

MOBILIZING COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD WELL-BEING

The Early Childhood Collaborative Research Centre's Newsletter

We would like to acknowledge that the ECCRC at MSVU is located in Kijipuktuk (Halifax), part of Mi'kma'ki, the unceded ancestral territory which remains the homeland of the Mi'kmaq Nation.

A Message from Dr. Jessie-Lee McIsaac

Happy Spring! It is our first newsletter of 2024 and the ECCRC continues to reflect on our work with our partners and participants. We are proud of the achievements and the progress that we have made in our collaborative work so far.

We have submitted a number of new proposals over the last six months to extend research focused on equity to support early childhood well-being. We are excited to be able to co-create ideas for projects building on the interests of our community and government partners. For example, we recently received funding from the Inter-University Research Network with the Nova Scotia Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. In collaboration with community partners from the African Nova Scotian community, we will use Photovoice to learn how early childhood educators have been applying Africentric principles into practice, and the additional supports they need.

Many more exciting project updates to come. We will continue to share news through our social media platforms. Check out our project updates below, and please have any questions or have you would like to explore.

All the best!
Jessie-Lee



Dr. Jessie-Lee McIsaac, Director, Early Childhood Collaborative Research Centre



EDIA at the ECCRC

The ECCRC values the implementation of principles and practices that reflect and support equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility (EDIA) in its day-to-day work, in its research processes, with its partnerships, and in the creation of knowledge mobilization materials. [Learn more about EDIA at the ECCRC.](#)

Last year, our team started a book club as our EDIA project. We have read, “Five Little Indians” by Michelle Good and we are currently reading “The Skin We’re In” by Desmond Cole. As a team, we have bi-weekly EDIA meetings to discuss what we have read. We hope that through intentionally selecting specific books to read together at our book club, we can engage in deeper reflections and discussions both individually and as a team. This will enable us to gain a deeper understanding of the generational and current impact of racism and collectively work towards reconciliation here at the centre.

Five Little Indians explores five youths’ lives after leaving a residential school and demonstrates how it impacts their lives and contributes to generational trauma. While the characters are fictional, their stories are based on the real experiences of survivors of the residential school system on Turtle Island.

In the Skin We Are In, Desmond Cole describes a month by month image of the systemic inequality and injustices deeply entrenched in Canadian society and systems. The book highlights the struggle of Black people but also the power and resilience that the community continuously portrays in the face of adversity.

High-Quality, Inclusive, and Culturally Responsive Early Childhood Learning Environments



Image: Dr. Brenna Duperron joined the ECCRC team during one of our EDIA meetings to discuss the book *Five Little Indians* and shared with the team some of the history behind the events and stories in the book.

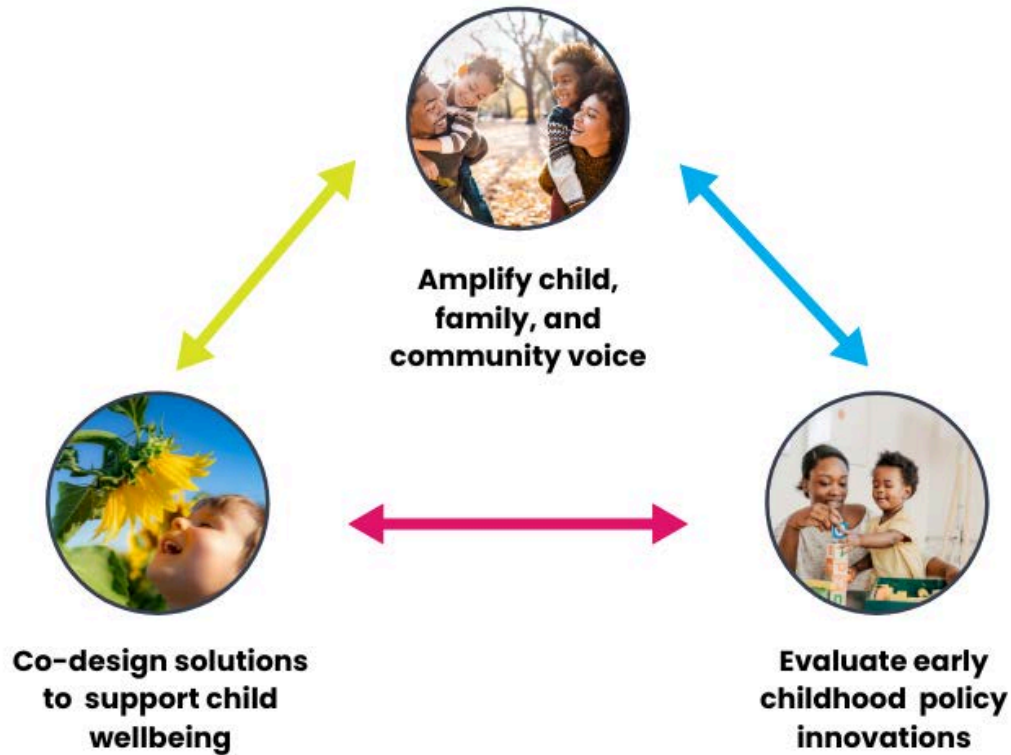
We pay respect to the histories, contributions, and legacies of African Nova Scotian communities that have been here for over 400 years and the 52 African Nova Scotian communities throughout the region today. We continue to explore new opportunities to advance our research to amplify the voices of Black families and educators.

