

A photograph of two children standing in a puddle. The child on the left is wearing a red jacket with white polka dots and red rain boots. The child on the right is wearing dark pants and blue rain boots. The puddle reflects the sky and the children's boots.

ROOTED IN NATURE: EXPLORING OUTDOOR PLAY AND OUR CONNECTION TO THE LAND

2026



Children
THE HEART OF THE MATTER

CONFERENCE PROGRAM

childcareoptions.ca



CONFERENCE OVERVIEW

FRIDAY, JANUARY 30

- 6:00 PM **DOORS OPEN**
Welcome reception
Registration table and Marketplace opens
- 7:00 PM **TRADITIONAL WELCOME**
with Xwopokton, Chief Harley Chappell,
elected Chief of Semiahmoo First Nation
- KEYNOTE**
Embracing Uncertainty and Making
Friends with Outdoor Risky Play
with Dr. Mariana Brussoni
- 9:30 PM **BOOK SIGNING**
with Dr. Mariana Brussoni
- 10:00 PM **MARKETPLACE CLOSES**



SATURDAY, JANUARY 31

- 7:00 AM **DOORS OPEN**
Registration table and
Marketplace opens
- 8:00 AM **TRADITIONAL WELCOME**
Lekeyten & Sqwayeten Cheryl Gabriel,
Elders from Kwantlen First Nation
- PANEL PRESENTATION**
Multiple Perspectives on Outdoor Play
- 10:15 AM **MORNING BREAK**
- 10:45 AM **AM SESSION WORKSHOPS**
- 12:45 PM **LUNCH BREAK**
DOOR PRIZE DRAWS
- 1:45 PM **KEYNOTE**
Land as Relative: Coast Salish Teach-
ings on the Connection, Value, and
Sacred Responsibility to Land
with Len Pierre
- Marketplace closes**
- 4:00 PM **CONFERENCE ENDS**

We are grateful to the ECE Professional Development Bursary Fund for helping to reduce the registration fees to participants of this year's conference. Without this funding the cost to attend would be \$160.00.

This initiative is funded through the Canada-British Columbia Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) Agreement between the Government of Canada and the Province of British Columbia, in partnership with the Westcoast Family Centres (Westcoast), the agency responsible for administering the funds.



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This course is based on the principles of *Discipline Without Damage*, the best-selling book by Dr Vanessa Lapointe. Dr Vanessa is also the author of the IBPA Benjamin Franklin Silver Award winning book, *Parenting Right From The Start*.

Visit www.drvanessalapointe.com to learn more!



Books available on Amazon or at fine booksellers

FOR THOSE ATTENDING IN-PERSON...

CERTIFICATES

For each keynote and workshop you attend, certificates will be available for download from the conference portal by February 2, 2026. You must complete an evaluation for each session before the certificates will be available to download.

SELFIE STATION

The selfie station is back! Be sure to drop in for fun with your colleagues and new friends! Take a photo and post it to Instagram or Facebook using the hashtag **#CHOM2026** to be entered to win a door prize!

WELCOME RECEPTION

Friday evening will feature light refreshments and a chance to catch up with friends and colleagues.

This is also a great time to visit vendors in the Marketplace!

VISIT THE MARKETPLACE

Check out the latest toys, equipment and materials available for the early care and learning field, as well as local community resources, in our Marketplace!

Photographs will be taken during the Children the Heart of the Matter conference. By registering for the conference, you are giving permission that photos containing your image/likeness may be used.

HEARTFELT THANKS TO THIS YEAR'S SPONSORS...

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FRIDAY CONFERENCE WELCOME



CHIEF HARLEY CHAPPELL

"O Siam e Nes Chalacha Siam"

Dear respected friends and relatives,

My traditional name is Xwopokton, English name Harley Chappell. I am the Elected Chief of Semiahmoo First Nation.

As you may or may not know, Surrey resides on the unceded traditional territory of three land based communities; Semiahmoo, Katzie, and Kwantlen, and has the highest Urban Indigenous population in British Columbia.

It's an honour to be asked to welcome participants for the Children the Heart of the Matter conference.

With sincere thanks,

Harley Chappell

Xwopokton, Harley Chappell



We gratefully acknowledge the beautiful artwork panels displayed on stage were created by Gitksan Nation artist Trevor Angus. The panels, titled Killer Whale, reflect the rich cultural traditions of the Gitksan people.



