

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 our director Dr. Jessie-Lee McIsaac

As we approach a busy holiday season, we continue to reflect on our work with our partners and participants. We are proud of the achievements and the progress that we make together.

Since our last newsletter, we held a number of events and submitted proposals to continue our collective efforts to enhance equity for childhood well-being. For example, with the support from 22 partner organizations, and additional co-applicants and collaborators we submitted a Partnership Development Grant (the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council) to build the Atlantic Promoting Equity in Early Childhood (PEEC) Hub. In collaboration with the Nova Scotia Community College, East Preston Day Care and Family Resource Centre, and the YWCA, we held a community event to share results from our recent photovoice research with graduates from the Africentric Early Childhood Education Cohort. We have also presented our research at conferences and continue to work on papers from our collaborative research focused on outdoor play, responsive feeding, and children's social and emotional health.

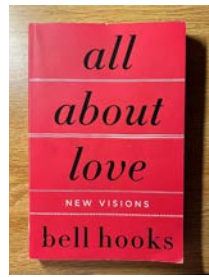
Please check out our project updates below and reach out if you have any questions or have research ideas that you would like to explore. Wishing you a happy and healthy holiday season.
Jessie-Lee



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



Image description: Some team members joined the "MSVU Research Highlights 2024" to celebrate research



Holding space for meaningful conversations

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 our research processes, with our partnerships, and in the creation of knowledge mobilization materials. [Learn more about EDIA at the ECCRC.](#)

Our team continued our book club as our EDIA project. We have read, added one more book to our collection after reading "Five Little Indians" by Michelle Good and "The Skin We're In" by Desmond Cole this year.

For EDIA Summer edition, we read 5 chapters from Bell Hooks' "all about love." The book itself is centered around the question "what is love?", how we conceive concepts of love (and how they shape us), and Western society's failure to keep love within the foundation of our society. Through this book, Bell draws on her personal experience approaching broad topics of love and community from a Black feminist lens. We intentionally selected chapters of the book to inspire conversations from our diverse team to reflect not only personal experiences but the work we do together. Chapters chosen were:

- Week 1: Chapter 8 - Community: Loving Communion
- Week 2: Chapter 2 - Justice: Childhood Love Lessons and Chapter 6 - Values: Living By A Love Ethic
- Week 3: Chapter 5 - Spirituality: Divine Love and Chapter 7 - Greed: Simple Love

The team had very meaningful conversations that allowed us to understand each other better, what each experience brings to the table, and how we can carry ourselves through this framework to create more loving, impactful, and organic relationships with current and future research participants and their respected communities.

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.

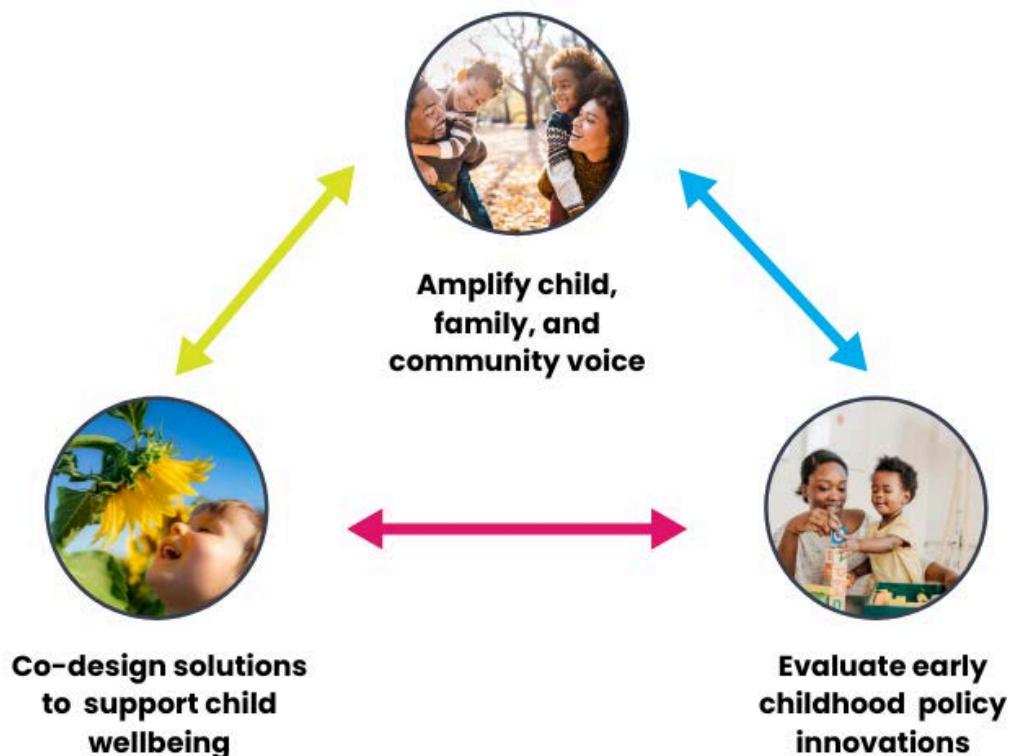
Inclusive, and Culturally Responsive Early Childhood Learning Environments

