

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 spring blooms around us, we are excited to share this newsletter update with our partners. This season brings our team renewed energy and reminds us of the growth and potential that come from working together to advance equity in early childhood.

In recent months, our team has been actively advancing our collaborative and funded research projects, while also developing proposals to shape future work. While securing longer term funding is never straight-forward, we remain optimistic and encouraged by the strong partnerships and shared vision of our partners.

We are also taking time to share our research process on social media - offering a behind-the-scenes look at how (and why) we design and conduct our research with our goal to inform policy and practice.

We invite you to explore the project updates below. As always, feel free to reach out with any questions - or if you have research ideas you would like to explore together.

Wishing you all the best,
Jessie-Lee



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



Image description: In celebration of Caritas Day at MSVU today, team volunteered with Chebucto Connections at Spryfield to support the produce packs given out to community members. Team assisted in unloading the food truck, sorting out produce and packing bags for delivery and pickup.



Image description: Team members at the oval skating

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COMMUNITY & PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

ECCRC TEAM



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 our research processes, with our partnerships, and in the creation of knowledge mobilization materials.

[Learn more about EDIA at the ECCRC.](#)

In November, our team had the chance to chat with Adam Braye about gender identity in early childhood education. Adam is an advocate for the LGBTQIA+ community, quality child care, and access to mental health for all. We always enjoy talking with Adam about their personal and professional experience and their vision for the early childhood sector.

Here are a couple of examples of additional EDIA activities:

- We watched a documentary, *Families Embracing Anti-Bias Values*, from the Anti-Bias Leaders ECE organization. The film follows several families who parent through an anti-bias lens, from their home to community and child care settings to explore the experiences of teaching and raising children through a social justice perspective.
<https://www.antibiasleadersece.com/families-embracing-anti-bias-values/>
- We visited the Black Cultural Centre for Nova Scotia to learn about Black and African Nova Scotian history.
<https://bccns.com/>
- We participated in a Blanket Exercise co-led by Theresa Meuse (MSVU Special Advisor on Indigenous Affairs), along with faculty from the MSVU Child & Youth Study Department and educators from the MSVU Child Study Centre.

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



Image: ECCRC guiding pillars

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.



Image above: A collage of the team members at the Black Cultural Centre in Cherrybrook, Nova Scotia.

PROJECT UPDATES

Our work focused on 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 update, the Numeracy and Literacy team has completed and shared a graphic report of the [findings](#) from Phase 2 of the study. The report features many wonderful photographs and stories from early childhood educators and early elementary educators that depict numeracy and literacy learning through play and is available in [English](#) and [French](#). The team has also shared these results with the Education Innovation Programs and Services branch at the Nova Scotia Department of Education through a presentation.

Moving forward, we are preparing a traveling panel exhibit that features photos from both Phase 1 and Phase 2 to share these findings with the community.



Image: A visual presentation of children engaging in numeracy through play.

Nurturing Mi'kmaw children's social and emotional growth

We have started a new project in partnership with the Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey (MK) that focuses on supporting Mi'kmaw children's social and emotional growth. Over the past year, we have been building a relationship with the MK team to structure a research project that aligns with their goals.

Recently, we met with an early years program in a mainland Mi'kmaw community who are interested to participate in sessions for parents that offer strategies to support their children's social and emotional well-being. These sessions are adaptations of the [Positive Solutions for Families](#) coffee chat kits from the Nova Scotia Intervention Early Childhood Development Services. These sessions will be adapted with community to reflect Mi'kmaw culture and language. Stay tuned!



Image description: Some resource activity for supporting children's emotions from the NSEDCIS 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
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 Team has been busy writing and publishing papers on our results from the CELEBRATE Feeding project. We have two papers under review and one almost ready to submit. We have also applied to two large grants to scale up the project, and have launched a Delphi study to refine our CELEBRATE Feeding Approach. We hope this will help us focus our upcoming work on extending the reach of the CELEBRATE Feeding Approach to early learning and child care programs across the Maritimes. Stay tuned for **an opportunity to participate in an online survey as part of this process.**

We are also excited to share our [resources from CELEBRATE Feeding](#) were included in the recently updated Nova Scotia standards for [Food and Nutrition in Early Learning and Child Care Programs](#). 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

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. Since the last issue of this newsletter, a [Community Report](#) created in collaboration with participants, community researchers, and community members has been published. On November 21st, 2024, a community event was held at the Delmore 'Buddy' Daye Learning Institute.

To further mobilize the research and the stories of participants, we led two [virtual presentations](#). One with the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and the other with Administrators and Leaders of early learning and child care programs. We also presented at the [Inter-University Research Network](#) symposium.