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FRIDAY KEYNOTE

EMBRACING UNCERTAINTY AND MAKING FRIENDS WITH OUTDOOR RISKY PLAY

DR. MARIANA BRUSSONI

Research shows the importance of risky play for children. Providing children with opportunities for independent exploration, testing limits, and expanding boundaries helps promote mental health, physical activity, cognitive development, and independence. Yet many of us struggle with letting children enjoy these freedoms. We'll explore some common myths and current realities and will discover simple ways to move away from saying "No!" and "Be careful!" to creating opportunities for "Yes!".



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Markham

CASE STUDY: Learn why a centre in Markham invested in Outlast Sheds, blocks, tables & more.





**LEKEYTEN &
SQWAYETEN CHERYL GABRIEL**

SATURDAY CONFERENCE WELCOME

We are Lekeyten and Sqwayeten Cheryl Gabriel, Elders from Kwantlen First Nation, residing on McMillan Island across from Fort Langley. We have been together for 50 years and have 13 wonderful grandchildren from our blended family.

During our time as partners, parents, co-workers, grandparents, and Elders in Residence we promised ourselves that we would give back and share our Kwantlen First Nation history.

As Elders we have welcomed many to family gatherings for over 30 years, with drumming and singing to ground everyone to the learning spaces.

We have been part of the education system sharing our responsibility and accountability to Indigenous worldview with our love and respect as Kwantlen First Nation. We remind everyone we share with that we think generationally - reflecting on the knowledge from the previous seven generations as well as considering the seven generations forward to time immemorial. We share our traditional territories to those who live, play, learn and work here.

We are honoured to be asked to welcome everyone.

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CERTIFIED AND
CHILD SAFE

WINTERGREEN

LEARNING MATERIALS

SATURDAY PANEL PRESENTATION

MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES ON OUTDOOR PLAY



**LEN
PIERRE**

**OWNER & CEO
LEN PIERRE CONSULTING**



**SHANNON
COOK**

**PUDDLE SPLASHING FOREST
PRACTITIONER AND ADMINISTRATOR**



**BEVERLIE
DIETZE**

**OUTDOOR PEDAGOGY SPECIALIST
& EDUCATOR**



**RACHEL
RAMSDEN**

**OUTDOOR PLAY RESEARCHER,
STUDENT, & PARENT**



**SHELBY
GORDON**

**PARENT &
OUTDOOR ENTHUSIAST**



**ANGIE
UY**

**CHILD CARE LICENSING
PRACTICE CONSULTANT**



**LISA
KALDENBACH**

**CHILD DEVELOPMENT &
MENTAL HEALTH CLINICIAN**




**MEGAN
ZENI**

**PANEL MODERATOR & OUTDOOR
PLAY RESEARCHER & CONSULTANT**

This panel brings together passionate advocates and experts in outdoor play to highlight the important impact that spending time outdoors has on children's well-being. They aim to emphasize the significance of outdoor experiences, not only for the physical and emotional health of children but also for educators. By exploring the numerous benefits of outdoor play, we hope to share with conference attendees how it positively influences children's behavior, fosters creativity, and supports overall development.





SEE YOU

NEXT YEAR!



