

Data Systems for Early Childhood Development in Atlantic Canada

Early childhood policymakers, researchers, and practitioners from across Atlantic Canada joined a series of five collective conversations to share current progress and to discuss aspirations for the future

These conversations were led by Dr. Jessie-Lee McIsaac, Assistant Professor and Tier II Canada Research Chair: Diversity and Transitions at Mount Saint Vincent University and Director of the Early Childhood Collaborative Research Centre (ECCRC).

Support was provided by a planning committee which had representatives from Mount Saint Vincent University,

Dalhousie University, University of Prince Edward Island, Memorial University, University of New Brunswick, the Margaret and Wallace McCain Foundation, McMaster University, and Mo Dresch, graphic facilitator.

All five sessions took place virtually through Microsoft Teams Meetings. After each presentation, attendees participated in facilitated conversations.

This project was supported by a Connections Grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC).



The objectives:



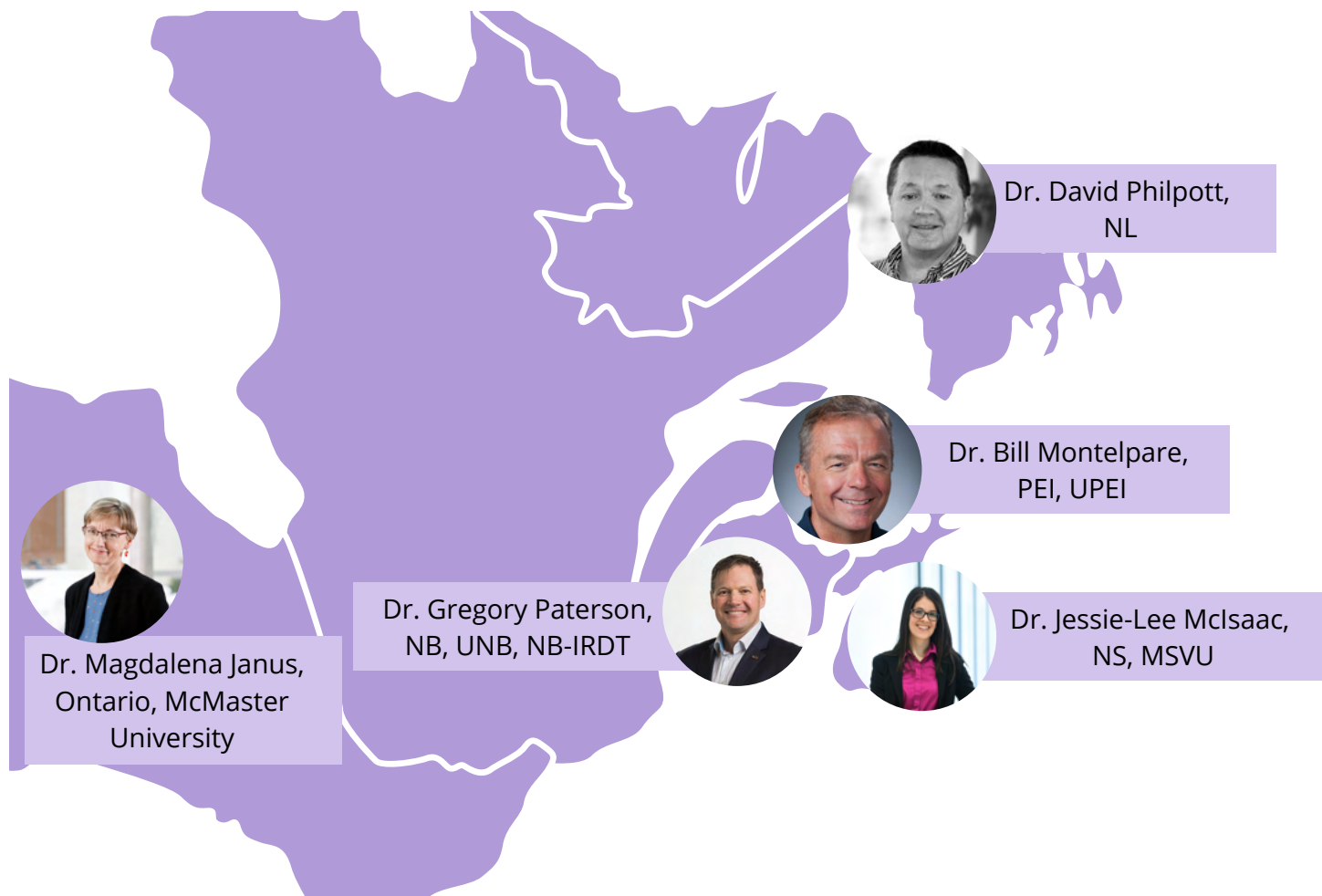
Objective 1

To mobilize knowledge on the impact of quality Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) experiences across the Atlantic provinces and across Canada to build an understanding of current research efforts.



Objective 2

To explore opportunities for Atlantic Canadian researchers, practitioners, and policymakers to work together in collaborative research that uses child development data to monitor the impact of quality ECEC and related programs on children's development and learning.



The five conversations were facilitated by representatives from each Atlantic province and Ontario



Dr. Magdalena Janus

How Are the Children? What We Know About Early Child Development in (Atlantic) Canada



Dr. David Philpott

Collaborating in the Development of Data Repositories: Recommendations and Opportunities for Atlantic Canada



Dr. Gregory Paterson

NB-IRDT: Using Data to Support Informed Policy and Decision Making to Promote Health and Social Prosperity for New Brunswickers



