



AECEA

Association of Early Childhood Educators of Alberta



2025 ESSENTIAL PIECES CONFERENCE

bright futures

strong roots

leading by purpose



teaching with care



VIRTUAL CONFERENCE
MAY 23 - 24, 2025
[AECEA.CA/2025-CONFERENCE](https://aecea.ca/2025-conference)

2025 AECEA ESSENTIAL PIECES CONFERENCE



WELCOME MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Welcome to AECEA's 2025 Essential Pieces Virtual Conference, a celebration of our sector's *bright futures, strong roots*, and the educators who continue to *lead with purpose and teach with care*.

As we gather from across Alberta and beyond, we honour the deep roots of early learning and child care that is grounded in relationships, community, and the wisdom of those who came before us. At the same time, we look ahead with hope and determination, knowing that the future of our profession can be as vibrant as the children we serve.

Whether you're just beginning your journey or have been walking this path for years, I want to congratulate you on choosing early learning and child care as your professional pathway. The work you do is absolutely vital – shaping the foundation of children's lives, making a lasting impact on families and communities, and quite literally building brains.

At AECEA, we are proud to stand beside you. Our mission is to support and strengthen the early childhood educator profession by amplifying your voices and advocating for policies that reflect the importance of your work. We believe in a future where ECEs are valued, well-supported, and empowered to lead with purpose and teach with care.

This year's conference is both a celebration and a call to action. A celebration of our strong roots – the relationships, knowledge, and values that ground our profession – and a call to keep moving forward with clarity and courage. It's about recognizing the incredible leadership that lives in our programs, homes, centres, and communities, and shining a light on the care, creativity, and commitment that define our work. As professionals, your voice matters. Your growth matters. And your leadership is essential to shaping a system that truly honours the children, families, and communities we serve.

As you engage in this conference, I invite you to reflect, connect, and be inspired. Let's keep showing up with confidence, compassion, and a shared commitment to a bright future for early learning and child care in Alberta.

With gratitude,
Mary-Frances Smith
Executive Director, AECEA

2025 AECEA ESSENTIAL PIECES CONFERENCE



Welcome to AECEA's Essential Pieces Virtual Conference where we highlight the essential role educators play in shaping the future, featuring powerful keynote speakers, engaging workshops, and opportunities to celebrate our shared commitment to children and families! The theme for this year's conference is **Bright Futures; Strong Roots; Leading by Purpose; Teaching with Care.**

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SESSION INFORMATION

All sessions will be recorded, and you will have 90 days following the conference to watch the recordings.

As you navigate through the many enriching sessions, we've made it easy to find the ones that best suit your interests and professional goals. Below, you'll find a breakdown of the key components for each session, ensuring that you can easily select the sessions that matter most to you.

SESSION THEMES

Each session will be based on one or more of the following four central themes:

Bright Futures
Strong Roots
Leading by Purpose
Teaching with Care

SESSION FORMAT

Each session is categorized by its format. You'll find a clear indication of whether the session is a **workshop, presentation, lecture, keynote**, or an **interactive** session.

TARGET AUDIENCE

To make it easier for you to identify sessions relevant to your role and professional needs, each session will specify its target audience(s), including:

- Educators;
- Administrators;
- Coaches or Mentors;
- Family Day Home Agencies;
- Leadership/Directors;
- Owner/Operators;
- Policymakers;
- Researchers;
- Inclusion Consultants

AFFILIATION ICONS

Some sessions feature special icons to highlight the affiliations of the presenters.



These sessions are led by presenters who are affiliate partners with AECEA.



These sessions are presented by Canada-based presenters.



Alberta Early Learning and Care Leaders' Caucus (ALC) Co-Hosting Leaders Day at Essential Pieces Conference

We are excited to announce that the Alberta Early Learning and Care Leaders' Caucus will be co-hosting Leaders' Day at this year's Essential Pieces conference! May 23 will provide a dedicated space for early learning and child care leaders to connect, collaborate, and strengthen their leadership capacity. Through engaging sessions, thoughtful discussions, and networking opportunities, Leaders' Day will empower leaders to navigate challenges and drive positive change in Alberta's early learning and child care sector.

DAY 1
MAY 23

LEADERS' DAY
SHAPING SYSTEMS

9:00 AM - 9:15 AM **WELCOME**

9:15 AM - 10:30 AM **BREAKOUT SESSIONS A**

10:30 AM - 10:45 AM **BREAK**

10:45 AM - 12:00 PM **BREAKOUT SESSIONS A (CONTINUED)**

12:00 PM - 12:45 PM **LUNCH**

12:45 PM - 1:45 PM **PANEL DISCUSSION**

1:45 PM - 2:00 PM **BREAK**

2:00 PM - 3:30 PM **BREAKOUT SESSIONS B**

3:30 PM - 3:45 PM **BREAK**

3:45 PM - 4:30 PM **ENVISIONING THE FUTURE SESSION**

4:30 PM **CLOSING**



DAY 2
MAY 24

EDUCATORS' DAY
SHAPING PRACTICE

9:00 AM - 9:15 AM **WELCOME**

9:15 AM - 9:45 AM **STUDENT SHOWCASE**

9:45 AM - 10:45 AM **KEYNOTE**

10:45 AM - 11:00 AM **BREAK**

11:00 AM - 12:00 PM **BREAKOUT SESSIONS C**

12:00 PM - 12:45 PM **LUNCH**

12:45 PM - 1:45 PM **BREAKOUT SESSIONS D**

1:45 PM - 2:00 PM **BREAK**

2:00 PM - 3:00 PM **BREAKOUT SESSIONS D (CONTINUED)**

3:00 PM - 3:15 PM **BREAK**

3:15 PM - 4:45 PM **BREAKOUT SESSIONS E**

4:45 PM **CLOSING**



9:15 AM - 12:00 PM

BREAKOUT SESSIONS A

SESSION A1

Workshop (2.5 hours)

RESILIENCE FOR CHILDREN, FAMILIES, AND COMMUNITIES

NANCY MANNIX

Resilience can be defined as the ability to respond positively in the face of adversity. The Resilience Scale metaphor, developed by the Harvard Center on the Developing Child, depicts how adversities, positive supports, and acquired skills and abilities interact to influence resilience and impact lifelong physical and mental health outcomes. The Resilience Scale can also be used to clarify the roles of organizations in contributing to resilience, improve referral pathways, and facilitate organizational change management. Alongside data from the Brain Story Certification Course, the Resilience Scale is explored as a framework for identifying community assets to help build community resilience and implement systems change.