Children
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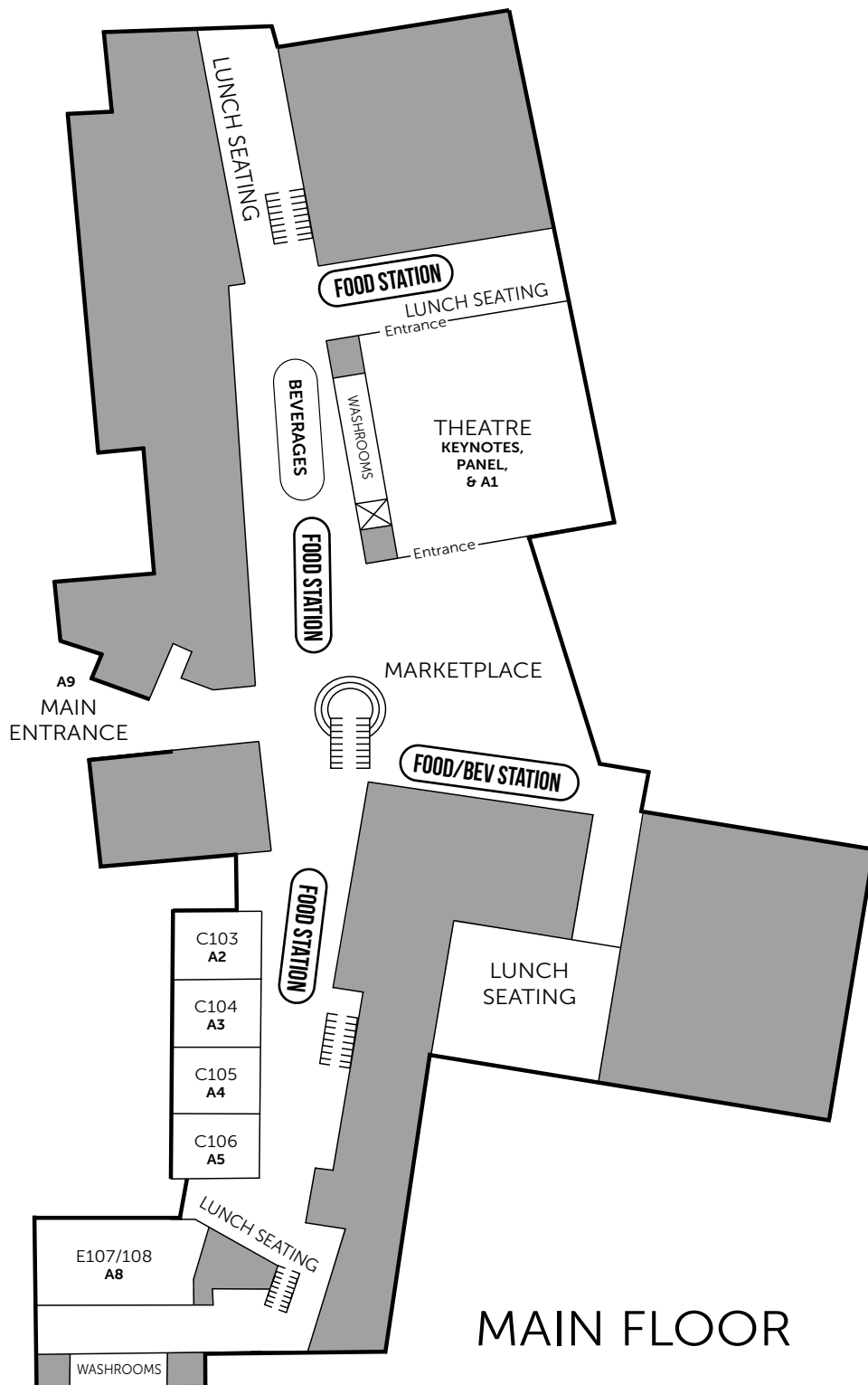
COMMUNITY RESOURCES

- BC Aboriginal Child Care Society (BCACCS)
- BC Cancer Prevention (Sun Safe BC)
- Child Care Options CCRR
- Delta Continuing Education, ECE Program
- Early Childhood Educators of BC (ECEBC)
- Inclusion Langley Society
- Learning Outside Together Program (BCACCS/ECEBC)
- Learn Through Active Play
- Métis Nation BC
- Outdoor Play Canada
- Outside Play UBC Lab
- Reach Child & Youth Development Society
- The Centre for Child Development

VENDORS

- Eleven Twenty One Enterprises
- Forest Learning Tools
- Kinderbooks
- Little Métis Things
- Little Peg Town
- Little Sunshine Felt Stories
- Louise Kool & Galt
- McPar Creations Felt Stories
- Michael Hill Designs
- Natural Pod
- Naturalwood Creations
- Sensory Kidz
- Sticks & Stones
- The Local Bookshelf
- Ubuntu Ogogo Grandmothers to Grandmothers Campaign
- Wintergreen
- Wool Food