Dr. Jessie-Lee McIsaac

Mobilizing Data to Inform Early Childhood Policies in Nova Scotia



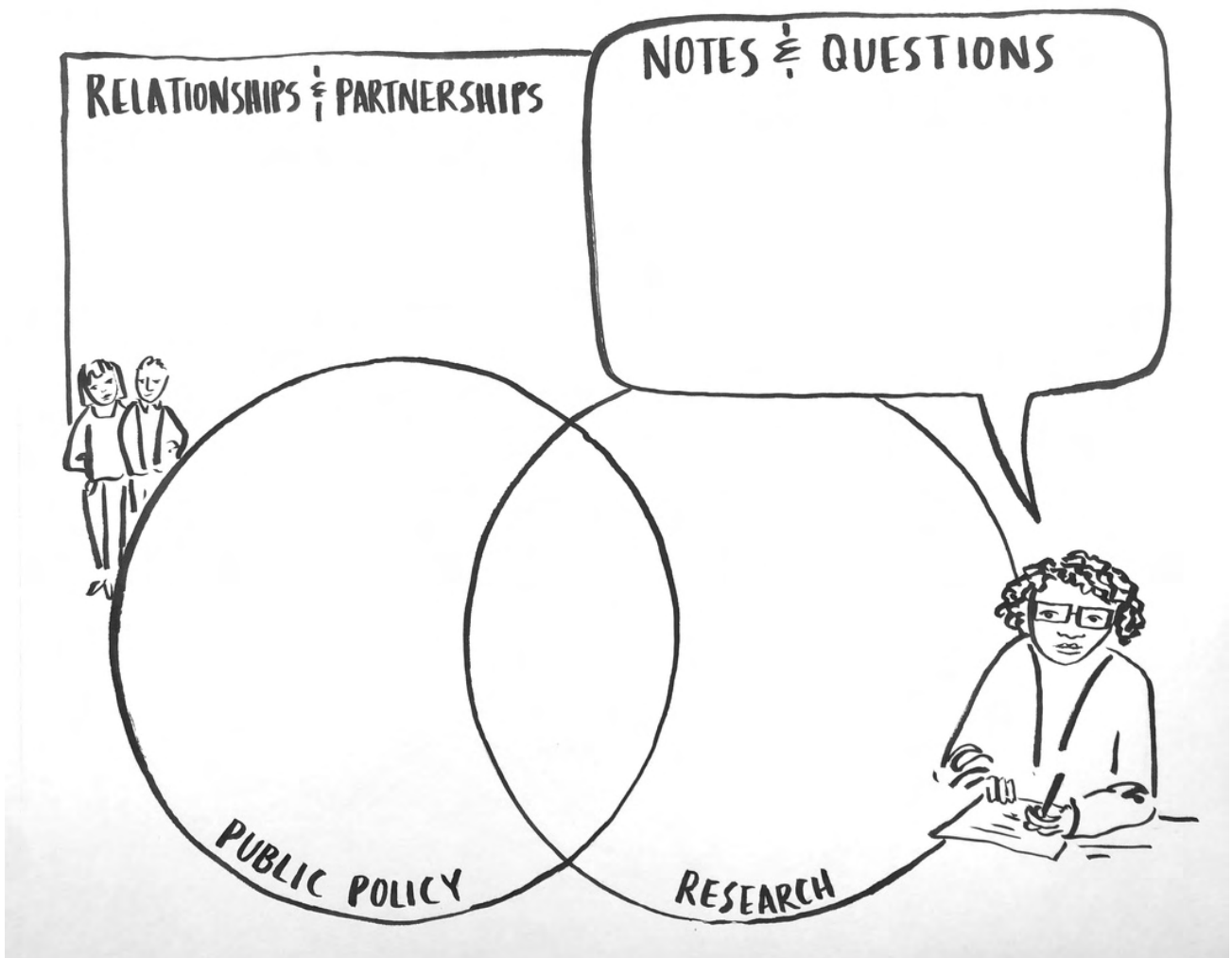
Dr. Bill Montelpare

Evaluating the Impact of Early Years Intervention on Human Development and Health: Using a Birth Cohort as an Upstream Approach to Understanding Factors that Influence Human Development

Listening Template

Graphic Facilitator, Mo Dresch created a listening template for participants to use during the collective discussions. The template was designed to guide participants' thinking and further discussions around the implications for public policy and research and how to bridge the gap between the two. The template also encouraged participants to think about aspirations for relationships and partnerships between the Atlantic provinces.

"[Shaped] thinking about what resonates, and the questions and possibilities that come to mind," "useful tool," "looked great"





First in the series
March 25, 2021

