshops at conferences in addition to hosting research projects and visiting delegations.

Pat is a long time member of the Canadian Association for Young Children. During the years from 2002-2006 she was the BC and Yukon Provincial Director of CAYC. During her tenure as provincial director Pat played a key role in organizing the 2003 CAYC National Conference in Vancouver. As well, she organized various CAYC events throughout the Lower Mainland and Vancouver Island. To keep in touch with members scattered across BC and the Yukon Pat began a regular CAYCBC Newsletter to inform members of CAYC events and early childhood happenings in the larger community.

In 2005 as a delegate to The World Forum on Early Care and Education in Montreal Pat had the opportunity to reflect on the care and education of young children from a global perspective. A further bonus was the privilege of hosting World forum delegates in Vancouver before the Montreal conference.

During the past year, Pat and her teaching colleagues have spent countless hours devoted to finding a suitable new home for the Vancouver Child Study Centre. In true collaborative spirit and relentless effort they were able to successfully save and relocate the school and were poised and ready for a September opening. With its long history in the community, the Vancouver Child Study Centre will be able to continue to provide the preschool programs for which it is well known. This relocation effort on the part of the VCSC impressed upon Pat the vulnerability of preschool education when few dedicated and permanent facilities exist for preschool children. This situation has reinforced her belief in the importance of CAYC as a national voice for young children and in particular, the need to actively lobby federal and provincial governments for more and improved facilities for the care and education of young children.

Pat was presented the Friends of Children award when her peers gathered to honour her advocacy and dedication to children over her long career in early childhood education. The evening included entertainment by storyteller, Pauline Wenn.



## THE FRIENDS OF CHILDREN AWARDS

*Recipients to date include:*

### 1995

David Booth (ON)  
Brenda Clark (ON)

### 1996

Anne Luke (SK)

### 1997

Barbara Stange (SK)  
Dr. Caroline Krentz (SK)  
Imogene McIntyre (MB)  
Hollie Andrew (MB),  
Dr. Jennifer Hardacre (ON)  
Dr. Frances Haug (SK)  
Dr. Leora Cordis (SK)  
Dorothy Sharp (NL)  
Dr. Mona Farrell (QC)

### 1998

Elnor Thompson (NS)  
Wally Weng-Gerrity (QC)

### 1999

Judy Steiner (QC)  
Elsie Perkins (SK),  
Susan Fraser (BC)  
Jenny Chapman (BC)  
Barbara Coloroso (QC)  
Robert Munsch (ON)

### 2000

Gayle Robertson (MB)  
Vicki Warner (AB)

### 2002

June Meyer (BC)  
Lynda Philips (BC)  
Larry Railton (BC)  
Cathleen Smith (BC)

### 2003

Kathryn McNaughton (SK)

### 2004

Dr. Wayne Eastman (NL)

### 2005

Judy Wainwright (AB)  
Mary Cronin (SK)  
Darlene Dixon (SK)

### 2006

Lorraine Maskiw (MB)  
Dr. Jack Newman (ON)  
Sylvia Taylor (MB)  
Dr. Wayne Serebrin (MB)

### 2007

Patricia Breen (BC)

## *Friends of Children Award Guidelines*

*The CAYC "Friends of Children Award" was established to give CAYC a way of recognizing outstanding contributions, by individuals or groups, to the well-being of young children. If you know someone you would like to nominate for this award, please use the procedure and criteria below:*

### PROCEDURE

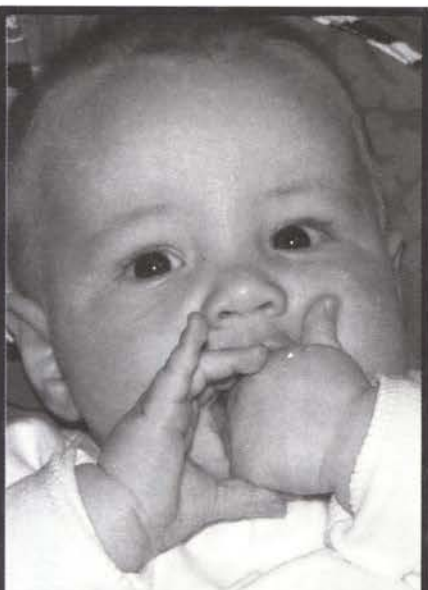
- The submission for nomination(s) must come through a member of the board and be seconded by a member of the board. Board members can receive recommendations for nominations from other persons or groups.
- The nominator will be responsible to obtain approval from the nominee before submitting the name of the nominee with relative background or biographical information.
- The nomination(s) will come forward at a board or executive meeting from the board member assigned responsibility for the award.
- This board member or an executive member will present the nomination and speak to it.
- The nomination will be passed by the board and/or executive with a consensus decision.
- The award will be presented promptly and in person when possible.
- Publicity of the award and the recipient(s) will appear in the journal, Canadian Children, and other publications where possible.
- Number of awards per year will vary.