IN THE MEDIA

These publications in the CBC news and the Canadian press discussed the lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on children. Dr. Jessie-Lee McIsaac, provided her expert opinion on these issues:

Effects of COVID-19 pandemic, affordability crisis showing up in child development data, experts say

More than 28 per cent of N.S children starting out in school and vulnerable: study



PROJECT UPDATES

The renewed phase of the ECCRC focuses on the key areas of our 3 pillars (Amplify Voice, Evaluate Policy Innovations, and Co-design Solutions). Each of our projects fits into at least one of these key areas:

- High-quality, inclusive, and culturally responsive early childhood learning environments;
- Child well-being through (a) responsive feeding, (b) social and emotional learning, (c) outdoor play;
- Building connections for early childhood development.

SUPPORTING NUMERACY AND LITERACY IN PLAY- BASED EARLY LEARNING PROGRAMS

Since our last newsletter, phase 2 of our Numeracy and Literacy project has begun. We are now halfway through our monthly virtual community of practice sessions with early childhood educators and early elementary teachers. The participants have shared many examples of numeracy and literacy occurring through play in their learning environments. We look forward to the remainder of our community of practice sessions and hearing more inspiring insights from the participants!

In addition, the team has been working on a scoping review. The review aims to understand the scope of research that has been done about how literacy is supported through play in early learning environments. This involves screening articles to see if they fit our research question and, more specifically, our inclusion criteria. The team has currently completed the abstract screening process and is halfway through the full-text screening. The next steps will involve taking a deeper look at the articles that have passed our screening process and writing about our findings.



BRIDGING THE KNOW-DO GAP

Our research assistant Milena Pimentel, in the summer of 2023 received a Scotia Scholar Award from Research Nova Scotia to learn about the experiences of early childhood educators who completed the “Culturally-Responsive Practice in Nova Scotia’s Early Learning and Child Care Settings” professional development (PD) modules. Under the supervision of Dr. Jessie-Lee McIsaac, Milena explored how PD influenced knowledge, confidence, and culturally-responsive practice. We are excited to share the findings of the study with you. Click [here](#) to read the report.



Image: The ECCRC team visited the Playdium in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia this winter to spend some time together.

KNOWLEDGE MOBILIZATION

SUPPORTING NUMERACY AND LITERACY IN PLAY-BASED EARLY LEARNING PROGRAMS:
GRAPHIC REPORT
SOUTENIR LA NUMÉRATIE ET LA LITTÉRATIE DANS LES PROGRAMMES
D'APPRENTISSAGE PRÉCOCE BASÉS SUR LE JEU: RAPPORT GRAPHIQUE
NUMERACY AND LITERACY - IT'S EVERYWHERE!
LA NUMÉRATIE ET LA LITTÉRATIE - C'EST PARTOUT!

Child Well-Being Through Responsive Feeding

CELEBRATE FEEDING (Coaching In Early Learning Environments to Build a Responsive Approach to Eating and Feeding.)

In December 2023, the CELEBRATE Feeding team hosted a collaborative workshop that was held simultaneously at Mount Saint Vincent University and the University of Prince Edward Island. The 42 attendees included directors, cooks, and educators from our participating centres, along with individuals in government, public health, and university roles. At the workshop, the CELEBRATE Feeding team and our participating centres shared the successes and challenges of the project through the findings from the interviews, surveys and observations, and personal experiences. The workshop also provided the opportunity for attendees to discuss how the project could be successfully scaled up while aligning with existing support services available in the Maritimes.