Participants will see the application of the Resilience Scale in several contexts and explore the importance of building a strong foundation to ensure bright futures for children and their caregivers, through teaching skills and abilities and providing positive relationships and environments for those skills to grow. Early learnings from work done in Alberta indicate that the Resilience Scale effectively provides foundational knowledge and a common language that are accessible across populations and disciplines, including policy makers, educators, practitioners, and the public.

Target Audience: Educators (Facility-Based, Family Day Home, Out-of-School Care, Preschool); Administrators; Coaches or Mentors; Leadership/Directors; Policymakers; Researchers



strong roots

bright futures

LENA GROW: AN INNOVATIVE EARLY LEARNING PROGRAM

JANELLE WYDEVEN & EMMA MAGUIRE

SESSION A2

Workshop (2 hours)

Many children spend as much as half of their waking hours in child care. Early childhood educators play a vital role in children's development, and professional development on the best way to interact and engage with infants and toddlers to stimulate their language development and brain growth is critical. Through LENA Grow, educators receive regular feedback on talk in their classrooms combined with strengths-based coaching sessions. The coaching sessions provide time for teachers to review the data on the interactive talk environment and then use the data to set goals to integrate higher levels of interactive talk into their everyday activities.

The program draws on LENA's widely validated talk pedometer technology, automatically generating reports that motivate teachers and uniquely describe children's language environments. With 2 years of delivery in Alberta, we are thrilled to share the results and impact of this powerful program. In concert with high impact strategies like The Brain Story, we are creating an innovative environment in our Province. By highlighting the synergy between LENA Grow and Flight, we can further build a strong Early Learning system in Alberta.

Target Audience: Administrators; Family Day Home Agencies, Coaches or Mentors; Leadership/Directors; Policymakers; Researchers; Inclusion Consultants

BREAKOUT SESSIONS A CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE



SESSION A3

Interactive (2.5 hours)

NAVIGATING HIGH STANDARDS AND GRACIOUS FORGIVENESS IN LEADERSHIP

ALICIA FINGAL & LAUNA CLARK

Navigating the Paradox of High Standards and Gracious Forgiveness in Child Care Leadership: Childcare leaders face the challenge of balancing high standards with gracious forgiveness when addressing staffing issues like attendance, motivation, and educational background. High standards ensure quality care and compliance, while forgiveness fosters a supportive environment. This paradox can strain leadership, but when managed effectively, it promotes resilience and growth. This training invites leaders to share strategies to navigate these complexities and foster a culture of accountability and empathy.

Target Audience: Administrators; Family Day Home Agencies, Coaches or Mentors; Leadership/Directors; Owner/Operators; Policymakers



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INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP: EQUITABLE AND RESPONSIVE ENVIRONMENTS
SARAH NYCHKA & KRISTINA PATTERSON

SESSION A4

Workshop (2 hours)

This workshop is designed for childcare directors, leaders, researchers, and policy makers who are committed to creating inclusive environments that support every child's participation and learning.

The workshop will provide an overview of inclusive practices and practical strategies to implement the Pyramid Model (PM) for the Promotion of Social-Emotional Competencies in Infants and Young Children. Participants will further have the opportunity to consider the important elements required for educators to be successful in using these practices, including:

- Time
- Resources
- Professional Learning
- Reflective Practice
- Collaborative Coaching

This workshop will empower leaders to create nurturing environments that celebrate diversity, inclusion, and equitable opportunities for every child.

Target Audience: Administrators; Coaches or Mentors; Leadership/Directors; Owner/Operators; Policymakers; Researchers; Inclusion Consultants





12:45 PM - 1:45 PM

PANEL DISCUSSION

ALBERTA LEADERS CAUCUS OF EARLY LEARNING AND CARE CAUCUS (ALC)

Join us for an engaging panel discussion on the future of early learning and child care (ELCC) in Alberta. This panel will explore the components of system-building, including workforce development, funding, governance, and equitable access. Panelists will share insights on recent policy developments, challenges, and opportunities for collaboration to strengthen Alberta’s ELCC system. This session will provide valuable perspectives for educators, administrators, and advocates working to create a more sustainable and effective ELCC framework. Don’t miss this opportunity to be part of the conversation shaping the future of ELCC in Alberta!

Target Audience: Educators (Facility-Based, Family Day Home, Out-of-School Care, Preschool); Administrators; Coaches or Mentors; Family Day Home Agencies; Leadership/Directors; Owner/Operators; Policymakers; Researchers; Inclusion Consultants; Post-Secondary curriculum creators



2:00 PM - 3:30 PM

BREAKOUT SESSIONS B

bright futures

SESSION B1

Lecture (1.5 hours)

INDOOR LOOSE PARTS PLAY & COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT
OZLEM CANKAYA

Unlike traditional toys, loose parts are not originally intended for play, offering endless opportunities for creativity and exploration. Widely used in early learning environments, loose parts are valued for their potential to foster high-quality play and support cognitive growth. The session will begin with an overview of the historical foundations of loose parts play (LPP) and a review of current research on how loose parts have been integrated into early learning environments and their role in supporting exploration and learning. Building on this foundation, the session will present findings from a study involving 61 children aged 3 to 6 years. The study used an experimental design to examine children's play duration, engagement, and play types with loose parts compared to limited-purpose toys (e.g., percussion instruments). Results were analyzed in relation to cognitive functioning, as well as variables such as executive function, age, gender, parental education, and home learning environments. We will address two key questions: How do children's play duration, engagement, and types differ when using loose parts versus other toys? What factors influence children's engagement with loose parts? The session will conclude with a detailed discussion of four dimensions of children's interactions with loose parts" materials, space, relationships, and time" that create environments conducive to meaningful play experiences.

Target Audience: Preschool Educators; Coaches or Mentors; Leadership/Directors; Policymakers; Researchers



BREAKOUT SESSIONS B CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE



strong roots

STORYING CARE PRACTICES

JENNIFER SIBBALD & DR. LEE MAKOVICHUK

SESSION B2

Lecture (1.5 hours)

What are the ways we enact care? What can we learn from making care moments visible to ourselves? And others? Using a process of pedagogical documentation, we interpreted possible meanings of everyday storied events, leading us to a new understanding of early childhood pedagogy and curricula. The vivid stories of care make visible everyday moments of being alongside, expressing confidence and trust, giving time, and playful, caring encounters. Seemingly, ordinary moments are (re)vealed as extraordinary caring acts that shape how care is experienced. I feel cared for; I care for others. Through the educators' pedagogical storytelling process, we gained the opportunity to critically examine assumptions and taken-for-granted discourses that operate within the field of early childhood curricula, making space for new and relational understandings of leading teams through a care curriculum. In this presentation, Jennifer Sibbald, MA, and Lee Makovichuk, PhD, share insights gained through engaging a team of invested educators in pedagogical and participatory processes whereby those in practice produce knowledge about their work alongside children and families. The image of engaged and intentional educators is animated through processes that enliven leadership and enhance the continuation of professional identity and growth.