### CRITERIA

This may be:

- An individual or group, regardless of age.
- Has a history of commitment to the CAYC mission statement and/or aims.
- Has shown an outstanding scholarly, advocate innovative and/or practical contribution to the well-being of young children.
- CAYC membership not mandatory but encouraged.
- Canadian citizenship not mandatory.





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[www.cayc.ca](http://www.cayc.ca)

FOR AN INDEX  
 OF  
 CANADIAN  
 CHILDREN  
 ARTICLES  
 AND  
 AUTHOR  
 GUIDELINES

## Dorothy Sharp

Remembering a Pioneer of Early Childhood Education  
 In Newfoundland and Labrador

We are all saddened by the recent passing of Dorothy Sharp in Scotland. She was passionate about providing young children and their families with quality care and education. Dorothy began her career in education as a preschool teacher in Britain and Malawi. Shortly after her arrival in St. John's in the early 1970's, she established Teach-a-Tot Day Care Centre, which provided the roots of the present Daybreak Parent and Child Centre, an agency that continues to so positively affect the lives of many families in St. John's.

This determination to create quality care for young children was evident in her involvement with many community and provincial committees whose focus was the well being of preschool children. One of these was the YMCA-YWCA where serving as the Chair of the Y Early Childhood Advisory Committee, Dorothy brought fresh ideas that enhanced their programs for young children. She further helped to strengthen the Y by bringing her beliefs to the discussion table as a member of the Y Board of Directors.

Dorothy considered the training of educators to be the key to quality child care. Much of her career was dedicated to lobbying for and organizing training opportunities across this province and at the national level. In the early 1980's, she established the first full-time training program for educators of young children at the Early Childhood Training Centre under the auspice of

Community Services Council in St. John's. This course offered a one-year certificate in Early Childhood Education (ECE) until the late 1990's. In 1985, Dorothy coordinated development of the diploma program in Early Childhood Education along with the establishment of a demonstration child care centre at the College of Trades and Technology, now called the College of the North Atlantic. This became the basis for the current Early Childhood Education training programs that are offered across the province. Dorothy taught principles of quality ECE practice at the college until her retirement in 1998. Students and colleagues alike were enriched by tales of her travels. Her wit and sense of fun were legendary.

During the 1980s, Dorothy had a national impact as well. She represented Newfoundland on the Board of Directors of the Canadian Association for Young Children (CAYC) for six years. It was because of this significant contribution to the children of Canada along with her continued support and encouragement to local early childhood educators that her colleagues recognized her as the first Newfoundland recipient of the prestigious CAYC Friends of Children Award in 1998.

As a woman of tremendous energy, dedication and fortitude, Dorothy always spoke up for what she believed was right. Dorothy Sharp truly made a difference.



# Joint Statement on Physical Punishment of Children and Youth



Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario  
 Child Welfare League of Canada Family Service Canada Canadian Child Care Federation  
 Canadian Institute of Child Health Canadian Public Health Association Canadian Association for Young Children

## KEY FINDINGS

- There is no clear evidence of any benefit from the use of physical punishment on children.
- There is strong evidence that physical punishment places children at risk for physical injury, poorer mental health, impaired relationships with parents, weaker internalization of moral values, antisocial behaviour, poorer adult adjustment and tolerance of violence in adulthood.
- Few parents believe that physical punishment is effective, most believe it is unnecessary and harmful, and a majority think the most common outcome is parental guilt or regret.
- Parents are more likely to use physical punishment if they approve of it, experienced it themselves as children, feel anger in response to their children's behaviour, are subject to depression, or are burdened by particular forms of stress.

## CONCLUSION

"The research evidence now available permits us to move beyond the debate about whether physical punishment is harmful to children and youth or is even effective as discipline."

**"On the basis of the clear and compelling evidence—that the physical punishment of children and youth plays no useful role in their upbringing and poses only risks to their development—parents should be strongly encouraged to develop alternative and positive approaches to discipline."**

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. delivery of public awareness messages to inform all Canadians that physical punishment is harmful to children's development and is ineffective as discipline
  2. development of universal parenting education
  3. provision of the same protection of children from physical assault as is given to Canadian adults and to children in a growing number of countries
- Responsibility for action lies within the jurisdiction of national, provincial/territorial and local levels of government, the mandates of organizations, and the expertise of professionals who serve children and youth.

The statement as a whole may be considered an urge to action by professionals and by parents and caregivers—within and beyond their families.

## ENDORSEMENTS

By April of 2007, the *Joint Statement* was endorsed by over 250 organizations and a number of distinguished Canadians. Endorsements are national, provincial/territorial, regional and community in scope and represent many sectors of Canadian society:

- child/youth/family services
- health
- education
- child welfare
- recreation
- rehabilitation
- human/legal rights
- provincial child advocates
- women's groups
- aboriginal organizations
- professional associations
- military
- anti-violence
- business

Endorsements continue to be welcome. See contact.

