CELEBRATING 30 YEARS!

CHILDREN THE HEART OF THE MATTER CONFERENCE

FEBRUARY 26 & 27, 2027

childcareoptions.ca

REGISTRATION

Register online at **childcareoptions.ca**
Click on the registration link on the conference page.

Join us **ONLINE** or **IN-PERSON**, February 26 & 27, 2027 for the 30th Annual Children the Heart of the Matter Conference!

CHOICES...	ONLINE Streamed live Sessions will not be recorded	IN-PERSON Bell Performing Arts Centre 6250 144 St, Surrey, BC
FRIDAY February 26 $20	Includes evening keynote	
SATURDAY February 27 $45	Includes: • Morning keynote • AM workshop - A1 only • PM workshop - P1 only • Afternoon keynote	Includes: • Morning keynote • AM workshop - ANY • PM workshop - ANY • Afternoon keynote
Registration closes:	February 26, 2027 at 4:00 PM PST	February 22, 2027 at 6:00 PM PST

FOOD

Refreshments at the morning break and individually packaged lunches will be provided. Vegetarian, gluten-free, nut-free, and dairy-free options will be available. Please make your own arrangements if you have other dietary restrictions or allergies.

ACCOMMODATIONS

Participants receive discounted rates at the Holiday Inn & Suites Surrey East - Cloverdale (17530 64 Ave) for the nights of February 25, 26, & 27, 2027 or until sold out. These rates are available until January 18, 2027, after which regular rates will apply.

HOTEL	RATES
Holiday Inn Standard Room	$209 +Tax

Book online by clicking the booking link in our online brochure, found at childcareoptions.ca

Discounted rates are only available by booking online, please do not call the hotel to book. Cancellations and changes must also be processed online, through your confirmation email.

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 $225.00.

ECE PD BURSARY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT BURSARY FUND

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.

POLICIES

> Workshop changes are not permitted after registration. Registration is first-come, first-served; we do not maintain waitlists for full sessions.

> A unique email address is required for each registrant. If registering multiple people, make sure you have a different email address for each of them. All confirmations, receipts, and information about the conference are sent by email. Please add childcareoptions@options.bc.ca to your contacts to ensure you don't miss any important correspondence.

> Certificates of attendance will be provided for the completion of each keynote and workshop session attended.

> Photographs will be taken during the Children the Heart of the Matter Conference. By registering for the conference, you are giving permission for photos containing your image/likeness to be used on our website or social media.

CANCELLATIONS

All cancellations are accepted until February 22, 2027 at 6:00 PM.

Cancellations will be subject to a 10% administration fee. Participant substitutions are accepted at no additional cost. We are unable to process registration changes after this date and time.

THE CHILDREN THE HEART OF THE MATTER CONFERENCE COMMITTEE IS HONOURED TO USE OUR CONFERENCE AS A TOOL TO ELEVATE INDIGENOUS WORLDVIEW, ESPECIALLY THAT EVERY CHILD IS A GIFT AND HAS GIFTS TO SHARE WITH US AND OUR COMMUNITY. AS A COLLECTIVE OF EARLY YEARS PROFESSIONALS WITH THE SACRED JOB OF CARING FOR THESE GIFTS, THE CHILDREN - WE ARE GATHERING ON THE TRADITIONAL LANDS OF THE COAST SALISH PEOPLES SITUATED ON THE UNSURRENDERED TERRITORIES OF THE S'ólh Téméxw (STÓ:LŌ), KWANTLEN, sq̓əc̓iy̓aʔɬ təməxʷ (KATZIE) AND SEMIAHMOO FIRST NATIONS AND THE TREATY LANDS OF THE sc̓əwaθenaʔɬ təməxʷ (TSAWWASSEN) AND Á,LEṈENEC ŁTE (W̱SÁNEĆ) FIRST NATIONS. IN ADDITION, WE RECOGNIZE THE FIVE MÉTIS CHARTERED COMMUNITIES WITHIN THE SOUTH FRASER REGION.

ABOUT THE CONFERENCE

We are pleased to offer this year's Children the Heart of the Matter Conference in a flexible hybrid format.