Target Audience: Facility-Based Educators Administrators; Coaches or Mentors; Leadership/Directors



leading by purpose

SESSION B3

Interactive (1.5 hours)

SYSTEMS THINKING IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

RHONDA WEBSTER

This interactive workshop will focus on current Systems Thinking Models and how they can be utilized to address complex challenges ECE leaders and educators experience today. Systems Thinking Models will be taught as a tool to lead ideas, resolve conflicts, and manage change. Through speaker led discussions and participant interaction we will recognize how sustainable solutions are based on values, empathy, and calculated risks. Participants will listen to learn, question to understand, and practise the concepts to incorporate the change they desire in their current ECE Centres.

The workshop will provide an overview, conversation and application of the following:

1. Values Thinking as a Systems Thinking Foundation: Discover and discuss values and their connection to the systems we currently navigate.
2. What is Systems Thinking: Understand the principles of systems thinking and its importance in ECE to address complex challenges and foster collaboration.
3. Identify Systems Thinking Tools: Review the most beneficial tools for ECE educators and leaders.
4. Apply System Thinking in ECE: Review and discuss real-world ECE challenges; analyze these challenges with systems thinking tools.
5. Cultivating a Systems Thinking Mindset: Building resilient ECE systems in daily practice through collaborative planning and reflection.

Target Audience: Educators (Facility-Based, Family Day Home, Out-of-School Care, Preschool); Administrators; Leadership/Directors; Owner/Operators



BREAKOUT SESSIONS B CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE



teaching with care

LOOKING IN A MIRROR: PATTERNS, CYCLES AND BIAS

KERRY DRAKE

SESSION B4

Interactive (1.5 hours)

When it comes to being truly reflective, what is the best way to do it and how? This workshop will focus on reflective practice tools and strategies to help us look in the mirror and uncover some hidden why's. Digging into these areas can be uncomfortable, but that is where the most growth happens. This will be a safe space to begin that journey of meaningful and genuine reflective practice that results in more inclusive spaces. Looking in a Mirror: Patterns, Cycles, and Bias, Oh My! is an interactive workshop designed specifically for early childhood educators who want to explore how unconscious biases, cyclical patterns, and societal influences play a role in their teaching practices and the learning environment. Through reflective exercises, discussions, and case studies, we will unpack how our own implicit biases formed by societal norms and personal experiences can affect how we respond to children, families, and colleagues. We'll also explore the impact of repeating patterns in our approach to discipline, communication, and classroom management.

This workshop aligns with the conference theme of *Teaching with Care* by encouraging educators to reflect on their own biases, patterns, and cycles, fostering a deeper awareness of how these factors influence their teaching and interactions with children. By examining and addressing unconscious biases and harmful cycles, educators can create more intentional, compassionate, and inclusive learning environments. Learners will be able to apply strategies for disrupting harmful cycles and fostering an inclusive, supportive environment for all children. Learners will be able to uncover and identify personal and professional biases that influence your teaching practices.

Target Audience: Educators (Facility-Based, Family Day Home, Out-of-School Care, Preschool); Administrators; Leadership; Directors; Inclusion Consultants



3:45 PM - 4:30 PM

ENVISIONING THE FUTURE: A REFLECTIVE VISUALIZATION OF AN ELCC SYSTEM

MADELINE KLEINFELD

Step into the future of early learning and child care (ELCC) through a guided reflective visualization. In this immersive session, you'll be led through a thoughtful exercise to imagine what a fully realized, equitable, and thriving ELCC system could look like. What does high-quality care feel like for children, families, and educators? How are policies, funding, and workforce support aligned to create a seamless system? This session will help you clarify your vision for ELCC and inspire you to identify actionable steps toward making it a reality.

Target Audience: Educators (Facility-Based, Family Day Home, Out-of-School Care, Preschool); Administrators; Coaches or Mentors; Family Day Home Agencies; Leadership/Directors; Owner/Operators; Policymakers; Researchers; Inclusion Consultants; Post-Secondary curriculum creators





9:15 AM - 9:45 AM

STUDENT SHOWCASE

SHOWCASING FUTURE LEADERS: BACHELOR'S DEGREE RESEARCH WITH AECEA

MACEWAN UNIVERSITY AND MOUNT ROYAL UNIVERSITY DEGREE STUDENTS

Join us as bachelor practicum and capstone students present their research projects conducted in partnership with AECEA. These emerging professionals will share their insights and findings on key issues in early learning and child care (ELCC), highlighting innovative approaches and practical solutions. This session offers a glimpse into the future of ELCC through the lens of the next generation of leaders and researchers. Come support and engage with these inspiring students as they contribute to strengthening Alberta's ELCC sector.

Target Audience: Educators (Facility-Based, Family Day Home, Out-of-School Care, Preschool); Administrators; Coaches or Mentors; Family Day Home Agencies; Leadership/Directors; Owner/Operators; Policymakers; Researchers; Inclusion Consultants; Post-Secondary curriculum creators



9:45 AM - 10:45 AM

KEYNOTE

teaching with care

LOVE BEYOND YOUR BIAS: UNLOCK THE POWER OF LOVE IN HUMAN SERVICE

ALICIA FINGAL

As human service professionals, we dedicate our lives to uplifting others. But have you ever considered the transformative impact of bringing love into your work? Love Beyond Your Bias is an engaging and thought-provoking course designed to challenge conventional ideas about love in professional settings. This session invites you to rethink love, not as a fleeting feeling, but as a deliberate and powerful action that can heal, educate, and inspire. In this interactive training, you'll explore how embracing love as a conscious action can deepen your connections with the humans you work with, enhance your practice, and break down barriers of bias. You'll gain practical tools and insights to foster a more compassionate, inclusive, and supportive environment for those you serve.

Target Audience: Educators(Facility-Based, Family Day Home, Out-of-School Care, Preschool); Coaches or Mentors; Family Day Home Agencies; Leadership/Directors; Owner/Operators; Inclusion Consultants





11:00 AM - 12:00 PM

BREAKOUT SESSIONS C

SESSION C1

Interactive (1 hour)

CHILD RIGHTS AND PRACTICING CRAFTIVISM IN ECE

EMMIE HENDERSON-DEKORT, CAROLYN BJARTVEIT, EMMA DECECCO

The resurgence of traditional crafts on social media is opening opportunities to engage in conversations and advocate for child rights through craftivism (Corbett, 2017), which uses craft-making to address social issues and initiate social and political change. Utilizing a duoethnography research methodology, Bachelor of Child Studies students and professors at Mount Royal University discussed their observations of preschool children's engagement in craftivism to understand how the children came to understand homelessness through craft-making. Media and picture books provoked conversations with the children and increased their awareness of social issues impacting marginalized youth who are often silenced and othered.