National Day for Truth and Reconciliation (September 30) and Mi'kmaq History Month (October)

As a team, we continue our bi-weekly EDIA meetings. We hope that through intentionally selecting specific books or articles to read together, we can engage in deeper reflections and discussions both individually and as a team. We also select and watch videos on significant societal and historical happenings to understand the society that work and hold space to have meaningful conversations. This enables us to gain a deeper understanding of colonialism and intergenerational racism, while considering how we can contribute to reconciliation here at the centre.

Here are some examples of materials that we discussed and shared in recognition of the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation and Mi'kmaq History Month:

- Battiste, M. (2016). Reframing the Humanities: From Cognitive Assimilation to Cognitive Justice. In Battiste, M (Ed.), Visioning a Mi'kmaw Humanities: Indigenizing the Academy (pp. 1-17). Cape Breton University Press.
- [We Know the Truth: Stories to inspire reconciliation](#)



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

We wrapped up our community of practice sessions just before the end of the 2023-2024 school year. We had many insightful discussions with the early childhood educators and early elementary educators who participated in our research studies about what play can and does look like in the early years. We are working on a graphic report to share the research's findings with the public and other stakeholders. Thank you to Dr. Lyse Anne LeBlanc for facilitating the workshops with Jessie-Lee and Christine and to Dr. Amna Mirza for her expertise. We also thank the participants for their invaluable contributions to the research project and education in the early years.

Our work with the scoping review has continued since the last newsletter. Our team has screened many articles to understand the scope of research that has currently been done about how literacy is supported through play in early learning environments. We are now conducting a thematic analysis of the chosen articles to better understand how the mechanisms of play support literacy. We are working on a manuscript for publication



Image: A representation of early writing and inventive spelling that aligns with our research.



Scotia Scholar Award

Our Research Coordinator for the outdoor play project, Robyn Ashley received a Scotia Scholar Award from Research Nova Scotia for her PhD studies, ***“Exploring Nova Scotia early childhood educators’ perspectives of child-nature relationships across outdoor play settings”***. Robyn is a doctoral student in the Inter-University Doctoral Program in Educational Studies at Mount Saint Vincent University



Image: This summer team engaged in including a walk around Long Lake, Halifax, lunch dates and sharing about our projects at conferences and events.

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.)

Since our last update, the CELEBRATE Team has been busy writing and publishing papers on our results from the CELEBRATE Feeding project, applying to grants to scale up the project, and starting the groundwork for a Delphi study. We also had the opportunity to share our research at a workshop with the Association of Early Childhood Educators Nova Scotia.

This is a process to refine our CELEBRATE Feeding Approach. We hope this will help us focus our next grant proposal on extending the reach of the CELEBRATE Feeding Approach to early learning and child care programs across the Maritimes. In the meantime, all of our [resources from CELEBRATE Feeding](#) are available on our website. Stay tuned for more opportunities to be involved in future steps.

For more information about the CELEBRATE Feeding project:

Please visit our website:

www.celebratefeeding.ca

and follow us on:

Instagram: [@celebratefeeding](#), X (formally

Twitter): [@CELEBRATE_Feed](#) and Facebook:

[@celebratefeeding](#)

Exploring the application of Africentric principles and pedagogy to the realities of early childhood practice

This research project builds on [earlier work](#) that identified that early learning environments in Nova Scotia often adhere to a Eurocentric approach, which creates unsafe environments for Black children, their families, and Black educators. The [Africentric ECE program at the Nova Scotia Community College \(NSCC\)](#) and the importance of this ECE training was also highlighted to be a community asset and critical to dismantling anti-Black racism that permeates the system of early learning and child care. We held 3 workshop sessions with 12 graduates of the NSCC Africentric ECE program, including the Accelerated Africentric ECE program.

