

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 Kjipuktuk (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 come to the end of the year, it is a meaningful time for our team to reflect on the important work we have accomplished together through our collaborations.

This fall, we have launched data collection for new projects, held professional learning sessions for the early childhood community, and prioritized knowledge mobilization through reports and papers. We also had the chance to host an Atlantic equity network in early childhood, exploring collaborations across research, policy, and practice in the region.

Looking ahead to the new year, our dynamic team is excited to continue strengthening early childhood well-being through our research collaborations.

We invite you to explore the project updates below and get in touch with any questions or ideas

Wishing you a restful and joyful holiday season.

Jessie-Lee



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



Image Above: ECCRC team members went bowling for an end of year celebration.



Image Above: ECCRC Team members took a walk at the Hemlock Ravine Park to get some fresh air and spend some quality time together outside of the office.

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ECCRC TEAM



EDIA at the ECCRC

Our team at the ECCRC values the implementation of principles and practices that reflect and support Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (EDIA) in our 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.

Over the last few months, we attended a workshop from Theresa Meuse (Special Advisor on Indigenous Affairs at MSVU) to learn about wholistic well-being and the Medicine Wheel.

We also met with Theresa to discuss how our team could intentionally learn from Indigenous ways of knowing and build relationships with community.

Recently, we dedicated a few of our EDIA meetings to learn more about the importance and meaning of land acknowledgements by watching a [Personal Land Acknowledgement Workshop lead by Annie Battiste](#). We then discussed how this knowledge could inform the development of our own personal land acknowledgements. At a subsequent meeting, we gathered in small groups to further discuss the components we could include in our own land acknowledgements. Our personalized land acknowledgements are shared at the beginning of every team meeting through our rotating meeting chairs.

Finally, we formed an in-house reconciliation subcommittee to revise our [reconciliation statement](#) originally published in 2021, which is now available on our website. We acknowledge that while reconciliation is related to and often intersects with EDIA, it is a distinct and ongoing process that is specific to the acknowledgement of colonial harms and rebuilding a mutually respectful relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. This subcommittee was formed to reflect this understanding and provide a space to focus on specific actions that our team can engage in moving forward.

In January, we plan to have an EDIA Book Club where we will select a book focused on newcomer children's experiences during their settlement journey in Canada.

Images to the right: The ECCRC Team joined a gathering at the Wikuom on campus for Indigenous People's Day and had the opportunity to see and experience indigenous vendors art



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.



Above Image: ECCRC guiding pillars

PROJECT UPDATES

Our work focused on key areas of our three pillars (Amplify Voice, Evaluate Policy Innovations, and Co-design Solutions) with each of our projects fitting 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.

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

Supporting Numeracy and Literacy in Play-Based Early Learning Programs

The numeracy and literacy team is happy to share that a [manuscript](#) has been published in the Journal of Early Childhood literacy. This [paper](#) shares the wonderful and insightful experiences of how early childhood educators view and support numeracy and literacy learning through play. Moving forward, we hope to have a traveling panel exhibit ready to embark on its journey in the new year, beginning at the Nova Scotia Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.



Above Image: Numeracy and literacy skills can be fostered through a variety of materials free for children to explore.

Photo by [Sigmund](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Nurturing the social and emotional growth of Mi'kmaw children

With support from Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey, and in partnership with the Nova Scotia Early Childhood Intervention Services (NSECDIS), we have been working with the Pre-Kindergarten Director and Mi'kmaw Language Support Educator in Sipekne'katik First Nation to adapt the [Positive Solutions for Families](#) coffee chat kits. These kits are called "Ketu'pite'man? Do you want tea?"

We worked on translating key terms to be represented in both English and Mi'kmaw, while also including social emotional strategies that reflect Mi'kmaq culture such as healing through drumming, singing, and dancing. Our partners at NSECDIS are creating narrative videos to go along with the session kits as audio-visual support. Thank you to Mi'kmaw Language Educator, Eleanor Michael for lending her voice to the narration! We are looking forward to delivering these sessions to families in February and March. Stay tuned!

Image Below: Some of the resources for supporting children's emotions from the NSECDIS Positive Solutions Coffee Chat Kits



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

EXPANDING NUMERACY AND LITERACY THROUGH PLAY IN SCHOOL-BASED LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS: GRAPHIC REPORT

ÉTENDRE L'APPRENTISSAGE DE LA NUMÉRATIE ET LA LITTÉRATIE DANS LES ENVIRONNEMENTS SCOLAIRES BASÉS SUR LE JEU
NUMERACY AND LITERACY - IT'S EVERYWHERE!
LA NUMÉRATIE ET LA LITTÉRATIE - C'EST PARTOUT!