Third wave feminist ideas related to craftivism (Chansky, 2010) and Fricker's (2007) epistemic injustice provided a scholarly framework for the project. Advocating for child rights, listening to children and offering creative opportunities for children and adults to partner in inclusive project work supports bright futures and teaching with care as reflected in the conference theme. Through this interactive session (presentation and discussion), the presenters aim to advocate for children's right to explore social issues through play, dialogue, and craftivism and to raise awareness about equity and inclusion of all children.

Target Audience: Educators (Facility-Based, Family Day Home, Out-of-School Care, Preschool), Administrators; Coaches or Mentors; Family Day Home Agencies; Leadership/Directors; Owner/Operators; Policymakers; Researchers; Inclusion Consultants



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OUTDOOR PLAY - LISTENING TO EDUCATORS

CHRISTINA PICKLES

SESSION C2

Workshop (1 hour)

In 2024, this ARCQE project engaged 400 educators and others about their experiences with young children in Alberta early learning and care settings about outdoor play. These conversations highlighted the joy educators and children find outside and educators' real challenges in accessing engaging outdoor play time and spaces. In this session, we will share emerging themes, like weather, responsive environments, and regulatory relationships, along with practical ideas like children's favourite play spaces and educators' most common ask for improving their play space.

Target Audience: Educators (Facility-Based, Family Day Home, Out-of-School Care, Preschool); Administrators; Coaches or Mentors; Family Day Home Agencies; Policymakers; Researchers



BREAKOUT SESSIONS C CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE



SESSION C3

EDUCATOR PERSPECTIVES ON DEATH ED IN ALBERTA

Lecture (1 hour)

DELANEY CARRIERE

Despite the inevitability of death, it remains a sensitive and often avoided topic in early childhood education. This session presents the findings of a research study conducted in late 2024, examining the perspectives of early childhood educators in Alberta on teaching death and dying to preschool-aged children. Using radical constructivism as a conceptual framework, the study explores how educators' personal experiences, cultural backgrounds, and beliefs influence their comfort and willingness to engage in death-related discussions. Participants will learn about the historical and cultural shifts that have shaped death education, the role of early childhood educators in supporting children's understanding of death, and the barriers that impact its inclusion in early learning environments. Insights from this study highlight whether these challenges are unique to Alberta or align with international findings. This session will spark reflection and discussion on how we can better prepare educators to navigate this important aspect of life education, with implications for curriculum design, professional development, and family partnerships.

Target Audience: Educators (Facility-Based, Family Day Home, Out-of-School Care, Preschool); Administrators; Coaches or Mentors; Family Day Home Agencies; Leadership/Directors; Owner/Operators; Researchers; Post-Secondary Curriculum Creators



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CHILDREN'S PEER-PLAY WITH LOOSE PARTS

KEIRSTEN TAYLOR & DR. OZLEM CANKAYA

SESSION C4

Lecture (1 hour)

This session will explore how children interact with loose parts and how these interactions can foster STEM-related behaviours during early childhood. The session will begin with an overview of STEM's significance in early learning, highlighting children's natural tendencies for exploration and problem-solving. Loose parts like sticks and acorns will be showcased as tools that promote creativity and lay a foundation for STEM education. Participants will gain insights from a study that compares preschool-aged children with single-purpose toys (i.e., a Playmobil set) and loose parts during two peer-play sessions. A within-subjects design was used to analyze the relationships between play materials, STEM behaviours, engagement, and social cognition, offering evidence-based findings to enhance understanding of the role of materials in fostering STEM-related explorations. The session aims to inform educators about integrating loose parts into early learning environments. Goals include demonstrating play's connection to STEM and social-cognitive development, sharing study findings on play materials' impact, and offering strategies for implementing loose parts play. This session aligns with the Bright Futures theme, emphasizing the role of high-quality play experiences in enhancing STEM learning and developmental outcomes. Participants will gain practical, evidence-based insights to enrich their practices and support children's academic success.

Target Audience: Educators (Facility-Based, Family Day Home, Out-of-School Care, Preschool); Family Day Home Agencies; Owner/Operators; Researchers





12:45 PM - 3:00 PM

BREAKOUT SESSIONS D

SESSION D1 REIMAGINING OUR IDENTITY

Workshop (2 hours) LISA LALONDE

Fostering a strong professional identity is more critical than ever in a time of significant change within the Early Learning and Care sector. This workshop will explore how cultivating ECE identity can serve as a foundation for creating meaningful and impactful professional learning opportunities. Participants will examine strategies for empowering ECEs to see themselves as professionals, advocates, and innovators in their sector. Drawing on insights from research, the session will examine the following themes:

- The role of identity in shaping professional engagement and retention.
- Strategies for creating inclusive and accessible professional learning experiences that align with ECE values and aspirations.
- The importance of collaborative and community-driven approaches to professional learning.

Through storytelling and active engagement, participants will be encouraged to build reflections and inspiration for their settings. This session addresses the growing need for ECEs to feel valued and supported within their profession. By focusing on identity and professional learning, participants will gain insight into how a sense of belonging and purpose can drive engagement and transformation within the sector.

Target Audience: Preschool Educators; Administrators; Coaches or Mentors; Leadership/Directors; Owner/Operators; Policymakers; Researchers



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LENA GROW | CONVERSATIONAL TURNS + EARLY LITERACY

EMMA MAGUIRE & JANELLE WYDEVEN

SESSION D2

Interactive (2 hours)

Early Talks, a preventative language program at YW Calgary, helps combat language isolation by increasing educators' and caregivers' knowledge and skills. We offer LENA Grow, a program that accelerates child language skills and provides strategies to support child development in early learning environments. The goal of this program is to help early childhood educators make a difference in children's lives through early talk and interaction. YW Calgary's Early Talks team will facilitate this presentation, providing insight into LENA Grow, discussing the strategies used in the program and connecting them to Flight: Alberta's Early Learning and Care Framework.

The presentation will outline effective ways of utilizing the program and framework in practice, delving into methods of practical application to showcase how LENA Grow and Flight can enhance early literacy, dialogic reading and strengthen children's development. This session will begin with an introduction to LENA Grow and its 14 Talking Tips, a series of straightforward strategies to strengthen serve-and-return interactions (conversational turns). It will then segue into the importance of early literacy and dialogic reading, using Scarborough's Reading Rope and the Simple View of Reading. Those who attend the session will be given the opportunity to collaborate and practice planning book-based provocations to scaffold children's learning. They will also be given direct links to LENA's 14 Talking Tips and other resources.