Participants discussed how they apply Africentric Principles in their early learning environments through the research method of photo-voice, and what the response has been from children, families, and their colleagues.

Participants used photos to share their experiences. We held a community event in November to launch the [community report](#) and share the stories from participants. We look forward to continuing to find ways to bring forward the recommendations from this important work.

Image below: A collage from the Africentric Principles and Pedagogy community event

KNOWLEDGE MOBILIZATION

CELEBRATE FEEDING

New Paper: CELEBRATE FEEDING: A Responsive Approach to Food and feeding in Early Learning Settings

New Paper: CELEBRATE Feeding: For me it's just the conversation: 'responsive feeding influences among childhood early childhood educators (cambridge.org)

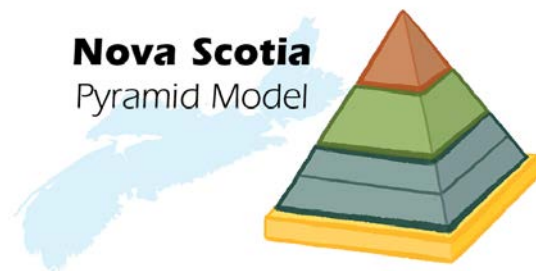
CHILD WELL-BEING

Through social and emotional learning

EVALUATING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PYRAMID MODEL IN NOVA SCOTIA

Since our last newsletter we have published the Pyramid Model Executive Summary Report (2022-23) in [English](#) and [French](#).

We are continuing our evaluation this year with a series of data collection activities to better understand how Pyramid Model programs are supporting the social and emotional development of children.



Through outdoor play

MOBILIZING OUTDOOR PLAY THROUGH PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH

Since our last newsletter, our team has made progress on our outdoor play projects. Data from our first project, Mobilizing Outdoor Play, has been analyzed and two papers for publication are currently being drafted. In March and April 2024, we collected data with a child care centre and a forest school program for our second project, Enhancing children's voices and play outdoors across early learning and child care settings. We conducted go-along interviews with children in their outdoor settings (e.g., a playground and a forest space) using GoPro cameras to record. Interview video data from this project is currently being analyzed.





EDUCATION AND
EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT



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

CHILD WELL-BEING

EQUITY AND THE CONCEPT OF SCHOOL READINESS: A NOVA SCOTIA STUDY

We are excited about our recently funded MITACS project that has been made possible with support from the Margaret and Wallace McCain Family Foundation. In this research, our goal is to explore educator and community expert perspectives regarding the expectations of child development and school transition as they relate to children from equity-deserving groups. This mixed-methods study will take an exploratory design, wherein results from the initial qualitative inquiry will help inform the quantitative inquiry. In the initial qualitative inquiry, we will invite teachers and community experts to focus group sessions to discuss child development and measurement. We are currently recruiting Nova Scotian and newcomer educators and parents. These experts, we also plan to include in the Early Development Instrument (EDI) study held by the Department of Education and Early Childhood.

COMMUNITY EVALUATION OF THE HALIFAX FARSI SCHOOL

We have recently partnered with the Iranian Cultural Organization of Nova Scotia in a project funded by Change Lab Action Research Initiative (CLARI). In response to our partner question, our goal for this project was to understand how the Halifax Farsi School can enhance the engagement of Iranian immigrant children with their Persian language and culture. We had conversations with children and interviewed families, teachers, and the school administrators. A report is now published [[English version](#) and [Farsi version](#)] and now we are in conversation to plan an event to discuss the findings with our partner and Iranian community in Nova Scotia.



The Early Childhood Collaborative Research Centre is looking for knowledgeable individuals to take part in a study aimed at exploring child development and school transitions for children from equity-deserving groups.