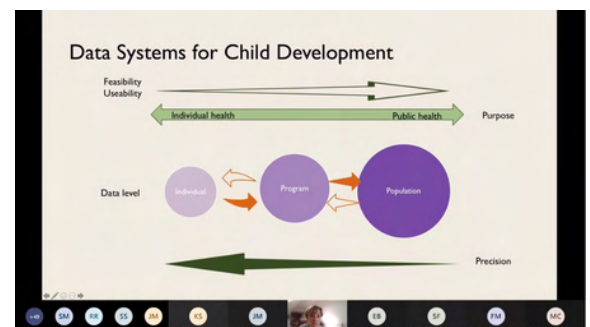
How Are the Children? What We Know About Early Child Development in (Atlantic) Canada

Facilitated by Dr.
Magdalena Janus

Dr. Magdalena Janus, Professor at McMaster University and Co-Developer of the Early Development Instrument (EDI), facilitated a collective conversation about the importance of measuring and monitoring early childhood development. As an introduction to the series, she provided a broad summary of up-to-date EDI findings from various regions in the context of social determinants of health. Dr. Janus explored the potential of the Atlantic provinces' experience to inform both regional and national discourse.

Reflecting on the presentation, what resonates with you and your role? In your province?

- Similarities and differences between the Atlantic provinces
- Addressing areas of vulnerabilities and understanding inequalities
- Learning from others: What can be linked? Where are the gaps?