Target Audience: Educators (Facility-Based, Family Day Home, Out-of-School Care, Preschool); Administrators; Coaches or Mentors; Leadership/Directors

BREAKOUT SESSIONS D CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE



SESSION D3

Lecture (1.5 hours)

**GROWING OUR ROOTS:
INDIGENOUS WAYS IN EARLY LEARNING**

LOIS MAPLETHORPE

This session highlights unique Indigenous practices, beliefs, and perspectives around early language and literacy learning in the home, school, and community which can be different from Western, mainstream perspectives. A wider definition of language and literacy skills, beliefs and practices can contribute to more culturally consistent early learning policy, programming, assessment, and pedagogy to reduce cultural dissonance and eventually smooth the transition to starting formal schooling. This wider definition is based on findings from a community-embedded collaborative research project with an Indigenous preschool in Red Deer, AB where parents and educators shared their ideas and experiences. Session participants are encouraged to reflect on their own world view and consider how key aspects of an Indigenous world view may enhance their professional practice in early learning. Building authentic cross-cultural relationships with Indigenous families and communities is an important aspect of our shared journey towards Truth and Reconciliation. Helpful recommendations for early years educators and administrators will be shared to scaffold the authentic incorporation of Indigenous ways of knowing in interactions, activities, materials, and assessment. PowerPoint slides will be shared through lecture and some discussion. Numerous cultural artifacts and Indigenous storybooks will be shared through photos, video-conferencing camera viewing, and full resource references.

Target Audience: Educators (Facility-Based, Family Day Home, Out-of-School Care, Preschool); Administrators; Coaches or Mentors; Family Day Home Agencies; Leadership/Directors; Owner/Operators; Policymakers; Researchers; Inclusion Consultants



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TEACHING WITH SELF-COMPASSION

ALICIA FINGAL

SESSION D4

Interactive (2 hours)

We know that educators are experiencing high amounts of stress. As educators, we are told to take care of ourselves as a solution to the stress. But in reality, WHEN? HOW? When we are with children, which seems like every minute of our workday, and we don't have the time or energy at the end of the day to add more to our to do list. This session addresses the role of self-compassion in the classroom in real time. We will explore strategies and narratives that can be implemented into your daily practice, in the moment while working with children, and how to model self-compassion to children.

Target Audience: Facility-Based Educators; Family Day Home Educators; Out-of-School Care Educators; Preschool Educators





3:15 PM - 4:45 PM

BREAKOUT SESSIONS E

SESSION E1

PRIORITIZING EDUCATOR WELLNESS WITHOUT THE GUILT

Workshop (1.5 hours)

MARCIA NICOLE

As educators, we pour so much of ourselves into others, our students, our classrooms, and our communities that we often forget to care for the one who matters most: ourselves. This 90-minute workshop is designed to help educators prioritize their wellness without guilt, fostering a healthier, more sustainable approach to thriving in this demanding yet rewarding profession.

Together, we'll explore the emotional toll of caregiving and the vital connection between educator well-being and classroom success, backed by research showing that happy educators create happier programs and students. Participants will gain practical, relatable strategies for filling their cups, strategies that go beyond luxury spa days and expensive self-care routines. Learn how small, intentional acts of self-care can have a big impact on your mental, emotional, and physical health, and ultimately, on the children you teach. By the end of this session, educators will walk away with actionable tools to build their resilience, cultivate joy, and embrace the importance of self-care, without the guilt.

Target Audience: Educators (Facility-Based, Family Day Home, Out-of-School Care, Preschool); Coaches or Mentors

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ADVOCATING FOR CITIZENSHIP WITH YOUNG CHILDREN

SESSION E2

BRAHMLEEN MAKKAR, ANNA KASPRICK

Interactive (1.5 hours)

The presenters will lead participants through a series of their real-life experiences and strategies they are incorporating with children and families. They will share their ongoing journey of how they continue to transform the youngest playroom into a place of vitality that highlights the image of the child. The presentation will focus on advocating for citizenship and respecting the children in their care as mighty learners. The presentation will elaborate on the importance on guiding young children with care and intentionality, which plays an essential role in building meaningful foundations for lifelong learning. Participants will leave the session feeling inspired with strategies and ideas that will guide their practices with children through citizenship.

Target Audience: Educators (Facility-Based, Family Day Home, Preschool); Administrators; Coaches or Mentors; Family Day Home Agencies; Leadership/Directors; Owner/Operators; Researchers

BREAKOUT SESSIONS E CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE



SESSION E3

Workshop (1.5 hours)

PLAY-FULL LEADERSHIP AND MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIPS

HEATHER FITZSIMMONS FREY & JAMIE LEACH

This workshop invites participants to explore play-full leadership through several creative provocations that Elm Tree Theatre used to develop The Urban Wildlife Project, and that educators can explore in their classrooms. Rooted in Flight: Alberta's Early Learning and Care Framework, and based on principles of respectful relationships, meaningful materials, abundance, and play-fullness, workshop participants will explore several imaginative and hands-on activities inspired by their own local and familiar urban wildlife. Workshop leaders will share the results of their creative research project (launched in 2019), and will offer prompts, materials and specific activities to experiment with during the workshop. Participants will leave the workshop with skills to lead children and other educators through a play-full and meaning-rich creative process that incorporates dramatic play, investigating loose parts, and co-imagining possibilities. Play-full leaders are also co-imaginings of possibilities. During our debriefing we will discuss leadership responsibilities in these relationships. Slides will introduce theory and research, and will provide examples and provocations. Three prompts will invite participants to work solo and then in groups to explore and co-imagine possibilities. Evidence includes research related to Flight, to Theatre for Early Years, and our own practice-based research.

Target Audience: Facility-Based Educators; Preschool Educators; Coaches or Mentors; Leadership/Directors; Researchers



leading by purpose

teaching with care

NURTURING CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE CARE: THE SPARK MENTORING PROJECT

CAROLE MASSING & MARY LYNNE MATHESON

SESSION E4

Presentation (1.5 hours)

The Spark Mentoring Project: ARCQE has been involved in a mentoring project to support the recently launched SPARK guide to support culturally responsive childcare. This pilot is an action research-based project designed to find effective ways to introduce and implement the principles and strategies put forth in the SPARK guide. Nine Cultural Partners from throughout the province have each worked with one or more childcare centres over a 6-month period. Their work has been supported by an initial orientation, monthly individual meetings with the Project Leaders, and monthly conversations between partners, program leaders, and Project Leaders.