New this year, our Friday evening keynote will be offered exclusively online. Join us from the comfort of your home as we welcome Angela Hanscom, author, pediatric occupational therapist, and founder of TimberNook, for an inspiring and thought-provoking session.

Join us in person or online for a full and enriching day of learning on Saturday. We begin with an uplifting keynote presentation from Coach Carey, followed by a diverse range of workshops that highlight inclusive practices, reflect the BC Early Learning Framework, and explore topics relevant to those in the early care and learning field. We will close the day with award-winning educator and best-selling author Leona Prince.

The Children the Heart of the Matter Conference is designed for all professionals working with young children and their families in early years settings.

OUR MISSION

The Children the Heart of the Matter Conference brings together all those involved in the care and education of young children. Our mission is to raise the awareness and profile of child care and early years programs. Through professional development, networking, and sharing of information and resources between child care professionals, we aim to help provide the best for young children.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CERTIFICATES

Conference attendees will receive certificates for sessions attended.

Friday: 2 hour keynote

Saturday: 6 hours keynotes & workshops
3 hours networking

Total for all sessions: **11 hours**

FOLLOW FOR CONFERENCE UPDATES

Facebook @childcareoptionsccrr
Instagram @childcareoptions
Threads @childcareoptions
Website childcareoptions.ca
Bluesky childcareoptions.bsky.social

FOR THOSE ATTENDING IN-PERSON...

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!

PHOTO BOOTH

Be sure to drop by the photo booth with your colleagues and new friends! Take a photo and post it to social media using the hashtag **#CHOM2027** for a chance to win a great prize!

CONFERENCE OVERVIEW

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 26

7:00 PM Keynote with Angela Hanscom
Now More Than Ever: The Need for Real Play, Connection, and Sensory Experiences

*Online participants have access to the Friday evening keynote, the Saturday morning keynote, the A1/P1 workshop sessions, and the afternoon keynote only.

Sign language interpreters will be available for in-person attendees only for all the Saturday keynotes and workshops held in the theatre.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 27

7:00 AM Registration table and Marketplace open

8:00 AM Keynote with Coach Carey
Confidence from Within

9:30 AM Morning break

10:00 AM AM Session workshops

11:30 AM Lunch break - time to network & shop!

1:00 PM PM Session workshops

2:30 PM Afternoon break
– time to network & shop!

3:15 PM Keynote with Leona Prince
Be a Good Ancestor: What This Means in Early Learning Settings

3:15 PM Marketplace closes

4:45 PM Door prizes & conference ends

FRIDAY KEYNOTE - ONLINE ONLY

Now More Than Ever: The Need for Real Play, Connection, and Sensory Experiences

WITH ANGELA J. HANSCOM

As we continue to decrease children's time and space to move and play outdoors, we are seeing a simultaneous rise in the number of children that are presenting with sensory and motor deficits. At the same time, classroom teachers are observing more and more children having trouble with attention, falling out of their seats in school, increased clumsiness, and even aggressiveness with games like tag on the playground.

So, how can we reverse this alarming trend of sensory and motor issues in children? How can we ensure that children are fully engaging their body, mind, and all of their senses?

Using the same philosophy that lies at the heart of her popular TimberNook program—that nature is the ultimate sensory experience, and that psychological and physical health improves for children when they spend time outside on a regular basis—Angela Hanscom offers several strategies to help children thrive in outdoor environments using a therapeutic approach to nature play.

Angela is a pediatric occupational therapist, founder of TimberNook, and author of Balanced & Barefoot. An internationally recognized speaker, she leads workshops and keynotes for parents, educators, and clinicians worldwide. Named a Glamour "Hometown Hero," Angela has been featured by NPR, TEDx, CBC Radio, The Washington Post, and other major media outlets. She also serves on the board of the International Association of Nature Pedagogy.

Angela lives in New Hampshire with her husband and three children, where TimberNook and Balanced & Barefoot first began..

SATURDAY MORNING KEYNOTE

Confidence from Within

WITH RAIA 'COACH' CAREY

Setting yourself up for success within your career starts with understanding how to find and foster your inner confidence. Whether you are part of a team or leading one, Confidence from Within provides the tools you need to set up healthy boundaries, feel more decisive, collaborate in group settings and effectively achieve goals with your colleagues. With a focus on how to maintain a positive mindset, Confidence from Within will empower you to navigate and leverage your communication skills, finances, and mindset so you can achieve your full potential in and out of the workplace.