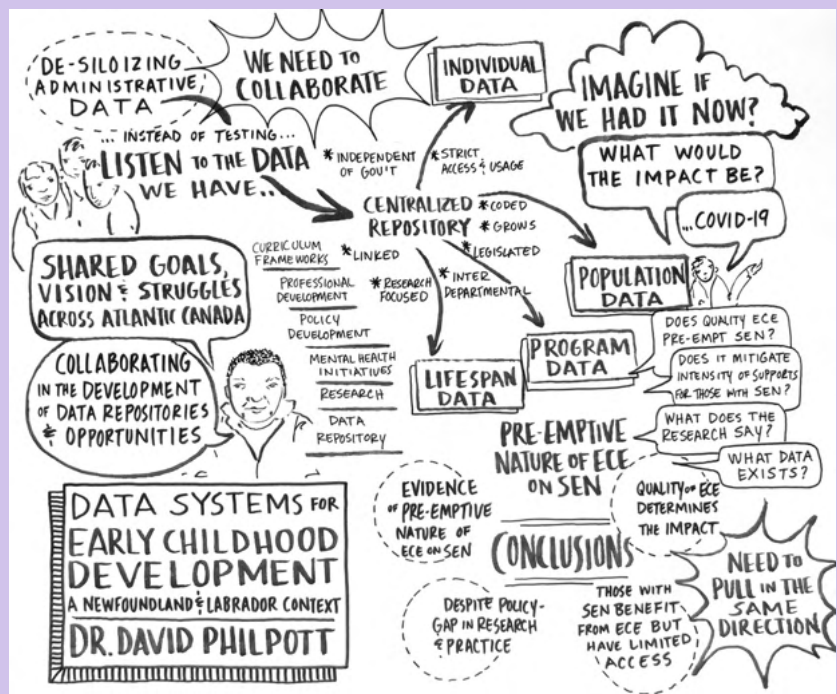


What are some of the connections that can be made for research and public policy across Atlantic Canada? What specific opportunities do you see moving forward to support data systems for early childhood across Atlantic Canada?

- More research collaboration within the Atlantic provinces (i.e. learning from each other and sharing data)
- Consider how to address regulatory and data sharing concerns
- Closing vulnerability gaps
- Telling an Atlantic story

Collaborating in the Development of Data Repositories: Recommendations and Opportunities for Atlantic Canada

Facilitated by Dr.
David Philpott



Dr. David Philpott, Early Childhood Researcher and Policy Informer in Newfoundland & Labrador, facilitated a collective conversation about his experience with recommending early childhood data systems and greater collaboration among the Atlantic provinces. He focused on the three areas of inclusive education, student mental health, and the early years. Dr. Philpott shared his aspirations for the future using data repositories and discussed the benefits for both service delivery and public policy development.



Reflecting on the presentation, what resonates with you and your role? In your province?

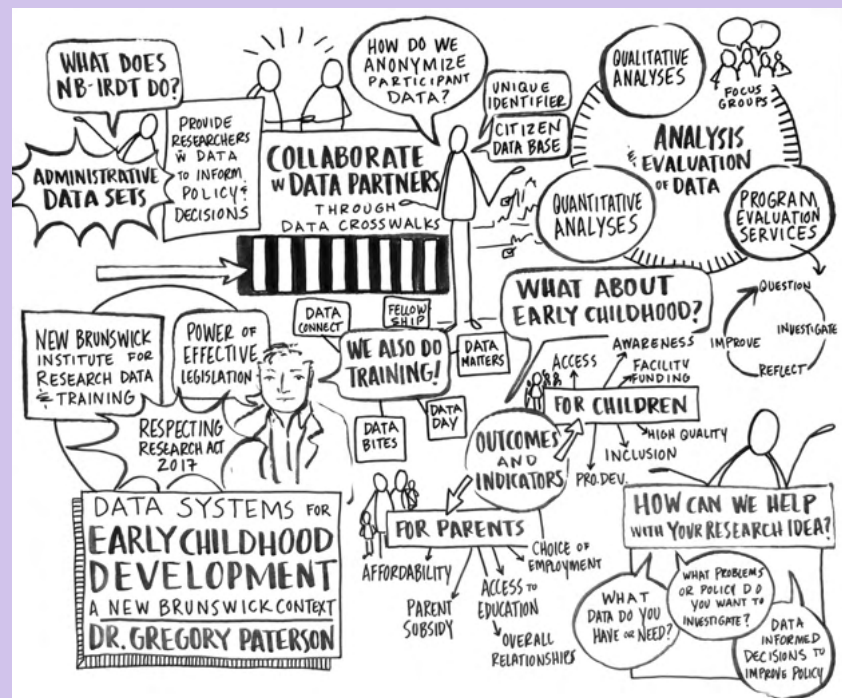
- Focus on special education
- Benefits of data at every level: Individual, program, population
- Need to define what data to collect
- Importance of early childhood educators for children's lifelong well-being

What are some of the connections that can be made for research and public policy across Atlantic Canada? What specific opportunities do you see moving forward to support data systems for early childhood across Atlantic Canada?