Materials have been developed to meet needs that have emerged throughout the project. In this presentation, several of the Cultural Partners, along with Program Leaders, will share their journey, Insights, and any bumps along the way as they supported culturally responsive practice in their programs. The Project Leaders, Mary Lynne Matheson and Carole Massing, will reflect on what the project has shown about the potential of a mentoring program to support thoughtful and culturally inclusive practices that respond to the uniqueness of individual programs.

Target Audience: Educators (Facility-Based, Family Day Home, Out-of-School Care, Preschool); Administrators; Coaches or Mentors; Family Day Home Agencies; Leadership/Directors; Owner/Operators; Policymakers; Researchers; Inclusion Consultants





Carolyn Bjartveit, PhD, is an Associate Professor in the Department of Child Studies and Social Work Department at Mount Royal University (Alberta, Canada), and Coordinator of the Bachelor of Child Studies degree Program. Her research focuses on human rights, social justice, topics of teaching and learning, and the complex intersections of the self of students and educators with the curriculum in culturally diverse post-secondary classrooms.

Day 2 • Session C1

Dr. Ozlem Cankaya is an Associate Professor in Early Childhood Curriculum Studies at MacEwan University. Before joining MacEwan, she worked as a research scientist at PolicyWise for Children & Families, a not-for-profit organization in Edmonton, Canada. In this role, she contributed to developing policies and practices that affect Alberta's children and families by managing, linking, and analyzing population-level administrative data from multiple ministries. Dr. Cankaya completed her BSc in the Early Childhood Education Program at Middle East Technical University (Ankara, Turkey) and her PhD in the Department of Cognitive Science at Carleton University (Ottawa), where she explored how children learn and play in different cultures.

Day 1 • Session B1
Day 2 • Session C4

Delaney Carriere is a passionate advocate for high-quality early childhood education, with extensive experience in fostering enriching, inclusive, and child-centered learning environments. Dedicated to community improvement and professional development for educators across Alberta, Delaney champions continuous improvement, diversity, and equity in education. She emphasizes innovative, research-based curriculum development and collaborative partnerships with families and the community to nurture holistic child development. Her work reflects a deep commitment to creating supportive and dynamic educational communities where educators' unique backgrounds and learning are embraced as foundational to the early childhood community.

Day 2 • Session C3

Launa Clark is a dedicated Andragogical Director and senior Facilitator with 30 years of experience training people of all ages. Her unique blend of skills and passion empowers her to deliver outstanding results in various curious and learning environments. She has a Bachelor of Professional Arts in Human Services, a Diploma in Early Childhood Development, and Certifications in Workplace Mental Health Leadership and Mindful Self-Compassion. Her journey as a lifelong learner has resulted in additional certification in Creative and Critical Thinking Assessment and as a Neurolinguistic Practitioner. Launa believes in the teaching and healing power of play. Her playful leadership and facilitation style create opportunities for open and honest conversations about hard things. She strives to connect humans to humans and build a respectful curiosity and an inviting space to talk about the wisdom that exists in each person she meets.

Day 1 • Session A3

Emma DeCecco is a Bachelor of Child Studies student and studying at Mount Royal University. She has a background in both Early Learning and Childhood Education and Child and Youth Care Counselling. After working in the youth homeless sector, she has developed a passion for social activism related to destigmatizing marginalized communities through a lens of harm reduction and holistic approaches that advocate and uplift those experiencing social injustice.

Day 2 • Session C1

Kerry Drake - With over 18 years of hands-on experience in early childhood education, Kerry Drake is a distinguished educator and leader. As the founder of KD Talks, Kerry has established herself as a dynamic workshop facilitator and public speaker, sharing her expertise in mentorship, reflective practice, perspective checking, and self-care. She holds a Master of Education in Leadership and Curriculum Design and has been a guiding force in both front-line and post-secondary education. Kerry is a Registered Early Childhood Educator in Ontario and a seasoned college and university professor.



She has mentored and supported over 1500 educators, fostering growth and development in her students and colleagues alike. Inclusion is at the core of Kerry's practice, ensuring that every individual feels valued and respected, and that a sense of belonging is fostered. Kerry believes in the importance of lifelong learning, both professionally and personally, and strives to continuously grow and improve.

Day 1 • Session B4

Alicia Fingal, the human development director for Imagine Institute for Learning, is a dedicated professional, with a heart for nurturing young minds and supporting caregivers, families, and professionals alike. With a degree in Honours Psychology and diploma in Early Childhood Education, Alicia has cultivated a deep understanding in the intricacies of human development and brings both expertise and warmth to her work. She has over 10 years of hands-on experience, working as a Director of a childcare centre mentoring many educators with an unwavering dedication to recognize and ignite their potential. She has a wealth of experience to empower adult professionals to build their capacities, excel in their fields, and foster growth and well-being.

Day 1 • Session A3

Day 2 • Keynote and Session D4

Heather Fitzsimmons Frey, Associate Professor and Chair in Arts and Cultural Management, is a community-engaged researcher focused on youth engagement in the arts and cultural sector. Her methodologies include archival and qualitative research, creative and performance-based inquiry, and performance-based historiography. One current SSHRC and MacEwan funded project is Elm Tree Theatre (elmtree theatre.ca). Elm Tree Theatre creates immersive theatre experiences for early years (ages 1 - 5) audiences, created and dramaturged through *Flight: Alberta's Early Learning and Care Framework*. Her Theatre for Early Years research has been presented at the

ASSITEJ World Congress in Cuba, the WeeFestival in Toronto, and is published in *Critical Stages*, *Performance Matters*, *Theatre Research in Canada*, and in several books including the *Routledge Companion to Drama in Education*. With a heart for creative and interdisciplinary thinking, and for gathering people to reimagine through multiple perspectives, she is committed to creating play-full and meaning-rich co-created experiences for early years audiences and their companions.

Day 2 • Session E3

Emmie Henderson-Dekort is an Assistant Professor in the Bachelor of Child Studies (BCST) degree program. Her research interests and expertise are centered on children and youth rights, participatory action research, and amplifying the voices of young individuals. She is deeply committed to the principles outlined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and incorporates these into her teaching and research activities. Her work emphasizes the importance of educating both practitioners and young individuals about the UNCRC to ensure that children's rights are understood, respected, and implemented in various contexts. In addition to her academic work, Emmie has extensive practical experience working directly with children and youth.