Coach Carey is a captivating motivational speaker, inspiring corporate wellness and meditation facilitator, and the EDI lead at Canada's largest children's hospital. In every role, she is dedicated to helping her clients—from individuals to corporations—access their untapped brilliance. Her words and work have reached boardrooms, international stages, and global brands. She has served as a corporate wellness facilitator for notable companies like Google, LinkedIn, H&M, and Royal Bank of Canada. She's spoken to audiences of thousands at the Move the Dial Global Summit and Elevate Technology Festival. And she's landed partnerships with renowned brands like Nike, DoorDash, Crest, and Intel.

With every opportunity, positive impact is Coach Carey's greatest metric for success.

Sign language interpreters will be provided for this session.

SATURDAY AFTERNOON KEYNOTE

Be a Good Ancestor: What This Means in Early Learning Settings

WITH LEONA PRINCE

The relationships children experience in their earliest years shape how they see themselves, others, and the world around them. Drawing on Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing, as well as themes from Be a Good Ancestor, Leona Prince invites participants to reflect on what it means to be a good ancestor through the everyday moments of early learning. Through story, humour, and heartfelt reflection, this closing keynote celebrates the profound impact of early childhood educators and offers an inspiring invitation to nurture belonging, identity, compassion, and hope, for today's children and for generations yet to come.

Leona is a Dakelh author, educator, researcher, and entrepreneur from the Nak'azdli Whut'en and a proud member of the Lake Babine Nation. She is the author of several best-selling, acclaimed children's books and is currently completing a Doctor of Education at UBC Okanagan, where her research focuses on Indigenous family engagement and educational transformation. Leona works nationally with Indigenous Nations, school districts, and organizations to advance land-based learning, reconciliation, and Indigenous student success. Above all, Leona believes that education is an act of relationship. Whether she is writing books, conducting research, teaching, speaking, or working on the land, her goal remains the same: to help carry the voices of those who came before us and create a better path for those yet to come.

Sign language interpreters will be provided for this session.

WORKSHOP OVERVIEW

AM SESSIONS 10:00 - 11:30 AM

A1 Embracing Risky Play
Megan Zeni
Online option available

A2 Accommodating Every Child, Naturally
Angela Horbanuik

A3 Raising Children Who Can Hear "No": Boundaries, Disappointment, and Emotional Strength
Monica Chan

A4 Inclusive Classroom and Child Care Strategies for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children
Charmaine Francis & Shanna O'Coin

A5 The Heart of ECE: Advocating for Ourselves and Our Profession
Ashleigh Davies

A6 Belonging Before Behaviour Rethinking Inclusion and Ableism in Early Childhood
Karen Lesage

A7 Stories Under the Open Sky: Where Adventure Begins
Jui-Jou Jasmine Chou & Nida Fatima

A8 A Bridging of Worlds with a Community Approach
Ana Valle Rivera, Kayla Papalia, & Ilam Muralidharan

A9 What Care Can Do: Hope-FULL within Early Childhood Education
Shelley Cranstone

A10 From Surviving to Reflecting: Reclaiming Connection and Well-Being in ECE (Part 1)
Zahra Rahbari

A11 Reimaging What Early Learning Can Be (Part 1)
Alisha Inch & Victoria Lim

A12 Using Story to Support Empathy, Connection, and Belonging
Leona Prince

PM SESSIONS 1:00 - 2:30 PM

P1 Strategies for Confidence and Growth: Understanding Imposter Syndrome
Raia 'Coach' Carey
Online option available

P2 Home Away from Home: Creating Meaningful Spaces for Children and Educators
Amanda Murphy

P3 How to Talk to Parents about their Child's Behaviour
Malgosia Tomanik

P4 Supporting Neurodivergent Children and their Families
Karen LeSage

P5 The Art of Being a Responsive Educator
Cathy Belgrave

P6 Stories in the Soil: Métis Land and Play
Violeta Savic & Larissa Torisselli Foncesa

P7 Using Story to Support Math in the Early Years
Janice Novakowski

P8 Listening Beyond English: Supporting Home Languages, Identity, and Belonging in Early Learning Programs
Julia Magacho Borsari

