

June 2026, Vol 9



MOBILIZING COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD WELL-BEING

The Early Childhood Collaborative Research Centre's Newsletter

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We would like to acknowledge that the ECCRC at MSVU is located in Kjiptuk (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 welcome the summer season, we want to extend our sincere thanks to our partners for their ongoing contributions to our shared work.

Over the last six month, our team has celebrated many personal and professional milestones and we have prioritized our knowledge mobilization efforts. This includes launching an equity resource library on social media, developing creative community reports, writing academic papers, and presenting at workshops/conferences. We continue to look for ways to ensure our work reflects the voices of educators, families, and children and have been collecting videos and developing resources for professional learning and expanding our use of child-led participatory methods.

We have also been applying for research funding to expand our collaborative early childhood research and hope to be able to share more news on this soon.

Please enjoy the project updates below and reach out with any feedback.

We wish you a restful and enjoyable summer and look forward to connecting in the months ahead.

Jessie-Lee



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



Image Above: The ECCRC Team threw a baby shower for Janice, our Knowledge Mobilization Coordinator.



Image Above: We were so happy to have Janice and her new baby come visit!



Image Above: The team has had many graduations in the last month!

From top left to bottom right: Hannah (Professional Graduate Diploma in Community and Health); Randi (Master of Information); Elham (Certificate in Early Childhood Education); Evelyn (Bachelor of Arts, Child and Youth Study).

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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.](#)

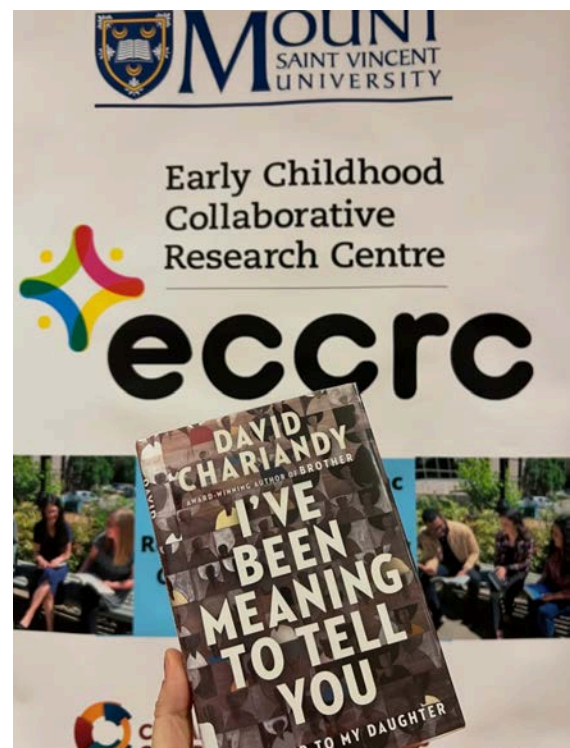
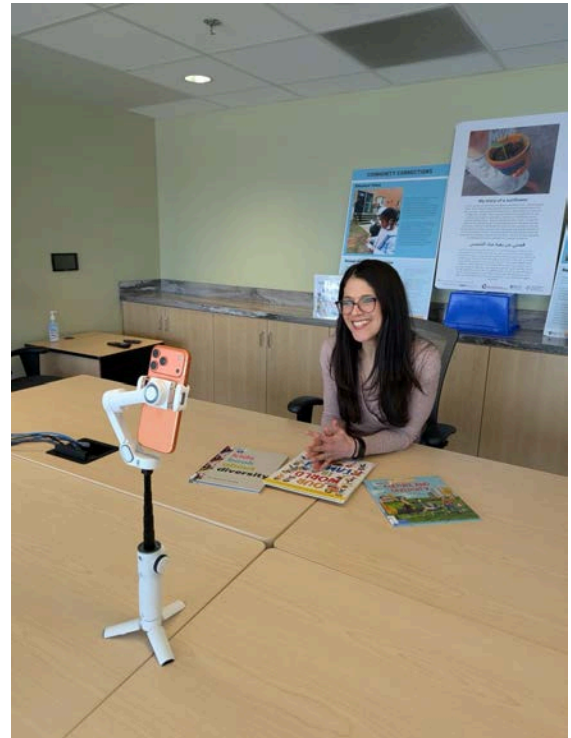
One of the pillars at the ECCRC is to “amplify child, family, and community voices”. This pillar not only supports the research that we do as a centre, but it also guides our presence on social media. In February we launched a new social media video campaign, to share equity resources that highlight diverse voices, experiences, and cultures through children’s literature. **Head on over to our socials (Facebook [@eccrc_msvu](#) and Instagram [@eccrc_msvu](#))** to see some of the ECCRC and MSVU Child Study Centre teams’ favourite resources!