Day 2 • Session C1

Anna Kasprick has worked in the early learning field for twelve years. She has worked alongside children and families as an educator, curriculum facilitator, and acting director. She also facilitated ECDV 0100: Exploring Early Childhood Curriculum for four years, sharing her experiences with educators across Alberta. During her time as a curriculum facilitator, Anna had the opportunity to share her knowledge and experience with Flight Framework with educators and stakeholders across the province. Anna has a passion for high quality early learning experiences for children and families.

Day 2 • Session E2



Madeline Kleinfeld is the Membership and Community Engagement Coordinator at AECEA. She holds a Master's degree in Public Health and Social Policy, where she specialized in factors that influence children's well-being. Her academic background and direct work with children and families as an Education Assistant and Dance Instructor have contributed to her understanding of strong early foundations as a vital piece in shaping thriving communities. Passionate about supporting and empowering educators, she recognizes their essential contributions to this foundation. Through engagement, knowledge-sharing, and meaningful connections, she is dedicated to amplifying educators' voices and strengthening the ELCC sector.

Day 1 • Envisioning the Future Session

Lisa Lalonde, RECE, PhD(candidate) is a professor and coordinator of the Bachelor of Early Learning and Community Development degree at Algonquin College. With over 20 years of experience in early learning, Lisa has contributed to the Reimagine Professional Learning project and is part of the leadership team with the Canadian Centre for Outdoor Play. Her research focuses on the professional identity of early childhood educators, innovative learning models, and fostering meaningful engagement through outdoor play and inclusive practices.

Day 2 • Session D1

Jamie Leach is an assistant professor in the Department of Child and Youth Study at Mount Saint Vincent University in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Her research interests and projects focus on children's relationships with materials (e.g., emotional expression, social interactions) and the ways in which materials invite or constrain connectedness in playful experiences in early childhood education and care (ECEC) environments. She is also interested in participant action research with ECEs to co-create communities of practice that offer authentic and sustainable collaboration. Her other projects

include early learning and care curriculum frameworks are used in ECEC environments and co-creating democratic and immersive theatrical experiences with young children from an ECEC perspective.

Day 2 • Session E3

Emma Maguire earned her Bachelor of Child Studies, with a major in Early Learning and Child Care, from Mount Royal University. Through her leadership practicum, she had the opportunity to facilitate the innovative and research-based LENA program. She started her career at YW Calgary coaching families and educators to increase conversational turns every day! Emma's experience in out-of-school care and child care settings provide her with a unique insight and practical experience in the field of early learning. Empowering and inspiring educators to be their best professional selves is what drives Emma's work as Early Talks Facilitator and LENA Grow Coach. Emma is proud to be part of creating a strong early learning system in Alberta.

Day 1 • Session A2

Day 2 • Session D2

Brahmleen Makkar is an early childhood educator who has been working with children for 2 years. She is also a researcher who holds a keen interest in literature, art and education. She presented her research in English language in 2019 (India) and in International professional development amidst diverse professions in 2020 (India). She is currently an educator and acting program director at Jasper Place Family Resource Centre. She has also been a part of Flight Video Tour Series (2023). She is quite passionate about working with diverse children and families.

Day 2 • Session E2

Dr. Lee Makovichuk is an Associate Professor (MacEwan's Department of Human Services and Early Learning) and the first author of *Flight: Alberta's Early Learning and Care Framework*. Lee



is passionate about early learning and care curriculum that embraces children's play as a multimodal literacy. Additionally, Lee collaborates with early childhood educators to make meaning of moments of children's play and care.

Day 1 • Session B2

Nancy Mannix is the Chair and Patron of the Palix Foundation, a private foundation whose philanthropy aims to improve the health and wellness outcomes of children and families. The Foundation, through the Alberta Family Wellness Initiative, focuses on aligning science, policy, and practice in areas of brain development and its implications for child development, mental health, addiction, and other diseases and disorders, generating changes at an individual, organizational and systems level. Nancy's work with the Palix Foundation has garnered a number of prestigious awards in the mental health sector. Nancy holds a Bachelor of Arts from the University of San Diego and a Juris Doctor Degree from Seattle University.

Day 1 • Session A1

Lois Maplethorpe has been an early years educator for over 20 years, specializing in early language and literacy learning. Lois is an instructor in the Early Learning program at Red Deer Polytechnic where she strives to build cross-cultural understanding and engagement through allyship.

Day 2 • Session D3

Carole Massing worked in various childcare settings and then taught at MacEwan University, the University of Alberta, and NorQuest College. Her work has focused on ELCC, Interculturalism, and human service administration.

Mary Lynn Matheson taught in the ELCC program at MacEwan University and the Bridging Program for Immigrant Child Care Workers. She was the Education Coordinator at the Intercultural Child and Family Centre and worked as ELCC Faculty Liaison at NorQuest College. She has

worked extensively as a pedagogical mentor for Flight.

They are co-authors of *Introduction to Early Childhood Education and Care: An Intercultural Perspective*. Carole has also co-authored *The Educational Assistant's Guide to Supporting Inclusion in a Diverse Society*.

Day 2 • Session E4

Marcia Nicole is a dedicated Early Childhood Educator with over 20 years of experience in the field. She holds both a Master's and a Bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Education and is a certified OCT. As the founder of *Ispyr to Educate*, Marcia leads with a mission to empower, uplift, and advocate for educators across all stages of their professional journey. Her work spans professional development, mentorship, and coaching, with a focus on inquiry-based and play-based learning. Marcia is also a part-time faculty member in Early Childhood Education, and host of *The Inspiring ECE Podcast*, where she shares actionable strategies and encouragement to reignite the passion within the field.

Day 2 • Session E1

Sarah Nychka has a Bachelor of Arts in Recreation and Leisure Studies (Special Populations) and a Diploma in Early Childhood Care and Education. She has worked with children and families in early learning inclusion programs for over 25 years. Sarah has worked with GRIT in Edmonton, Alberta for the past 11 years in a variety of roles: Developmental Assistant, Inclusive Learning Coach, Intake Coordinator, and currently as the Intake Supervisor for the Inclusive Child Care Program. Sarah's passion for building an inclusive and resilient community is matched by her love of Early Childhood Education and Development. When Sarah is not at work, she enjoys spending time with her family, playing board games, doing puzzles, and birdwatching.

Day 1 • Session A4



Kristina Patterson has completed her BA-Psych and has worked to support children and families in various capacities for the past 20 years. She has spent the last 10 years with GRIT supporting early learning and care centres as a coach, facilitator, and support lead. She is passionate about learning, and seeing people inspired drives her commitment to building educator's confidence and skills. She has 2 young people and a husky puppy who all keep her busy at home. In her spare time, she enjoys playing piano, reading, swimming, downhill skiing, riding her bike, and she has recently added meditation into her self-care routine.