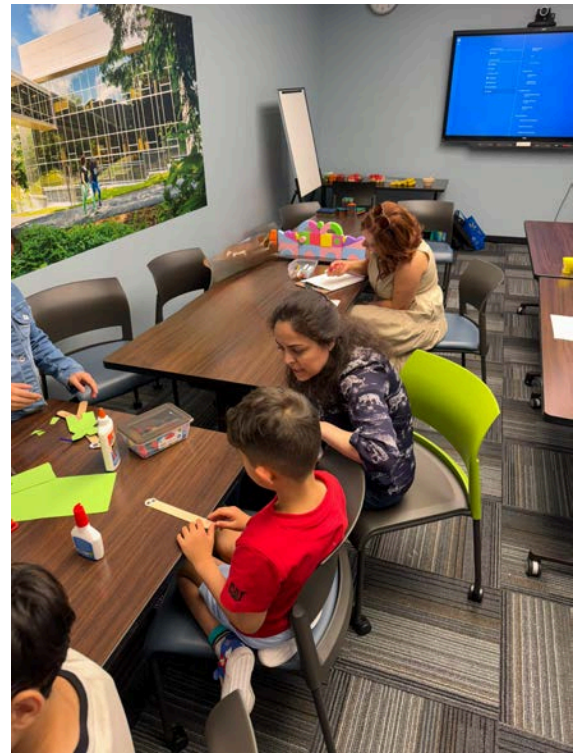




The Early Childhood Collaborative Research Centre is looking for knowledgeable individuals to take part in a study aimed at exploring child development and school transitions for children from equity-deserving groups.



Image above: Recruitment poster shared to recruit knowledgeable individuals to partake in our Mitacs study.



KNOWLEDGE MOBILIZATION

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

PROMOTING EQUITY IN EARLY CHILDHOOD HUB: AN ATLANTIC CANADIAN PARTNERSHIP

We are excited to continue our partnership work with folks across Atlantic Canada to learn more about equity in early childhood settings. In continuation of our work from last year, we organized a 2-part virtual seminar series. The first series focused on the lived experience and stories from newcomer early childhood educators. The second focused on programs and organizations that support newcomer early childhood educators, families, and children across the four Atlantic provinces. The audience for the seminar series included programs and services that are interested in learning how to better serve families with young children, early childhood educators, policy makers etc. You can watch last year's seminar series [here](#).



We had 5 storytellers for part one of the storytelling series on October 30th and 4 storytellers for part 2 on November 27th. Click [here](#) to check out which storytellers represented the four Atlantic province

Finally, with the support of partners, we worked together to submit a Partnership Development Grant to fund our exciting project. We will share more updates of the project in our next issue!

MOBILIZING RESEARCH THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA TO SUPPORT FAMILIES WITH YOUNG CHILDREN

Last year, our team received two grants from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research 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, our team moved on to the next phase of the project. We recruited and interacted with our 8-member diverse family advisory group representative across Atlantic Canada to provide guidance to our team on social media. This was to understand more about the informational needs and use of social media to support children's and emotional wellbeing. Our discussions focused on the gaps in social media in terms of children's social and emotional well-being.

Our team has shared findings from this project at two conferences Maritime SPOR SUPPORT Unit, Research Summit (October 2024) National Association for the Education of Young Children, Annual Conference (November 2024) Stay tuned for more updates.



Image above: The recruitment poster that was shared to recruit storytellers across the 4 Atlantic Provinces.



Image: Summary of feedback from family advisory groups on how they prefer images to be shared on social media.

Community & Partner Spotlight

Community Spotlight:

Association of Early Childhood Educators Newfoundland & Labrador (AECENL)

In this issue, we would like to thank the Association of Early Childhood Educators, Newfoundland and Labrador (AECENL) for collaborating with the ECCRC on several projects. AECENL is a non-profit organization and the professional organization for those with qualifications in early childhood or working in childcare or related fields.

The organization also plays a key role in implementing certification and providing professional development for Early Childhood Educators (ECE's) under the Child Care Services Act. AECENL hosts a provincial conference each year to foster learning and networking. The organization continually ensures the voices of ECE's are heard at both the provincial and federal levels.

AECENL has been a valued partner and member of our community since 2022, working with ECCRC on the Connections project, "Promoting Equity in Early Childhood" (2023 and 2024). They've connected us with storytellers from Newfoundland and Labrador and consistently offer valuable insights during partner meetings. AECENL also helped publicize our event in NL and actively participated in our in-person events, including the October 2023 fireside chat.

At their recent annual conference in October, AECENL provided ECCRC with a table to showcase our research and engage with potential collaborators.



Image Description: From left to right - Jeannie from ECCRC, Omobosola, storyteller on newcomer educators and Mojca, current registrar of AECENL Storyteller on programs and organizations that s.