A big thank you to all those who attended!



A group of people are seated around a large, light-colored wooden conference table in a well-lit meeting room. The room features large windows on the left side, providing a view of the outdoors. The participants, including men and women of various ages, are focused on the discussion. On the table, there are several water bottles, papers, and other items. In the background, a man in a yellow shirt is standing and presenting to the group. The room has a professional and collaborative atmosphere.

Image below: A graphic, by Rachel Derrah that illustrates a summary of the conversations had at the CELEBRATE Feeding workshop.



The CELEBRATE Feeding Approach

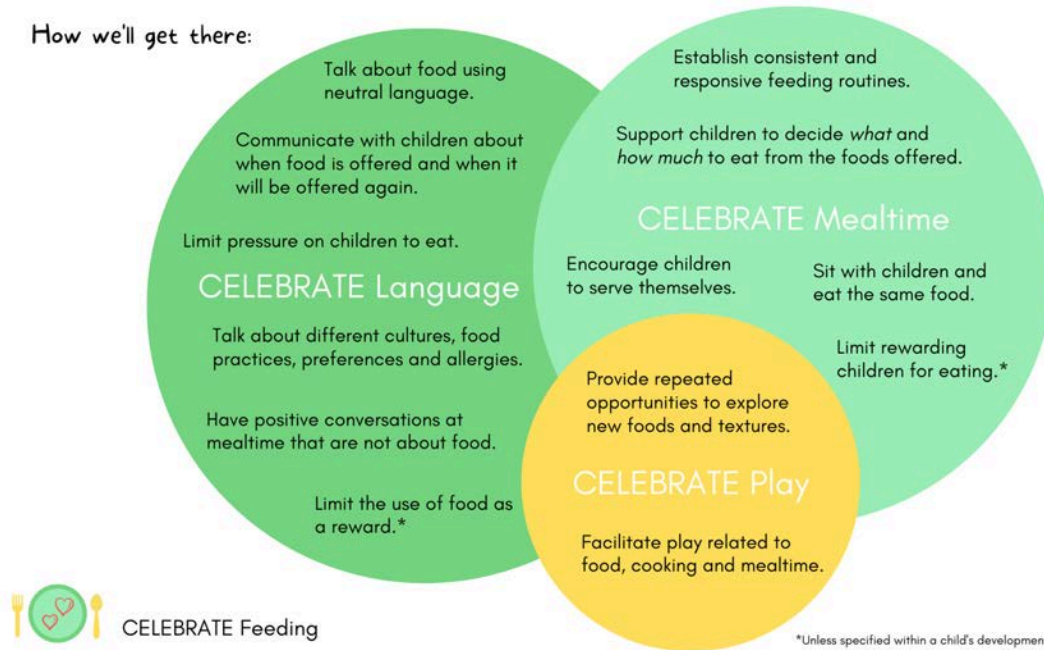
What we hope to accomplish:

Children gain eating competence and have a positive relationship with food.

Children accept a wide variety of foods and textures.

Children practice self-regulation and tune into hunger and fullness cues.

How we'll get there:



For more information about the CELEBRATE Feeding project:
Please visit our website:
www.celebratefeeding.ca
and follow us on:
Instagram: [@celebratefeeding](https://www.instagram.com/celebratefeeding), X (formally Twitter): [@CELEBRATE_Feed](https://twitter.com/CELEBRATE_Feed) and Facebook: [@celebratefeeding](https://www.facebook.com/celebratefeeding)



Image above: Some of the CELEBRATE Feeding Team

KNOWLEDGE MOBILIZATION

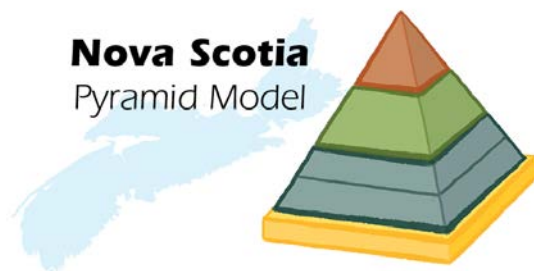
NEW PAPER: Advancing assessment of responsive feeding environments and practices in child care

Child Well-Being

Through social and emotional learning

EVALUATING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PYRAMID MODEL IN NOVA SCOTIA