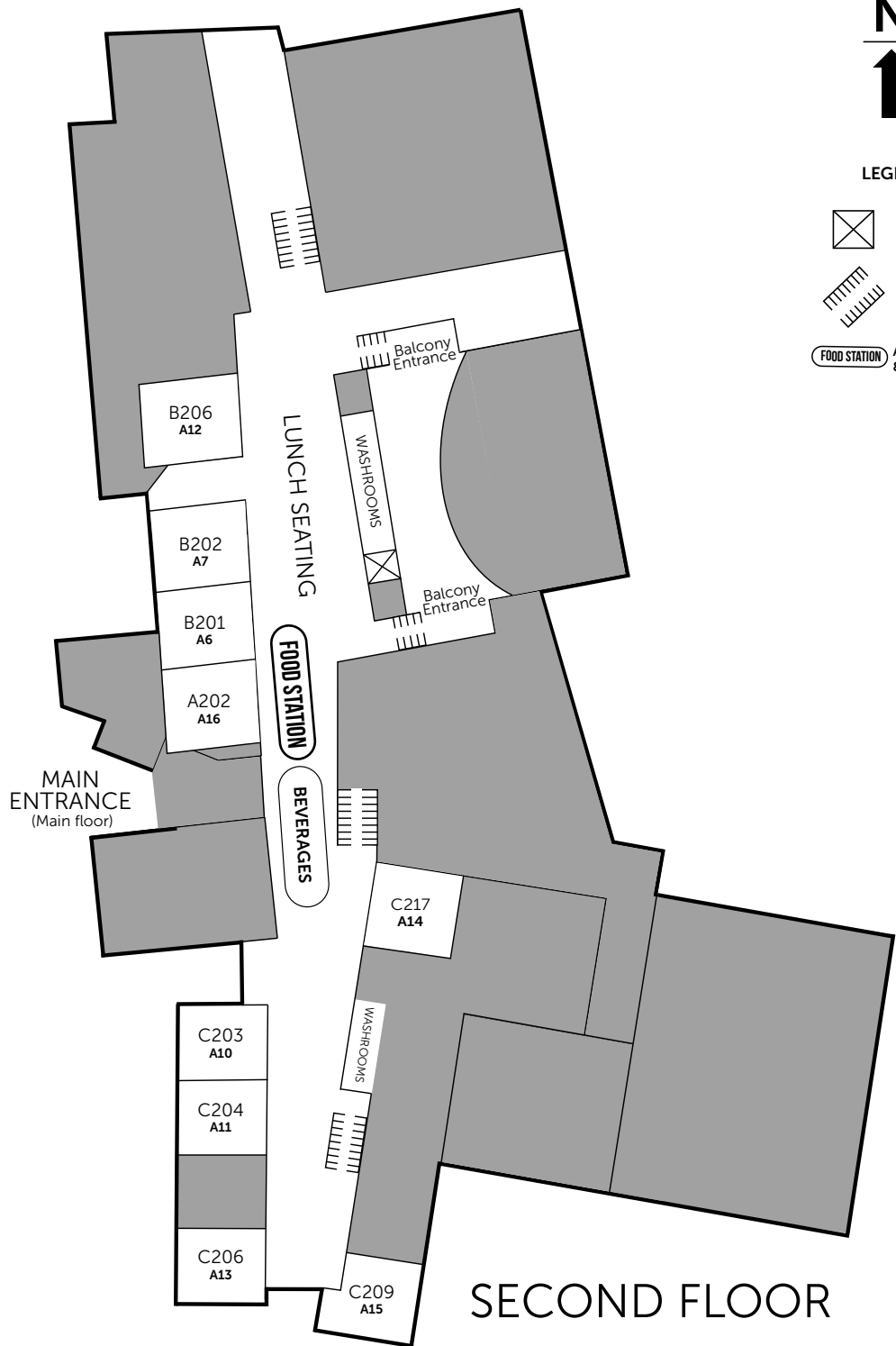


MAIN FLOOR



LEGEND

-  Elevator
-  Stairs
-  **FOOD STATION** AM SNACK & LUNCH PICK UP



SECOND FLOOR

SATURDAY AM WORKSHOP OVERVIEW

AM SESSIONS 10:45 AM - 12:45 PM

A1

Co-Designing Outdoor Play Spaces with a Sense of Curiosity and Wonderment

Dr. Beverlie Dietze

ROOM: Theatre

A2

Experiencing Mathematics Outdoors in the Early Years

Janice Novakowski

ROOM: C103

A3

Adventure Awaits Under the Trees

Nida Fatima Jasani & Jui-Jou Jasmine Chou

ROOM: C104

A4

Literacy and Landscape: Integrating Books and Outdoor Learning in Early Childhood