Partner Spotlight:

East Preston Daycare & Family Resource Centre



In this edition, we are excited to feature Trina Fraser, the Executive Director of [East Preston Daycare and Family Resource Centre](#), a nonprofit organization that has served the East Preston community for over 40 years. The daycare provides emergent curriculum and innovative programming for children ranging from 3 months to 10 years old, with a core mission of nurturing and supporting families in East Preston and the surrounding areas.

In addition to her leadership role, Trina is also a faculty member at NSCC, where she teaches the Afrocentric Early Childhood Educator course. She actively contributes to the Nova Scotia Early Learning and Child Care Advisory Committee and serves on the advisory board for the Nova Scotia Community College and Afrocentric Early Childhood Educator program.

Recently, Trina played a key role in supporting the project "Applying Africentric Principles and Pedagogies in Early Learning," by recruiting participants and contributing to its planning process. Both Trina and the East Preston Daycare and Family Resource Centre continue to collaborate with ECCRC to advance the important work we do. We look forward to our ongoing partnership!



KNOWLEDGE MOBILIZATION

To rewatch the 2023 virtual storytelling series please click: [Virtual storytelling series](#)

To rewatch the fireside chat held on October 3rd, 2023 please click: [Fireside chat](#)

ECCRC TEAM



ECCRC TEAM



DR. JESSIE-LEE MCISAAC,
RESEARCH DIRECTOR &
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR
WITH THE DEPARTMENT
OF CHILD AND YOUTH
STUDY

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Dr McIsaac is the Director of the Early Childhood Collaborative Research Centre and leads all the research projects at the centre.

The goal of the research program is to enhance the well-being during early childhood by ensuring policy and practice support families as they transition across early learning environments. Dr McIsaac loves collaborating with researchers, policy makers and research participants to inform policy and program design and decision-making. Every research at the centre is applied research!



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

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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 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.



SARAH CALDWELL,
RESEARCH MANAGER
Sarah.Caldwell@msvu.ca

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. Sarah is currently on maternity leave and is enjoying the time with her baby.



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 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.



**ROBYN ASHLEY,
RESEARCH
COORDINATOR**

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Robyn is the Research Coordinator for the Outdoor Play project. 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 recently started her PhD in Educational Studies at MSVU in the summer of 2024.



**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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RANDI CUMMINGS,

Milena has recently finished her Child and Youth Study Degree and moved into a new and exciting position with the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development 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.

**OLGA LEVIN,
DATA ANALYST**

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Olga joined our team in April 2023, primarily working on the Celebrate Feeding 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. Olga recently began a new position as a Public Health Nutritionist with Nova Scotia Health Authority. We are always excited to see our team members transitioning into new roles!

**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. Randi has recently begun the Master of Information program at Dalhousie University.



**DR. JEANNIE LARSON,
DOCTORAL RESEARCH
ASSOCIATE**

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Jeannie has been with the ECCRC since September 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



**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. She is currently enrolled in a graduate diploma in public health. Hannah loves numbers and is our quantitative wizz!



**KIARA SEXTON,
RESEARCH ASSISTANT**

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Kiara is an Acadia alumnus with a BA in Sociology. As an African Nova Scotian, I'm interested in the research surrounding cultural principles and pedagogies being applied in early childhood practices. Access to connect with culture is something that is important to me. Prior to this position, I worked with high school students (grades 9-12) as a support worker.

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



**ABIGAIL PATEY,
RESEARCH ASSISTANT**

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Abigail Patey is a research assistant currently working on the Development of a Quality Assurance and Improvement System for the Nova Scotia project. Abigail has a BA (Hons) in Child and Youth Study with a minor in psychology. Abigail is passionate about promoting high-quality spaces in early child care settings whether through research or on-the-floor practices.



**JANICE OSEI-ESSAH,
KNOWLEDGE
MOBILIZATION
COORDINATOR**

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Janice joined our team in February 2023. She has an MA in Communication studies (applied) and a BA in History and Theatre Arts from the University of Ghana. Janice recently completed an 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."



Image above description: Members of the ECCRC team

Stay Tuned

More to come from the ECCRC. We look forward to sharing the results of our ongoing work and our new research directions. The next newsletter is planned for the spring of 2025.

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



CANADA RESEARCH CHAIRS
CHAIRES DE RECHERCHE DU CANADA



Public Health
Agency of Canada

Agence de la santé
publique du Canada



researchNS

About the ECCRC

The ECCRC is at Mount Saint Vincent University led by Dr. Jessie-Lee McIsaac, Associate 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.

Our Website:



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CRCearlychildhood@msvu.ca

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