Our developmental evaluation continues with the Pyramid Model. Since our last newsletter we have shared internal preliminary reports on focus groups conducted with Coach Team Leads (CTLs), the Pyramid Model Planning Team, and surveys distributed to CTLs, Inclusion Coaches, Early Childhood Development Consultants, Pre-Primary Consultants, and Pre-Primary Leads. From September to December 2023, we conducted interviews with 10 selected case study Pyramid Model program sites (Regulated Child Care = 5, Pre-Primary Programs = 5). Individual interviews were conducted with educators participating in the Pyramid Model, Centre Directors, Pre-Primary Leads, Inclusion Coaches, and Consultants. Across these 10 sites, 62 individuals across levels of implementation were interviewed on the respective program's experience of Pyramid Model implementation. Our annual report has been submitted to the Provincial Leadership Team (public report will be available soon).



Child Well-Being

Through outdoor play

MOBILIZING OUTDOOR PLAY THROUGH PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH

Since our last newsletter, our team has begun to analyze the video interview data that was conducted with children during their outdoor play from our first project, *Mobilizing outdoor play through participatory action research*. The Research Coordinator is currently working on drafting a paper based on their reflexive journal throughout the data collection process. In January 2024, we began visiting a participating child care centre and a forest school program to start building relationships for a new project titled *Enhancing children's voices and play outdoors across early learning and child care settings*. We plan to begin data collection of go-along interviews with children while they record their outdoor play using GoPro cameras in these programs very soon!



NSECDIS



EDUCATION AND
EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT



SSHRC CRSH
Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council
Conseil de recherches en sciences humaines

KNOWLEDGE MOBILIZATION

NOVA SCOTIA EARLY CHILDHOOD PROFESSIONAL WELL-BEING SURVEY, PRELIMINARY RESULTS APRIL 2023

MOBILIZING RESEARCH THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA TO SUPPORT FAMILIES WITH YOUNG CHILDREN

Last year, our team received two grants from CIHR and an MSVU Standard Grant to build a new area of research focused on the use of social media to support families with children's social and emotional health. This research aims to build family protective factors by leveraging evidence-based social and emotional health information using social media and identify research priorities through an Atlantic-wide family advisory committee. Since our last newsletter, we completed an environmental scan of Instagram influencers to learn more about the information that is posted online about children's social and emotional health and the characteristics of influencers who post this information.

Moving on to the next phase, our team has recruited a diverse family advisory group to provide guidance to our team on social media. Stay tuned for more updates.



SSHRC CRSH
Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council
Conseil de recherches en sciences humaines



CALL FOR PARTICIPATION

Families, we want to hear from you!

The Early Childhood Collaborative Research Centre (ECCRC) is establishing a family advisory committee to learn how to understand how parents/guardians use social media to understand their children's social and emotional wellbeing.

- Are you a family that lives in one of the Atlantic Provinces?
- Do you actively use social media as one source of accessing parenting information?
- Do you have a child/children aged between 12 months and 4 years?

We are seeking to establish a diverse family voice group and encourage individuals who are newcomers to Atlantic Canada, Black, Indigenous, people of colour, members of the LGBTQIA2S+, and families of a child with a disability or who have a disability themselves.

Deadline to apply
March 18, 2024

You could receive up to \$200 by participating in this study.

Interested in learning more?

Scan the QR code or visit
<https://tinyurl.com/Learnmorefamilyvoice>
for more information on how to apply



If you have any questions, please contact: Nahal Fakhari: Nahal.Fakhari@msvu.ca



CANADA RESEARCH CHAIRS
CHAIRES DE RECHERCHE DU CANADA



Image above: The recruitment poster that was shared to recruit family advisors.

Community & Partner Spotlight

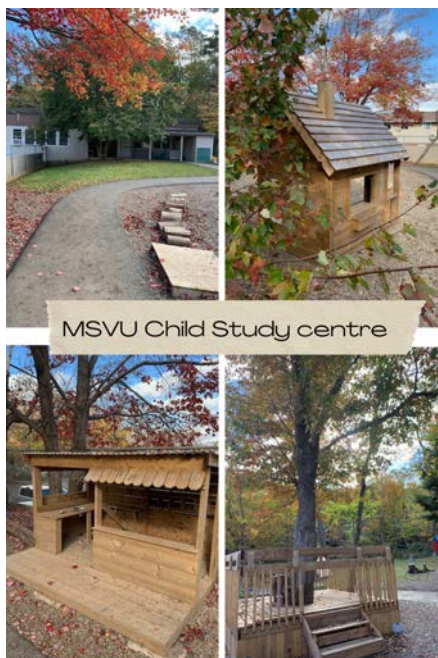
Community Spotlight:

MSVU Child Study Centre (CSC)

In this issue, we would like to thank [the Mount Saint Vincent University Child Study Centre](#) (MSVU CSC) for collaborating with the ECCRC on several projects. The MSVU CSC is a regulated child care program located on campus that provides early learning and child care to children ages 18 months to 4 years. The CSC values child-led, play-based learning which is demonstrated through their high quality physical indoor and outdoor environments and their educators' passionate pedagogical practice.