Keeping with the theme of reading, the team has continued our EDIA book club. Our most recent read was [I’ve Been Meaning to Tell You: A Letter to my Daughter by David Chariandy](#). This book is written in the form of a deeply personal and insightful letter about the politics of race and the authors own experiences as the son of Black and South Asian migrants from Trinidad growing up in Canada. The Team met bi-weekly to discuss and reflect on the experiences of newcomer children in this book and beyond.

We also read, [We Have Always Been Here: A Queer Muslim Memoir](#) by Samra Habib. This book club offered us the opportunity to reflect on the intersectionality of culture, religion and sexuality all while navigating a new place.

Top Image: Jessie-Lee filming our introductory Equity Resource Library video.

Bottom Image: A photo of one of our Team EDIA Bookclub reads, David Chariandy’s “I’ve been meaning to tell you”.



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.

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.



Above Image: ECCRC guiding pillars

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

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

We have continued visiting our immigrant family participants using a child-led approach and visual formats to engage in discussions about the meaningful spaces and supports for social and emotional wellbeing for newcomer children. We have used go-along interviews, hand-drawn roadmaps, and comic-style collages to engage families in data collection and participant-led analysis. Through these conversations, we hope to deepen our understanding of the experiences the children have shared with us. We will be beginning to recruit our second cohort of families over the summer.

Jessie-Lee shared more about our research approach during a webinar hosted by the Canadian Sociological Association's Sociology of Childhood and Youth Research Cluster, called ["Exploring research with children and youth: perspectives and practices."](#)

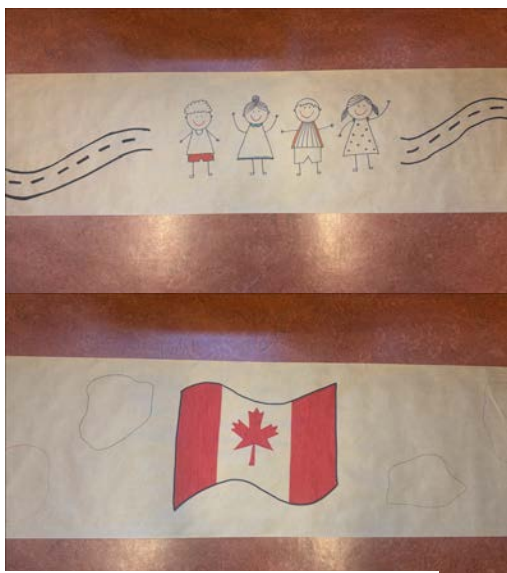


Image Above: Elham created a visual roadmap and children were invited to write/draw their own journeys on the map.

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

We recently completed data collection from our Grade Primary teacher expert group and are finalizing the report. The report will focus on teachers' perspectives on how to support children's success in Grade Primary classrooms and how these perspectives are reflected in the Early Development Instrument (EDI). Our [first report from community experts working with African Nova Scotian and newcomer children](#) is now available on our website.

In the fall, we will be working on our academic publications from both community experts groups. This is a Mitacs Accelerate project that has been made possible with support from the Margaret and Wallace McCain Family Foundation.



Image Above: The front page of our [Equity and the Concept of School Readiness Community Report](#).

Supporting Numeracy and Literacy in Play-Based Early Learning Programs

As we wrap up the final papers from the Numeracy and Literacy Project, we are excited to share that this content is being adapted for the purposes of asynchronous professional development modules that will be offered to early childhood educators in Nova Scotia. We are hoping to highlight the many possibilities for emergent numeracy and literacy that can occur in play-based learning environments.