CELEBRATE Feeding!

Coaching in Early Learning Environments
to Build a Responsive Approach To
Eating and Feeding

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 Feeding Team has conducted a three-round Delphi study with 25+ experts in the field from four countries to refine our CELEBRATE Feeding Approach. Results will be sent to participants soon, and we are working on writing up a paper for this study. These results have also been used to inform a new professional development webinar series for ECEs in Nova Scotia, of which the first session was just held in November. Our slides [from this session](#) are available on our website. We also had the opportunity to translate our [resources into French](#) as part of this professional development. The second iteration will be happening in Winter 2026 – stay tuned for more information.

We continue to work on writing and publishing papers and conference abstracts on our results from the CELEBRATE Feeding project. We had a [paper](#) accepted in Nutrition & Dietetics surrounding how pressure-to-eat manifests in child care. We also have two papers resubmitted after initial review. Lastly, we have re-applied to CIHR Project grants to scale up the project. We are looking forward to sharing more about our project findings this upcoming winter and spring!

Our resources are now available on our website in French and English. Check them out here:

www.celebratefeeding.ca

and follow us on:

Instagram: [@celebratefeeding](https://www.instagram.com/celebratefeeding), and Facebook: [@celebratefeeding](https://www.facebook.com/celebratefeeding)

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

The Africentric Principles and Pedagogy project, funded by the [Inter-University Research Network](#), focused on the stories and experiences of early childhood educators since graduating from the Africentric ECE programs at NSCC. Following our [Community Report](#), together with our community partners we have published a [peer-reviewed manuscript](#) in a thematic issue on Anti-racist Pedagogy in Early Years in the *Journal of Childhood, Education and Society*. We are proud to be co-authors of this article with our local community partners who are champions for Africentric early childhood pedagogy and practice. We are continuing to explore potential next steps to extend this work.



Two Images Above: Some images from the Knowledge Mobilization Event showcasing the different methods, materials and hard work ECE participants use in their work.

Image below: A snapshot of the new publication by the Africentric project



The image shows a digital snapshot of a journal article from the 'Journal of Childhood, Education & Society'. The title of the article is 'Reconnecting and reclaiming Africentricity: Applying Africentric principles and pedagogy in early learning and child care settings'. The authors listed are Milena Pimentel¹, Justin West², Moashella Shortte¹, Kiara Sexton⁴, Trina Fraser³, Anne Briscombe⁴, Kerri Johnson⁵, Barbara-Ann Hamilton-Hinch⁶, Crystal Watson⁷, Jessie-Lee D. McIsaac^{1*}. The abstract discusses an Africentric Early Childhood Education diploma program at Nova Scotia Community College, highlighting its application of Africentric principles and pedagogy through a Photovoice methodology. The article history notes it was received on 31 March 2025 and accepted on 26 October 2025. The keywords include Africentric education, Racial justice, Participatory research, Early childhood care and education, Social justice, Anti-racist pedagogical practice, Anti-racism, and Photo-voice.

New Publication!

From our Africentric Principles and Pedagogy photo-voice project

Journal of Childhood, Education & Society
Volume 6, Issue 3, 2025, 619-631
DOI: 10.37291/2717638X.202563648

ISSN: 2717-638X
Research Article

Reconnecting and reclaiming Africentricity: Applying Africentric principles and pedagogy in early learning and child care settings

Milena Pimentel¹, Justin West², Moashella Shortte¹, Kiara Sexton⁴, Trina Fraser³, Anne Briscombe⁴, Kerri Johnson⁵, Barbara-Ann Hamilton-Hinch⁶, Crystal Watson⁷, Jessie-Lee D. McIsaac^{1*}

Abstract: An Africentric Early Childhood Education diploma program offered in Nova Scotia (Canada) at the Nova Scotia Community College has been highlighted as a community asset, bringing strength to the early childhood sector. Underpinned by the philosophy of Ubuntu, this pre-service training fosters a supportive learning environment for Black early childhood educators. This research used a Photovoice methodology to explore the application of Africentric principles and pedagogy from participants (n=12) who were graduates of this program and working in early childhood settings during the time of the study. Through a series of workshops, participants identified five key themes: 1) I am the foundation; 2) Connection; 3) Our cultural identity; 4) Self-expression; and 5) Support. Participants referred to themselves as foundational for driving change in early childhood education and curated environments that offered authentic learning experiences of cultural advocacy. At the same time, participants shared feelings of not being supported in their practice as educators, primarily by program administrators, which hindered trust. Participants collectively developed recommendations for the early childhood sector to improve cultural safety and responsiveness. The results from the study are transferable to other educational settings in efforts to challenge systemic racism and ensure safe working environments for educators.