Day 1 • Session A4

Christina Pickles founded Get Outside and Play, which advocates for more outdoor play for children in early learning and care settings, schools and communities. She delivers professional learning to educators, building their knowledge and confidence to support more outdoor play with children. Christina also explores the challenges of outdoor play in relation to early learning and care programs from a systems perspective. She led the creation of the Outdoor Play in the Child Care Settings: Recommendations for Child Care Licensing in Alberta.

Day 2 • Session C2

Jennifer Sibbald, MA is the Manager for Early Learning at MacEwan (ELM). Since 1972, ELM has been a centre of innovation, research and education, providing quality childcare to the university community as well as the broader community. Jennifer recognizes the importance of creating a community of learners by building nurturing relationships with children, families and educators. In this presentation, Jennifer and Lee will share insights gained from documented moments of ELM educators' early learning curriculum with children and families and reveal the complexity of care pedagogies within play, routines, and daily comings and goings of a local university child care program.

Day 1 • Session B2

Keirsten Taylor graduated from MacEwan University with a Bachelor of Science in Honours Psychology, where her passion for children's development and play-based learning developed. At the CanPlay Research Lab, Keirsten was a Research Coordinator, contributing to projects focused on the role of play materials in children's cognitive development and STEM explorations.

Day 2 • Session C4

Rhonda Webster is an organizational consultant who has provided small and medium-sized enterprises with financial management and systems development for over 25 years. She has designed and facilitated hundreds of systems to help businesses discover, create, and execute their strategic plans. She works to analyze internal operations to improve business optimization. In the Fall of 2025, she will be a graduate student attending the University of Victoria to pursue her MBA in Sustainable Innovation. Here she will continue to research and develop sustainable solutions co-existing within a collaborative human-centred environment.

Day 1 • Session B3

Janelle Wydeven earned her Bachelor of Linguistics: Speech and Language Science from Brock University, as well as a Master of Education in School, Family and Community Partnerships from the University of Calgary. She has worked with children and families in a variety of settings, including the Calgary Board of Education and Calgary Reads. In 2020, Janelle added LENA Start to her portfolio, where she began to deliver the innovative and research-based LENA program to families. In 2023, she started her career at YW Calgary supporting families, facilitating community partnerships, and continuing to establish LENA in Calgary. Janelle is passionate about creating a strong early learning system through scaling evidence informed practices in Alberta.

Day 1 • Session A2

Day 2 • Session D2

2025 AECEA ESSENTIAL PIECES CONFERENCE



REGISTRATION INFORMATION

CONFERENCE RATES

All prices include GST

Ticket Type	1 Day	Both Days
AECEA Professional Members	\$94.50*	\$189.00*
Non-Members	\$120.75	\$241.50
Students	\$78.75	\$157.50

* One conference registration at this rate per individual professional membership

Not an AECEA Professional Member? Become a member today and be eligible for the discounted rate. For more information and to purchase a membership, [click here](#).

REGISTRATION

Registration deadline: May 16, 2025

To complete registration, [click here](#). Once payments are received a receipt will be issued and emailed to the payee. Please ensure current email information is included when registering.

Contact info@aecea.ca with any questions you may have.

CANCELLATION AND REFUND POLICY

All cancellation requests must be received by May 19, 2025, to receive a partial refund.

No refunds will be made for requests received after May 19, 2025. Refunds are subject to a 50% cancellation fee. Refunds will be issued in the same form payment was made. Please allow up to four weeks for processing.

2025 AECEA ESSENTIAL PIECES CONFERENCE



THANK YOU

A conference like this does not happen without the hard work of a group of dedicated volunteers. The Association of Early Childhood Educators of Alberta would like to thank all the following volunteers on the AECEA conference committee:

Shirley Rempel

AECEA Board & Family Dayhome Provider

Stephanie Short

AECEA Board & Stepping Stones Daycare Society

Kathryn Cooper

AECEA Board & University Child Care Centre Society (UCCCS)



Alberta Early Learning and Care Leaders' Caucus (ALC)

The Alberta Early Learning and Care Leaders' Caucus (ALC) is a project funded by and supported through the Canadian Child Care Federation to help inform public policy discussions in the field of early learning and care. The ALC comprises a knowledgeable group of leaders that convene with an intent to think through strategies, inform and influence how Early Learning and Care is funded, delivered and supported in Alberta. The ALC recognizes that a well-educated and well-supported early learning and child care workforce is the foundation for high-quality child care that fosters children's learning experiences and meets families' needs.

[\(Learn more\)](#)



Canadian Child Care Federation (CCCCF)

The Canadian Child Care Federation (CCCCF) believes that high-quality child care is everyone's responsibility and essential for building a better Canada. Well-educated child care professionals are motivated to deliver quality early learning and child care with passion, helping to give every child a strong start. CCCC is the national community for early learning and child care (ELCC) professionals and practitioners from coast to coast to coast. It amplifies the deep passion, experience, and expertise within the ELCC sector, giving voice to the issues that matter most. CCCC also provides space for excellent research in policy and practice to better inform service development and delivery. As a committed and passionate force for positive change, CCCC leads on key issues impacting the sector – knowing that what is explored, shared, and acted upon in this community has the power to change lives. AECEA is a proud affiliate of CCCC.

[\(Learn more\)](#)



Mount Royal University

With a progressive approach to studies that focus on children and youth, Mount Royal University's distinctive program emphasizes experiential learning in early learning and child and youth care. The program provides a theoretical foundation and valuable hands-on learning opportunities in and outside the classroom. Going beyond traditional program offerings, the Bachelor of Child Studies focuses on creating experienced, well-rounded graduates who are prepared to become strong advocates for children, youth and families or pursue further education at a graduate school level. Mount Royal University is proud to deliver the only Bachelor of Child Studies degree in Western Canada.

[\(Learn more\)](#)



GRIT

Dedicated to paving inclusive pathways for children with disabilities since 1982. GRIT has been a leader in inclusive and equitable childcare practices for children with disabilities and their families for over 40 years. As Canada's hub for inclusive early child care and education, GRIT's professional knowledge is informed by research and industry best practices to achieve the highest possible outcomes for children, families, educators and community partners. GRIT early learning providers work directly with families to leverage their already-established knowledge and strengths. Our families are the heart of our educational team, and GRIT knows that families are the best advocates for their children's needs. Inclusion is not one-size-fits-all, and it looks different for every family we serve. GRIT programs enable children with disabilities and their families to live their fullest lives and meaningfully participate in everyday activities and routines. We provide this support through our programs for families and educators.

[\(Learn more\)](#)