Image Above: Play-based materials can support numerical

Photo credit: MailChimp stock photo

KNOWLEDGE MOBILIZATION

In May 2026, previous research coordinator Milena Pimentel and co-researchers Barb Hamilton-Hinch, Crystal Watson and Justin West presented the results of our study ***Reconnecting and Reclaiming Africentricity: Applying Africentric Principles and Pedagogy in Early Learning*** at the Second Annual Black Child and Youth Wellbeing Conference held in Calgary (See photo below)!

To learn more about this study, you can find the [report](#) on our [website](#).



Child Well-Being

EVALUATING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PYRAMID MODEL IN NOVA SCOTIA

This year, our work focused on case study programs and the perspectives of various partners involved in these initiatives, with the goal of gaining a deeper understanding of how the Pyramid Model is implemented. We gathered data through multiple approaches, including surveys assessing educators' confidence in supporting children's social and emotional development, families' perspectives on their child's social and emotional development, and educator well-being across Nova Scotia.

In addition, we conducted interviews within selected case study programs and examined educator responsiveness using the Responsive Interaction for Learning Tool. This mixed-methods approach provided a more comprehensive picture of how the Pyramid Model may be influencing educator practices.

More details will be shared in the coming months. In the meantime, if you would like to learn more, please refer to [last year's Executive Summary](#)



NURTURING THE SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL GROWTH OF MI'KMAW CHILDREN

Since our last newsletter, we have completed and facilitated the first ever Tea Talk sessions in Sipekne'katik! Our team finished the adaptations of the "Ketu'pite'man? Do you want tea?" Tea Talk Kits for Families in January 2026, with Mi'kmaw translation support from Barbara Sylliboy. We held the sessions at the Pre-Kindergarten program in Sipekne'katik with two parents attending the sessions. The small group allowed for more conversation and connection as we went over the strategies and crafted the tools to use with their children (i.e., Feeling Wheels, visual schedules, tools for breathing exercises). Parents were invited to complete a survey at the end of the sessions to provide feedback. In April 2026, we had the opportunity to present as a team at the Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey Mawitaik Wjit Knijannaq Early Childhood Education Conference. ECCRC team members, Jessie-Lee and Robyn; NSCEDIS staff, Sarah Gillis and Jenny Gillis; Sipekne'katik Pre-Kindergarten Director, Lyn Sack; and Mi'kmaw Language Educator, Eleanor Michael shared their story of collaboration in bringing these sessions together. The material for the Tea Talks are now [available on the website of the Nova Scotia Early Childhood Development Intervention Services](#).



Image Above: ECCRC team members, Jessie-Lee and Robyn; NSCEDIS staff, Sarah Gillis and Jenny Gillis; Sipekne'katik Pre-Kindergarten Director, Lyn Sack; and Mi'kmaw Language Educator, Eleanor Michael at the Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey Mawitaik Wjit Knijannaq Early Childhood Education Conference.

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 with refining our proposal for a Project Grant for CIHR to scale up the project. We are expanding our resources and knowledge mobilization, including delivering Part 2 of our Professional Development webinar for ECEs in April. We also presented our work at a national (Canadian Nutrition Society) and international (International Society of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity) conferences. We are finalizing our Delphi study paper this summer and published our [main outcome paper of the CELEBRATE intervention](#) and our [process evaluation](#). We also published an article with [Conversation Canada](#) highlighting the importance of a perspective shift with feeding young children. We are looking forward to sharing more about our project updates this upcoming fall!

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](#), and Facebook: [@celebratefeeding](#)



Image above from left to right: Ashna Ashna (University of Nebraska-Lincoln), Jessie-Lee McIsaac (MSVU), Misty Rossiter (University of Prince Edward Island), Claire Tugault-Lafleur

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 is under review with an academic journal. Our third paper focusing on child engagement with nature is being drafted.

The results on our child-led approach to data collection have been shared at the previously mentioned webinar hosted by the Canadian Sociological Association's Sociology of Childhood and Youth Research Cluster ([recording here](#)) and at the International Society of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity conference in Spain. We also held a professional learning session with the two programs that participated in the project focused on the use of audio-visual methods to support pedagogical documentation.