Article History
Received: 31 March 2025
Accepted: 26 October 2025

Keywords
Africentric education; Racial justice; Participatory research; Early childhood care and education; Social justice; Anti-racist pedagogical practice; Anti-racism; Photo-voice

KNOWLEDGE MOBILIZATION

CELEBRATE FEEDING

New Paper: "A few more bites?": Manifestation of pressure-to-eat in child care. (Nutrition & Dietetics)

CHILD WELL-BEING

Through social and emotional learning

EVALUATING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PYRAMID MODEL IN NOVA SCOTIA

This year, we are continuing our evaluation through a comprehensive mix of quantitative and qualitative data collection activities to gain deeper insights into the impact of the Pyramid Model program on children's social and emotional development. Our 2024-25 Executive Summary Report will be posted soon.



Through outdoor play

MOBILIZING OUTDOOR PLAY THROUGH PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH

Our first paper titled, *Engaging in reflexivity as an educator-researcher to strengthen relationships in an outdoor early childhood education environment*, is [now published in the Canadian Journal for New Scholars in Education](#).

Our second paper focused on the use of audio-visual methods with children in outdoor spaces has been submitted to a journal for review.

Our third paper based on our most recent data collection with children at a childcare centre and a forest school is being drafted.

We look forward to sharing more in 2026.



Above images: Children playing outdoors.
Photo credit: MailChimp stock photos

CHILD WELL-BEING AMONG EQUITY-DESERVING COMMUNITIES

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

Since our last issue, we have been working on a report from the conversations with our two expert groups focused on African Nova Scotian and newcomer children.

Since the onset of the *Equity and the Concept of School Readiness* we have listened to community expert's perspectives regarding the expectations of child development and school transition as they relate to children from equity-deserving groups in NS primary classrooms. These insightful conversations have informed the development of our research framework and key themes for analysis. We have recently wrapped up our recruitment for teacher participants and are looking forward to beginning these focus groups in January 2026.

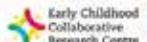
This mixed-methods study will take an exploratory design, wherein results from the initial qualitative inquiry will help inform the quantitative inquiry. With these experts, we also plan to look closer at the Early Development Instrument data, which is held by the Department of Education and Early Childhood.

This is a Mitacs Accelerate project that has been made possible with support from the Margaret and Wallace McCain Family Foundation.



EQUITY AND THE CONCEPT OF SCHOOL READINESS: COMMUNITY REPORT

Research investigator team: Jessie-Lee McIsaac (MSVU), Elizabeth Jean Larson (MSVU), Magdalena Janus (McMaster U), Natalie Spadatora (Brock U)
Research trainees: Nahal Fakhari, Janice Osei-Isah, Abigail Patey, Kiera Sexton

mitacs  Early Childhood Collaborative Research Centre  MOUNT UNIVERSITY

AMPLIFYING THE VOICES OF YOUNG NEWCOMER CHILDREN TO SUPPORT SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING

In this project funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC, Insight Grant), we aim to understand how young newcomer children living in Nova Scotia experience transitions and navigate support for social and emotional wellbeing in school and early childhood programs.

We are excited to share that we have recruited families with young children (aged between 4 to 8) from various cultural and linguistic backgrounds. We have completed the first visits with several family units in a comfortable indoor location. The goal of the first visit was to bring play-based materials for newcomer children to build relationship with them, learn more about their interests, and have conversation about their daily life activities, experiences, and feelings.

We are completing additional visits with families in outdoor settings to complete a walk-along in a familiar location to the child. These meaningful outdoor spaces are creating opportunities for natural, unstructured conversations, allowing the children to share their post-migration experiences in ways that felt comfortable, engaging, and authentic.

We will continue to work with our first group of family participants in the new year to share back what we heard to engage in participatory data analysis. We will also begin a similar data collection process with additional families later in the year.



Image to the left: Community report shared with participants in the *Equity and the Concept of School Readiness* project. We hope to post to our website soon.