## IMPACT

### KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE

- broad dissemination to professionals, parents, public
- endorsement process requires study & discussion

### ADVOCACY

- impetus & support for individual & organizational action

### POLICY, POSITION & GUIDELINES

- impetus & support for organizations to create/review/revise policy & positions re discipline

### LAW

- support for changes in provincial/territorial & federal legislation

### CASE ASSISTANCE

- support for parents in difficult family circumstances & for professionals involved in particular cases

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 e-mail: sygraham@cheo.on.ca  
 write: CHEO Community and Outreach Development,  
 401 Smyth Road, Ottawa, ON, K1H 8L1

for additional information about the *Joint Statement* visit the CHEO website at [www.cheo.on.ca](http://www.cheo.on.ca)



This poster is available on-line for you to print, post, circulate.



# Board of Directors

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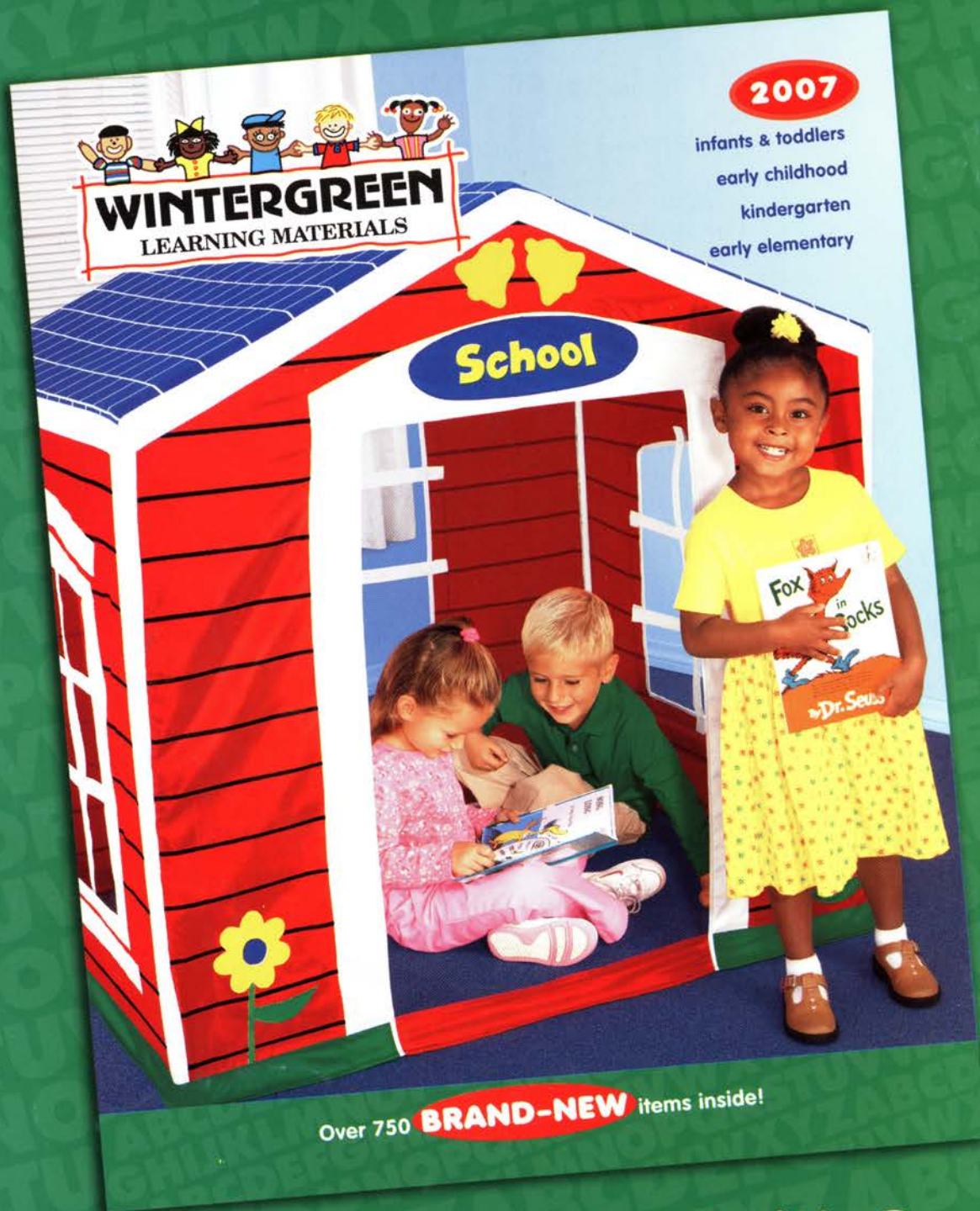
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