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

NEW PUBLICATIONS

CELEBRATE FEEDING

CELEBRATE Feeding: Impacts of a responsive feeding behavior change coaching intervention in child care settings (Journal of Nutritional Science)

For preschoolers, fear of new foods is common - and responding can feel anything but simple (The Conversation Canada)

Supporting responsive feeding in early childhood education centres: A process evaluation (Health Education Research)

OUTDOOR PLAY

Engaging in reflexivity as an educator-researcher to strengthen relationships in an outdoor early childhood education environment (Canadian Journal for New Scholars in Education)



CHILD WELL-BEING AMONG EQUITY-DESERVING COMMUNITIES

PROMOTING EQUITY IN EARLY CHILDHOOD HUB: AN ATLANTIC CANADIAN PARTNERSHIP

We look forward to continuing our work with our partners across Atlantic Canada to continue to share knowledge with folks who focus on supporting equity in early childhood settings.

With the support of our partners, we are currently working on our grant proposal to continue this network and collaboration with our partners. If funding permits, we are aiming to plan a symposium in 2027 to bring together researchers, practitioners, and policymakers to promote conversations and build connections across the Atlantic regions.

The symposium will build off our previous equity network to mobilize efforts to move toward a vision of ELCC that supports accessible, high-quality, and culturally responsive programs.

You can learn more about this work in the [report from our 2025 equity event](#).

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



KNOWLEDGE MOBILIZATION

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



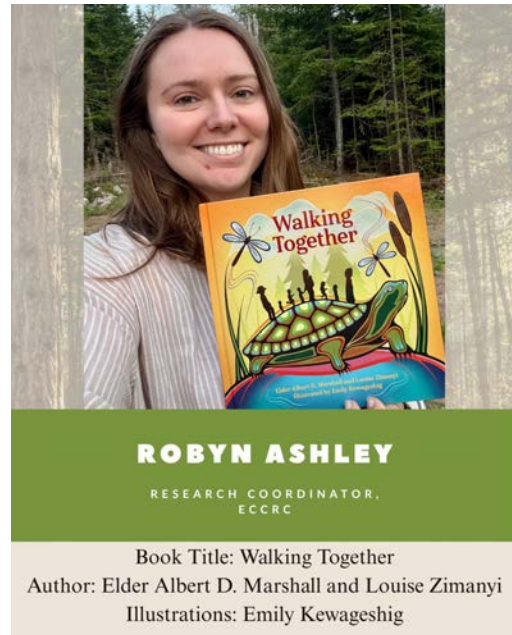
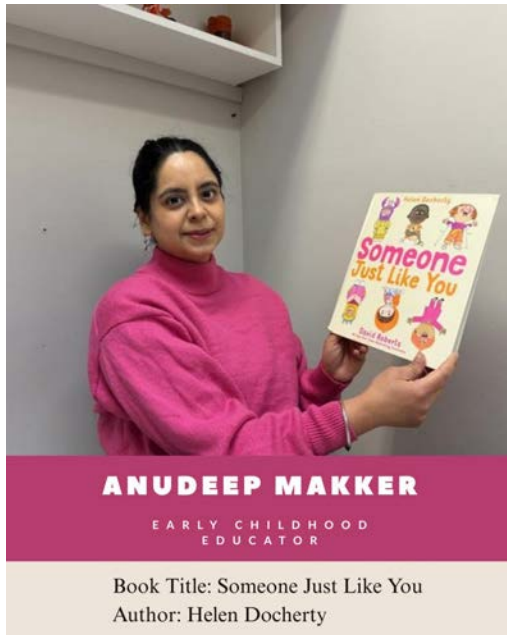
Community Spotlight: MSVU CYSS

In this edition, we feature the Mount Saint Vincent Child and Youth Study Society (MSVU CYSS). The society is a wonderful support for new and returning students, creating a warm, fun and knowledgeable environment for all. MSVU CYSS recently featured a gallery walk hosted by Dr. Jessie-Lee McIsaac and the CHYS Knowledge to Action class (CHYS 4417) on their Instagram. Follow them at [@msvu.cyss](https://www.instagram.com/msvu.cyss)

Images: The MSVU Child and Youth Study Society participates in many events to give back to the community!