As the project comes to a close, we have submitted a manuscript to a journal and hope to share the published article soon, keep up to date on this project via our [website](#) and socials for more information. We continue to gather reflections from all involved in this project on ways to further understand the impact of Black and African Nova Scotian educators, children, and families.

In closing, our team would like to express our sincere appreciation to the participants of this study who entrusted our team to share their stories and experiences through research. Our team is thankful to participants who joined us in the evenings, after their long work days, yet eager to ensure their stories were told. This study could not have been possible without the participation of each and every one of them. We would also like to extend our deepest gratitude to our community researchers and community partners. Their unwavering commitment to this work ensured the research team kept community at the core of every phase of this project.

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



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

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.

We completed several case studies around Nova Scotia to help us better understand how Pyramid Model programs are supporting the social and emotional development of children.

Stay tuned for our 2024-25 Pyramid Model Executive Summary Report coming summer 2025!

Through outdoor play

MOBILIZING OUTDOOR PLAY THROUGH PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH

Since our last newsletter our team has been working on writing papers for publication. In April we submitted a paper for publication based on the data from our first project, *Mobilizing Outdoor Play*. Another paper based on this data is currently being drafted by the team and will be submitted for publication soon. The data from our second project, *Enhancing children's voices and play outdoors across early learning and child care settings*, has been analyzed and a paper focused on children's engagement with the natural world in their outdoor settings (i.e., playground or a forest space) is being drafted. We have also been brainstorming knowledge mobilization activities to share results with our participants. More to come on this!



CHILD WELL-BEING

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

Since our last issue we have engaged in two focus groups with knowledgeable individuals, completing the first phase of the qualitative inquiry. We engaged community experts in two focus group sessions to explore their perspective on child development and measurement for African Nova Scotian and newcomer children.

We are currently in the phase of the coding themes from the two focus groups and have an in-person meeting with the two groups to share back on what was discussed.

We have received approval to include educators from the teaching board and will hold a focus group discussions with educators that meet the criteria soon. With this group we will continue to explore perspectives regarding the expectations of child development and school transition as they relate to children from equity-deserving groups. (Below is the call for participants. Email our Research Coordinator at Nahal.Fakhari@msvu.ca if you are interested in the study).

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 are hoping to have several family visits with children and their families 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.

The broader team, which consists of people from universities across Atlantic Canada, community organizations, and the government, has met several times to finalize the process for conducting this research.

We will be submitting the ethics application this spring and begin recruiting families and their children in the fall.

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 project that has been made possible with support from the Margaret and Wallace McCain Family Foundation.



Image above: Team members engaged in initial grouping codes to make meaning out of it



Call for Participants

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.

We are seeking knowledgeable individuals with experience in child development who are currently teaching in a Grade Primary classroom.

Deadline to express interest: XXX

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



Call for Participants

Eligibility criteria:

- Currently teaching in a Grade Primary classroom in a Nova Scotia public school
- Have used the Early Development Instrument (EDI) to assess their primary students at any time in the past 6 years
- Have experience teaching newcomer and African Nova Scotia students.

Selected knowledgeable individuals will be asked to take part in two focus group interviews (2 hours each) over a span of six to eight weeks, and a third in late 2025. In thanks for your time, you will receive a \$50 gift card at the end of each focus group session (possibly \$150 overall).

Deadline to express interest: XXX

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

Image above: Call for educators

KNOWLEDGE MOBILIZATION

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

PROMOTING EQUITY IN EARLY CHILDHOOD HUB: AN ATLANTIC CANADIAN PARTNERSHIP



As we shared from our last issue, our partnership work with folks across Atlantic Canada to learn more about equity in early childhood settings is still ongoing.

The 2-part virtual seminar series we organized is uploaded on our YouTube page. 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.

We had 5 storytellers for [part one](#) of the storytelling series on October 30th, 2024 and 4 storytellers for [part two](#) on November 27th, 2024. Click [here](#) to check out which storytellers represented the four Atlantic province.

We hope to organize more storytelling series this year so watch our social media platforms to know more about it.



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

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](#)

MOBILIZING RESEARCH THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA TO SUPPORT FAMILIES WITH YOUNG CHILDREN

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. We are continuing to finalize our research publications from this work.