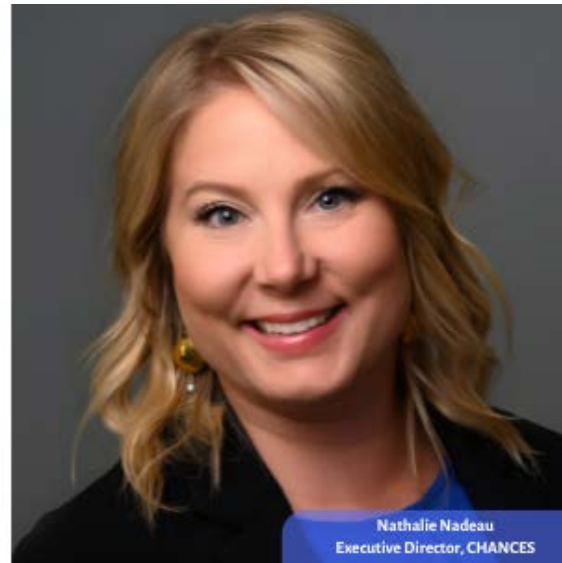
The CSC has been a major contributor to our Outdoor Play projects. Throughout our first project one of our team members had the opportunity to build relationships with the children and staff and take part in outdoor-focused professional development workshops with educators.

During the two-day event for the Connections project, *Promoting Equity in Early Childhood*, the MSVU CSC opened their doors to visiting practitioners, researchers, and policymakers to tour the centre and witness their high-quality practices and environments.



Partner Spotlight:

CHANCES



In this issue, it is our pleasure to spotlight Nathalie Nadeau who serves as the Executive Director of [CHANCES Inc.](#), a non-profit and charitable organization. With a mission centered on delivering holistic child development and parental support programs, CHANCES Inc. is unwavering in its commitment to diversity, serving as a pillar of strength and support for countless families.

Nathalie's experience spans over 17 years in pivotal leadership roles, predominantly working with vulnerable populations. Her dedication lies in early childhood development and learning, coupled with a deep-rooted belief in family-centered care and services.

Nathalie was one of our storytellers at the fireside chat event held to continue our conversation to build Atlantic Connections in Promoting Equity in Early Childhood. Nathalie and CHANCES continue to collaborate with the ECCRC in promoting the work that we do at the centre. We look forward to our continued partnership.



KNOWLEDGE MOBILIZATION

To rewatch the virtual storytelling series please click: [Virtual storytelling series](#)

To rewatch the fireside chat held on October 3rd please click: [Fireside chat](#)



ECCRC TEAM



DR. CHRISTINE MCLEAN,
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR
WITH THE DEPARTMENT
OF CHILD AND YOUTH
STUDY

Christine.McLean@msvu.ca

Dr. McLean contributes her passion and experience in the field of early childhood education to the ECCRC, along with her incredible sense of humor. She is



SARAH CALDWELL,
RESEARCH MANAGER

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As Research Manager, Sarah is the glue that holds us all together! She is also the Research Coordinator for the CELEBRATE Feeding Project. She is passionate about helping promote good health and well-being, with a particular interest in nutrition.



NAHAL FAKHARI,
RESEARCH
COORDINATOR

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Nahal is the Research Coordinator for the project titled "Social Media as a Tool for Families: Engaging families in accessing evidence-based resources to

involved with many of our projects, including co-leading the play-based numeracy and literacy project funded by the Margaret and Wallace McCain Family Foundation and as a co-investigator on our newcomer Photovoice project.



ELIZABETH DICKSON,
NUTRITION COACH
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Elizabeth is the Nova Scotia Nutrition Coach for the CELEBRATE Feeding project. She is currently helping with writing up the findings from the project.