- Increased communication and connectivity across departments, sectors, and provinces
- Possibility of creating a shared dashboard for data across Atlantic provinces
- Improving services, programs, and communication for special education
- Deeper commitment across Atlantic provinces to support high quality universal childcare



"Heads together in Atlantic Canada!"



Third in the series
May 6, 2021

Using Data to Support Informed Policy and Decision Making to Promote Health and Social Prosperity for New Brunswickers

Facilitated by Dr.
Gregory Paterson

Dr. Gregory Paterson is the Qualitative Research Analyst Lead with the New Brunswick Institute for Research, Data and Training (NB-IRDT) at the University of New Brunswick (UNB). He facilitated a collective discussion about NB-IRDT's use of data repositories and how the Institute is engaging in a five-year longitudinal study to support evidence-informed policy for early childhood education. In addition, Dr. Paterson shared examples of how NB-IRDT's work is delivering linkable data to provide data informed policy for many departments with the Government of New Brunswick and other non-government agencies.

Reflecting on the presentation, what resonates with you and your role? In your province?

- Opportunity to learn from NB
- De-siloing research and policy
- Opportunities for longitudinal data
- Other Atlantic provinces looking at similar possibilities

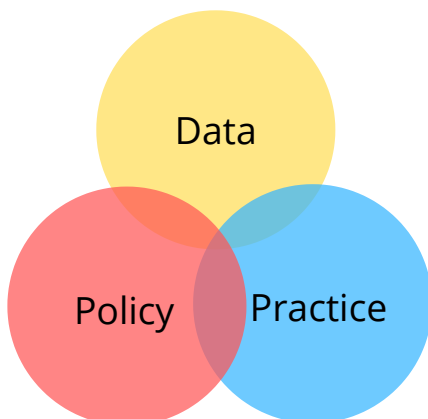
How we Anonymize Participant Data

MDSAs

Age=4
Gender=Male
Health Condition 1
Diabetes Type 1
Health Condition 2
Autism Spectrum Disorder
Geographic Location
Region 3
Immigrant Status
Resident
Parent Education
GED
Income Range
Social Assistance
Language
English



A Unique Identifier is then assigned!



What are some of the connections that can be made for research and public policy across Atlantic Canada? What specific opportunities do you see moving forward to support data systems for early childhood across Atlantic Canada?

- Learning more from NB
- Knowing that data informs policy and policy informs practice and care, an accessible place to share and collaborate would be useful
- Need alignment between Atlantic provinces and identification of what data to collect
- Realizing Atlantic provinces have similar desires

Mobilizing Data to Inform Early Childhood Policies in Nova Scotia

Facilitated by Dr.
Jessie-Lee McIsaac



Dr. Jessie-Lee McIsaac, Assistant Professor and Tier II Canada Research Chair in Early Childhood: Diversity and Transitions with the Faculty of Education and Department of Child and Youth Study at Mount Saint Vincent University, facilitated a collective discussion about the policy landscape for early childhood development and why it is important in Nova Scotia. She shared her previous and ongoing experience with EDI and other early childhood and education data systems. Providing aspirations for the future, Dr. McIsaac discussed linking data across systems and programs and provided examples.

Concluding thoughts

- There is a **timely opportunity** to build on the current attention on the importance of early childhood and related investment in policy initiatives
- Important to **identify the specific policy contributions** to create an **imperative** that will mobilize a need for interdisciplinary data systems/repositories

CANADA RESEARCH CHAIRS
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Early Childhood
Développement
Early Childhood

What are the challenges you have around data systems/repositories for early childhood?