Annie Montague

ROOM: C105

A5

Creating a Neurodivergent-Inclusive Outdoor Environment

Tricia Edgar

ROOM: C106

A6

Precipitation Education: Tips and Tricks for Embracing the Rain

Karen Begley

ROOM: B201

A7

Rooted Reflections: Integrating Sit Spots into Curricular Learning

Lauren MacLean

ROOM: B202

A8

Exploring Games and Outdoor Activities for Children

Gary Robinson

ROOM: E107/108 Multi-Purpose

A9

Re-Rooted: Finding our Inner-Child and Tapping into Nature-Connectivity

Kylee Cox

ROOM: Meeting at the Main Entrance

A10

Neurodiversity and Nature: Supportive Environments for ADHD

Monica Maddison

ROOM: C203

A11

The Wonder of Play

Angela Horbanuik

ROOM: C204

A12

Walking with the Land through a Métis Lens

Kari-Anne Barr & Cara Koebel

ROOM: B206

A13

Rethinking Risky Play

Megan Zeni

ROOM: C206

A14

Growing Outside the Walls: Holistic Development Through Outdoor Play

Shannon Cook

ROOM: C217

A15

Let Them Roam: Nature's Role in Raising Resilient, Connected Children

Alisha Inch & Victoria Lim

ROOM: C209

A16

Pathways to Outdoor Play in Early Learning and Child Care

Rachel Ramsden

ROOM: A202

SATURDAY AFTERNOON KEYNOTE

LAND AS RELATIVE:
COAST SALISH TEACHINGS ON
THE CONNECTION, VALUE, AND
SACRED RESPONSIBILITY TO LAND

LEN PIERRE

In Coast Salish worldviews, land is not a resource—it is a relative. Rooted in Indigenous knowledge systems and ways of being, this 2-hour session will invite early childhood educators to reimagine outdoor education through a relational lens. Participants will explore how land and territory are foundational to learning, identity, well-being, and belonging for Indigenous children, families, and communities.



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ONLINE CONFERENCE PORTAL

Tips, Tricks, and Helpful Information

- The conference portal can only be accessed by those registered for conference.
- **Only virtual attendees will be able to view the live streams.**
- Participants were sent an email with a password and link to the portal the week of the conference.
- To verify your registration details, check your email for your initial registration confirmation.
- **Please note both in-person and virtual attendees will use the portal to access their certificates.**

Can't find your registration information?

Contact childcareoptions@options.bc.ca or 604-572-8032



CONFERENCE PORTAL LINK

https://events.myconferencesuite.com/CHOM_2026/virtual/login



TO LOG IN, YOU NEED:

1. Your email address
2. Your password or confirmation number (8-digit string of letters and/or numbers)



TROUBLE LOGGING IN?

Contact support@myconferencesuite.com

For more detailed information, as well as a helpful video tutorial, on how to navigate the online conference portal - visit the link below:

<https://www.childcareoptions.ca/children-the-heart-of-the-matter/conference-portal/>

ATTENDING IN-PERSON?

The online conference portal is not just for online participants! In-person conference attendees can engage with the online conference portal in many ways:

- Access your certificate for all sessions attended.
- Connect with other conference attendees and speakers.
 - Use the right hand side bar to post a public message in the Social Feed, and chat with other participants under Users. You can also message any participant from the attendees list.
- View the conference program.
- Visit the sponsor's virtual booths.



GET SOCIAL

Join us on social media!

We'll be using the hashtag **#CHOM2026**. Be sure to use it when you post about conference, and you will be entered to win a prize!

Facebook @childcareoptionsccrr

Instagram @childcareoptions



CONFERENCE EVALUATION

We want to hear from you!

Your opinion is important to us. The conference committee is dedicated to offering innovative and engaging learning opportunities that addresses your needs and interests. We look forward to your valuable feedback and comments as it helps us to plan for future conferences.

Please scan the QR code below or watch for our follow up email with a link for you to give us feedback about your thoughts on the overall conference. The link will also be available on our website after the conference.

Thank you for taking the time to provide your insightful feedback.



**SCAN OUR QR CODE TO
COMPLETE OUR SURVEY!**





CONFERENCE PLANNING

The conference planning committee is comprised of individuals working in the field of early care and learning in our community. Committee members and CCRR staff contribute to the planning and organization of this conference. Through the dedication of the committee, provincial funding, and sponsor support, we are able to keep the conference affordable for our participants.

2026 CONFERENCE CO-CHAIRS

Leah Drayton Surrey School District #36
Michelle Davies Child Care Options CCRR (Options Community Services)

2026 CONFERENCE PLANNING COMMITTEE

Ewa Boss Child Care Options CCRR (Options Community Services)
Karen Came Inclusion Langley Society - Child Development Services
Daljit Dial Child Care Options CCRR (Options Community Services)
Laura Dutton Children's Foundation
Gisele Haines Child Care Options CCRR (Options Community Services)
Krista Harrison Surrey Libraries
Nina Kozawko City of Surrey
Jody Mischuda Ministry of Education and Child Care
Karen Norman Early Childhood Educator (Retired)
Rachel Oulton Child Care Options CCRR (Options Community Services)
Karina Roman Alexandra Neighbourhood House
Violeta Savic Métis Nation BC
Jennifer Street Fraser Health Licensing
Crystal White The Centre for Child Development