ROBYN ASHLEY,
RESEARCH
COORDINATOR
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Robyn is the Research Coordinator for the Outdoor Play projects and the Pyramid Model Evaluation. She loves that her work at the ECCRC allows her to follow her passions in exploring young children's experiences of outdoor and nature play. Robyn is excited to start her PhD in Educational Studies at MSVU in Summer 2024.

support their children's social and emotional development." Nahal is currently in her second year of her PhD in Interdisciplinary Studies at Dalhousie University. Her ability to balance school and work is inspiring to us all.



JULIE CAMPBELL,
DATA ANALYST
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Julie is the Data Analyst for the CELEBRATE Feeding project. While working at the ECCRC, Julie is working towards her PhD in the Faculty of Health at Dalhousie University, studying outdoor learning and play with school-aged children.



MILENA PIMENTEL,
RESEARCH ASSISTANT
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Milena has recently finished her Child and Youth Study Degree and moved into a new and exciting position where she hopes to bridge research and practice. We are so proud of her accomplishments! She currently is still assisting with an upcoming project at the ECCRC.



HEATHER PODANOVITCH,
RESEARCH ASSISTANT
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Heather recently graduated from MSVU's Applied Human Nutrition program and is currently carrying out her dietetic internship at NSHA. She works at ECCRC part-time as a Research Assistant on the CELEBRATE Feeding project and the Numeracy and Literacy project.



RANDI CUMMINGS,
RESEARCH COORDINATOR
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Randi is the Research Coordinator for the Numeracy and Literacy project. Randi also works on the Pyramid Model Evaluation project and is our go-to-gal for training new team members in anything related to data analysis.



DR. JEANNIE LARSON,
DOCTORAL RESEARCH ASSOCIATE
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Jeannie has been with the ECCRC since September



OLGA LEVIN,
DATA ANALYST
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Olga joined our team in April 2023, primarily working on the Celebrate Feeding



HANNAH COSMAN,
RESEARCH ASSISTANT
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Hannah is a research assistant working on the Pyramid Model Evaluation analyzing data. She has been working at the ECCRC since April 2023. Hannah has a Bachelor of Science with a double major in biology and psychology from Dalhousie University.

2022, first as a doctoral research associate and currently as a postdoctoral fellow. She assists with the Atlantic Connections work and the data analysis for the Pyramid Model Evaluation project. She received both her Masters of Education and her PhD in Language and Literacies Education from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) at the University of Toronto. She brings to our team 9 years of mixed-methods research experience in early childhood education, language learning, teacher training, and social work

project. She is also involved in a scoping review for numeracy and literacy learning through play project. Olga holds a bachelor's degree in nutritional science and a master's degree in applied human nutrition from MSVU



JANICE OSEI-ESSAH,
KNOWLEDGE MOBILIZATION
COORDINATOR
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Janice joined our team in February 2023. She has an MA in Communication studies and a BA in History and Theatre Arts from the University of Ghana. Janice is currently enrolled in the MA communication program at the Mount. As our Knowledge Mobilization Coordinator Janice is always thinking of innovative ways to share our work with others on social media- usually in a way that has us all laughing and having fun! Janice is assisting with our project, "Social Media as a Tool for Families: Engaging families in accessing evidence-based resources to support their children's social and emotional development."



JORDYN RIOU,
RESEARCH ASSISTANT
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Jordyn is a Research Assistant on the Outdoor Play project with the ECCRC and is doing her BA (Honours) in Child and Youth Study at MSVU. She is from Yellowknife, Northwest Territories and is passionate about seeing the perspectives of children and youth made visible in their communities. She is a dancer and artist, a member of the 2SLGBTQ+ community, and deeply loves her home in the North.

Stay Tuned

More to come from the ECCRC throughout 2024. We look forward to sharing the results of our ongoing work and our new research directions. The next newsletter is planned for last quarter of 2024.

**Thank you to our generous funders and
supporters:**



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IRSC
CIHR

Instituts de recherche
en santé du Canada
Canadian Institutes of
Health Research



Margaret and Wallace McCain
Family Foundation Inc.



Public Health
Agency of Canada

Agence de la santé
publique du Canada



The Child and Youth Refugee Research Coalition



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RESEARCH
NOVA SCOTIA

researchNS

About the ECCRC

Our Website:

The ECCRC is at Mount Saint Vincent University led by Dr. Jessie-Lee McIsaac, Assistant Professor and Tier II Canada Research Chair in Early Childhood: Diversity and Transitions. The goal of the centre is to ensure policy and practice are in place to support families across different early learning environments. This is achieved through population-level evaluation, leveraging family voice, and knowledge mobilization.



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