KNOWLEDGE MOBILIZATION

PROMOTING EQUITY IN EARLY CHILDHOOD HUB: AN ATLANTIC CANADIAN PARTNERSHIP

In November, we hosted a 3-day equity event at MSVU from November 24th- November 26th.

The event started with a [Fireside Chat](#) with the theme of storytelling where four storytellers, all Early Childhood Educators from Atlantic Canada, shared their work-related equity in early childhood.

We are thankful to the storytellers, Alison Johnson (NL), Shannon Nevers (NB), Donntayia Jones (NS) and Navneet Kaur (PEI) for sharing their stories and our moderator, Moashella Shortte for returning as our moderator of the Fireside Chat.

To watch the fireside side, please click on the link in the box below.

The following two days consisted of network building and planning workshops attended by network members to continue building connections across the network, to learn what is happening in early childhood research, policy and practice across Atlantic Canada and beyond. The meeting was also to identify opportunities for collaboration based on their mutual interests and to identify next steps together

We are working on an event report and will share more about our activities in the new year.



Images above: A) Table Setting from the fireside chat with a listening lens template, inviting participants to listen to the storytellers with intention.



Image above: Participants from the fireside chat engaged in conversations



Image to the left and above Hub members during the network and planning workshop



Image below: Graphic representation of the 2025 conversation held at the fireside chat by Louise Lyman

KNOWLEDGE MOBILIZATION

To rewatch the fireside chat held on November 24, 2025 please click here: [Fireside Chat](#)

Community & Partner Spotlight

Partner Spotlight: Equity Hub

In this issue we would like to thank the partners from the Promoting Equity in Early Childhood: Building Atlantic Connections project for their continued support and effort in continually building connections and identify opportunities for collaboration based on mutual interests.

This work has been made possible through funding from the Margaret and Wallace McCain Family Foundation and ongoing partnerships from across Atlantic Canada and beyond. We thank each and everyone of our partners who are committed to this work and supported the various aspects of this project

Community Spotlight: Our 2025 Storytellers

In this edition, we feature our four storytellers from the November 2025 Fireside Chat and thank them for *sharing their stories related to equity in early childhood and engaging in conversation with the audience*



Image Above, from left to right: Alison Johnson, Navneet Kaur, Donntayia Jones, Shannon Nevers and our moderator, Moashella Shortte.

OUR EQUITY HUB PARTNERS!



KNOWLEDGE MOBILIZATION

We have completed a new social media series titled, “Research Highlights” that breaks down our research process. Follow us on our socials for this and more updates



ECCRC TEAM



**DR. JESSIE-LEE
MCISAAC,**
TIER 2 CANADA
RESEARCH CHAIR,
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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. 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,
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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 collaborator on our newcomer projects.



SARAH CALDWELL,
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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,**

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COORDINATOR

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Nahal is the Research Coordinator for the project titled *“Amplifying the voices of young newcomer children to support social and emotional wellbeing.”* Nahal is currently in her final year of her PhD in Interdisciplinary Studies at Dalhousie University, examining the representation of Persian identity among Iranian girls in Nova Scotia.

**ROBYN ASHLEY,**

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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 is a PhD Candidate in Educational Studies at MSVU .

**JULIE CAMPBELL,**

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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,
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Milena has recently finished her Child and Youth Study Degree has recently worked with the Nova Scotia Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. She is currently assisting with the Africentric project at the ECCRC.



RANDI CUMMINGS,
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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 is in her second year of the Master of Information program at Dalhousie University



HANNAH COSMAN,
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Hannah is the research coordinator of the Pyramid Model Evaluation. 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 a graduand of diploma in public health from McMaster University. Hannah loves numbers and is our quantitative wizz!



DR. JEANNIE LARSON,
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Jeannie is an Assistant Professor with the Faculty of Education at MSVU. She has been with the ECCRC since September 2022, first as a doctoral research associate and then as a postdoctoral fellow. She is currently a co-applicant on the Equity and the concept of school readiness project. She also assists with the Atlantic Connections work. 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.



JANICE OSEI-ESSAH,
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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" and also on the "Equity and the concept of school readiness project."



**ABIGAIL PATEY,
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Abigail Patey is a Lead Research Assistant currently working on a number of projects including Equity and the concept of school readiness. Abigail has a BA (Hons) in Child and Youth Study with a minor in psychology.



Images above: 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 2026.

Thank you to our generous funders and supporters:



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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