KNOWLEDGE MOBILIZATION



We have a new Equity Resource Library social media campaign where we have been sharing short videos of children's books and resources that celebrate diversity. Follow us on our socials (@eccrc_msvu) for this and more updates!



ECCRC TEAM



DR. JESSIE-LEE MCISAAC,
TIER 2 CANADA
RESEARCH CHAIR,
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR
WITH THE FACULTY OF
EDUCATION AND THE
DEPARTMENT OF CHILD
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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,
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 collaborator on our newcomer projects.



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 *"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. Her dedication to this work is visible in everything she does.



ROBYN ASHLEY,
RESEARCH
COORDINATOR

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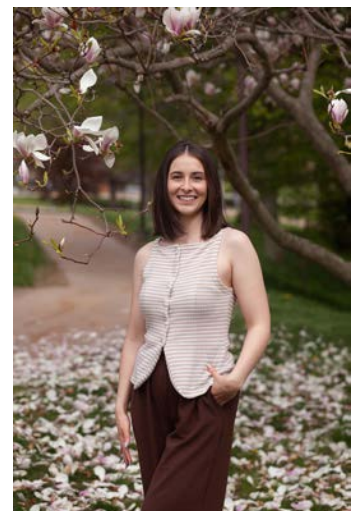
Robyn is the Research Coordinator for the Outdoor Play project. She loves that her work at the ECCRC allows her to follow her passions in exploring young children's experiences of outdoor and nature play. Robyn is a PhD Candidate in Educational Studies at MSVU and always has an answer to our questions about theory.



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. Her work ethic is matched by her kindness.



**HANNAH COSMAN,
RESEARCH
COORDINATOR**

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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!

**RANDI CUMMINGS,
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MOBILIZATION
COORDINATOR**

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Randi is the Research Coordinator for the Numeracy and Literacy project. Randi is also our interim Knowledge Mobilization Coordinator and is our go-to-gal for training new team members in anything related to qualitative data analysis. She has recently completed her Master of Information at Dalhousie University.

**ABIGAIL PATEY,
RESEARCH
COORDINATOR**

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Abigail Patey is the Research Coordinator for the Equity and the concept of school readiness project. Abigail has a BA (Hons) in Child and Youth Study with a minor in psychology and was recently accepted into the Master of Public Administration program at Dalhousie. Her detailed note-taking keeps us all on track.



**ELHAM TAGHAVI
RESEARCH ASSISTANT**

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Elham is one of our amazing research assistants for the Amplifying the Voices of Young Newcomer Children project. She holds both a Bachelor's and a master's degree in Sociology from the University of Tehran in her home country, Iran. After moving to Canada in 2023, she pursued a second Master's degree in Child and Youth Study at Mount Saint Vincent University. Elham's creativity shines through in everything that she does.



**EVELYN EKSTROM
RESEARCH ASSISTANT**

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Evelyn recently completed a practicum with us, and now we are so happy to welcome her back to the team as a research assistant! She has a BA in Child and Youth Studies (concentration) as well as a diploma in Photography and Digital Imaging from Holland College (Thanks for the new team photos, Evelyn!). Her exceptional organization and problem solving skills, and her sunshine personality, helps to keep multiple projects running smoothly.



**SAHAR ATBAEI
RESEARCH ASSISTANT**

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Sahar is another one of our amazing research assistants for the Amplifying the Voices of Young Newcomer Children project. She is currently a Health Promotion student at Dalhousie, we are so happy to have her join the ECCRC!



MANEET MALHI
DIETETIC INTERN

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Maneet joined the ECCRC at the end of April as a Dietetic Intern! She is in her last year of the Applied Human Nutrition Program at MSVU. Maneet is currently working on the CELEBRATE Feeding project, and a huge asset to our team!



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" and also on the "Equity and the concept of school readiness project."



DR. JEANNIE LARSON,
ASSISTANT PROFESSOR,
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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.

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 winter of 2026.

Thank you to our generous funders and supporters:



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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.



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