- Lack of communication across sectors and provinces about what data is being or has been collected
- Standardizing data collection
- Challenges with linking data
- Collecting and sharing data before school age
- Getting government involvement to get repositories off the ground

What are some of the connections that can be made for research and public policy across Atlantic Canada? What specific opportunities do you see moving forward to support data systems for early childhood across Atlantic Canada?

- Atlantic provinces coming together and deciding what data we should collectively gather in terms of the early years
- Learning from other provinces: What have you done? What has worked and what hasn't? Can this be implemented in other provinces?





Fifth in the series
June 17, 2021

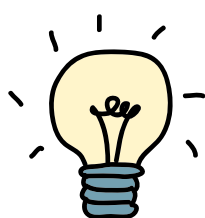
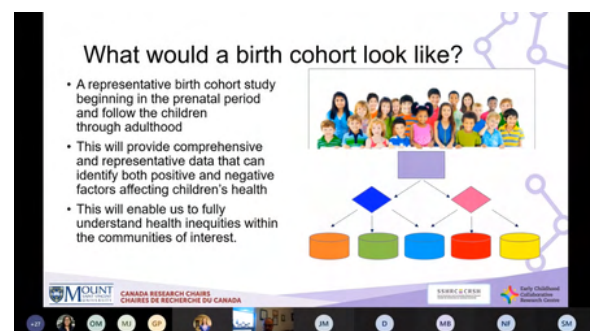
Evaluating the Impact of Early Years Intervention on Human Development and Health: Using a Birth Cohort as an Upstream Approach to Understanding Factors that Influence Human Development

Facilitated by Dr. Bill Montelpare

Dr. Bill Montelpare, Professor at the University of Prince Edward Island and Margaret and Wallace McCain Chair in Human Development and Health, facilitated a collective conversation that reviewed the background, rationale, methodology, and expectations for a prospective longitudinal birth cohort, in a general sense, and how such an initiative can be brought to scale across Atlantic Canada. He provided examples of how the birth cohort can address issues of child health and development and how it can be used to develop policies and programs that will enhance early childhood development.

What are one or two ways a future research consortium (or network or hub) could support your work?

- Linking data: Between education and health, between research and policy – address gaps between what we know and what we don't
- An inventory of what is already being collected and standardize what to collect across provinces
- Use to inform decisions and get buy-in from high level decision-makers
- Possibility of collecting data longitudinally from birth



What are the steps we need to take to build an Atlantic-wide research consortium? Or a network? Or a hub?

- Foster relationships and connections to increase capabilities
- Need involvement from government and community
- Establish common language across provinces
- Establish a collective vision that is relevant to all provinces
- Process mapping and people mapping across Atlantic provinces



Next Steps

What are participants' aspirations for the future?

"Hopeful for more research collaboration within the Atlantic provinces in the future."

"Can't wait to see which way we will go as an Atlantic Canada group!"

"Greater collaboration so we are utilizing existing administrative data to inform decision making and policy development."

"There are lots of opportunities for Atlantic Canada to be stronger together - but we will need a strategy."

"Atlantic Canada Professional learning and research opportunities; deeper commitment to support a high quality universal childcare system."

"Partnering for an Atlantic dashboard so we can track how children / families in Atlantic Canada are doing."

"Finding ways to combine data to make workload easier for all involved ECEs, Families, inclusion workers, and other professionals working with the child."

"I would absolutely love to see the Atlantic provinces come together to plan data sets, supporting policy and legislation and (most importantly) common set of desired outcomes."

"My aspiration would be that there would be a comprehensive system of data collection for each of the Atlantic Provinces with some sort of ability to aggregate data for the Atlantic Provinces."

What are the next steps for the Planning Committee?

A small group of representatives from each of the Atlantic provinces will meet over the summer to plan for future actions. These conversations were just the beginning of building connections between Atlantic Canadian early childhood researchers, policymakers, and practitioners. We hope to mobilize an Atlantic-wide partnership of families, researchers, policy makers, and practitioners toward an accessible, affordable, high-quality and inclusive early learning and child care system with a collective focus on children's lifelong well-being.

Thank you to everyone who participated in the conversation series

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SSHRC  CRSH

Thank you to our supporters:



Atkinson Centre
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NOUVELLE-ÉCOSSE



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