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

Community & Partner Spotlight

Community Spotlight:

Halifax Farsi School

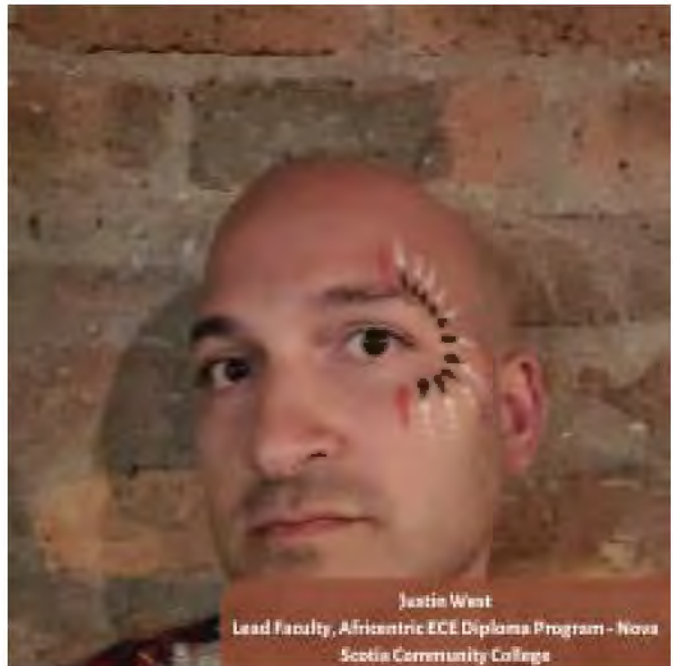
In this issue we would like to thank the [Halifax Farsi School](#) for partnering with us for the project titled "Community Evaluation of Halifax Farsi School." Halifax Farsi School, which is housed within the [Iranian Cultural Society of Nova Scotia](#) (ICSNS), is a non-profit organization that supports Farsi-speaking children in learning Persian and their cultural practices. ICSNS's mission is to promote the Iranian culture and support the Iranian-Canadian community in Nova Scotia.

Partner Spotlight:

Justin West



Image description: Children from the Farsi school participating in a research project.



Justin West
Lead Faculty, Africentric ECE Diploma Program - Nova
Scotia Community College

In this edition, we are excited to feature Justin West. Justin is the lead faculty of the Africentric Early Childhood Education program at Nova Scotia Community College. Justin has worked in the field of early childhood education for over 20 years as an inclusion coordinator, art enhancement coordinator, and practicum advisor. Justin has also co-written many articles, which can be found in *The Power of Emergent Curriculum* and in the *Outdoor Play Magazine*. Justin is the recipient of various awards including the Early Childhood Excellence in Learning and Care Award, the Edward Jost Legacy Award and the Prime Minister Award of Excellence for his contribution to the field.

Justin has been a vital resource to the ECCRC, contributing to our research projects on various levels. For example, Justin was recently involved as a community researcher on our project *Applying Africentric Principles and Pedagogies in Early Learning*. This project began with his interest, along with other instructors, in learning from the experiences of students that graduated from the Africentric Early Childhood Education program. We look forward to continuing to collaborate with Justin and exploring additional research questions together.

We have rolled out a new series titled Research Highlights where we share a breakdown of our research process on our social media platforms.

Follow us on our socials for more updates



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



NAHAL FAKHARI,
RESEARCH
COORDINATOR

Nahal.Fakhari@msvu.ca

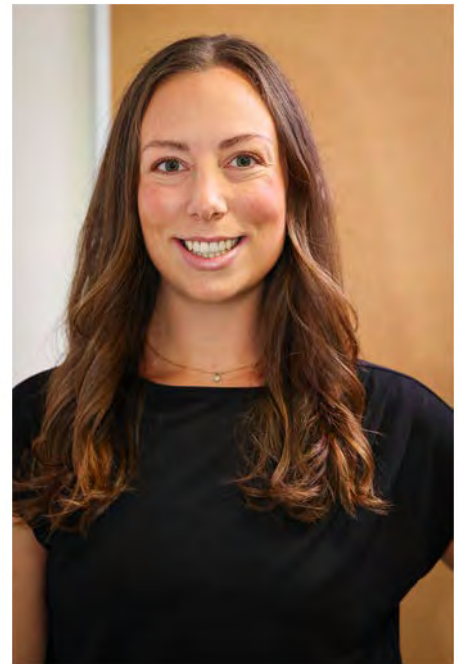
Nahal is the Research Coordinator for the project



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,
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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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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 the Africentric project at the ECCRC.



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. Randi has recently finished her first year in the Master of Information program at Dalhousie University.



HANNAH COSMAN,
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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



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

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.



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

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!



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

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, she worked with high school students (grades 9-12) as a support worker.

through research or on-the-floor practices.

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."



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 fall of 2025.

Thank you to our generous funders and supporters:



CANADA RESEARCH CHAIRS
CHAIRES DE RECHERCHE DU CANADA



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



Public Health
Agency of Canada

Agence de la santé
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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, 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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