P9 Thinking Together: Cultivating Collaborative Reflection
Nicole Clements & Amy Jessa

P10 From Surviving to Reflecting: Reclaiming Connection and Well-Being in ECE (Part 2)
Zahra Rahbari

P11 Reimaging What Early Learning Can Be (Part 2)
Alisha Inch & Victoria Lim

P12 Emotional Regulation through Storytelling
Barbara Schneider & Taryn Graham

A1 Embracing Risky Play

Online option available

This session will provide a conversational space to discuss research supporting risky play in early learning environments, alongside practical implementation strategies for working with children in our care. Three broad topics will be addressed:

1) What is risky play (and how it supports learning with and from the land);

2) Planning for, and implementation of, risky play in early learning environments; and

3) Risky play issues, challenges and recommendations for early learning professionals.

Megan Zeni (she/her)

Dr. Megan Zeni is an early learning and outdoor play and learning consultant and researcher in the province of British Columbia.

Sign language interpreters will be available for this session.

A2 Accommodating Every Child, Naturally

When we truly see every child as a unique being, accommodations aren't something that we "have to" make, they are what we offer naturally. When we decide to move away from the factory-model of child care and towards a child-centred model, we are in fact, accommodating every child. Seeing every child in your program for who they are, supporting them as they are, and engaging them in the ways that best support their learning style, is how we naturally, accommodate. Accommodations for every child. We do this naturally in our own life experiences, yet within the child care environments, this sometimes gets lost. During this workshop, we will uncover ways to accommodate every child within your program, through open discussion and solutions-based ideas.

Angela Horbanuik (she/her)

As a forest and nature school practitioner, a montessori guide, an early childhood educator, and a child-led play practitioner with over 20 years of experience, Angela is passionate about encouraging children. She is the visionary, owner and facilitator at Wonder & Awe Forest Play in Mission.

A3 Raising Children Who Can Hear "No": Boundaries, Disappointment, and Emotional Strength

Children do not become emotionally strong by avoiding disappointment; they become strong by being supported through it. This workshop explores how adults can set limits, hold boundaries, and say "no" without shame, harshness, or power struggles. Participants will learn why children resist limits, why adult guilt can weaken follow-through, and how to respond to tears, anger, negotiation, and protest with both compassion and clarity. Educators will leave with practical language and strategies that help children build trust, resilience, and emotional strength.

Monica Chan (she/her)

Monica is a parent, educator, coach, and storyteller who makes child development practical, compassionate, and usable. Her workshops help caregivers understand children with more clarity, confidence, and connection.

A4 Inclusive Classroom and Child Care Strategies for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children

This workshop explores practical strategies that support the inclusion of Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH) children in ECE settings. Participants will explore approaches that strengthen communication access, participation, peer relationships, and belonging. The session will highlight collaborative, team-based approaches used to support DHH children, including partnerships between child care educators, Early Interventionists (EIs), Sign Language Consultants (SLCs), DHH mentors, and families. Discussion will include how observations are conducted through specialized DHH agencies, how IFSP goals can be coordinated within child care environments, and how interdisciplinary teams can work together to support meaningful participation and development.

Charmaine Francis

Charmaine is a Program Coordinator with the BC Family Hearing Resource Society (BCFHRS) and has been a Speech-Language Pathologist (SLP) for 15 years. She is passionate about fostering inclusive environments where DHH children and their families feel empowered and supported.

Shanna O'Coin

Shanna began her journey with the Deaf community when she took an ASL course in university, so when her third child was born with hearing loss, she was eager to continue learning ASL to support their development. She is the ECE team lead at Communication Stars Specialized Childcare in Surrey.

A5 The Heart of ECE: Advocating for Ourselves and Our Profession

As ECE's we are no strangers to advocating for and supporting children, families, communities, but what about ourselves? This workshop focuses in on the heart of ECE...YOU! We will dive into discussion around burnout, knowing our rights in the workplace, what we want to see as the future of ECE, re-imagining the role of care in our profession to include care for ourselves as educators, and how we can advocate for ourselves as educators.

Ashleigh Davies (she/her)

Ashleigh holds her bachelors of ECCE and currently is the head coordinator for Burnaby Community & Continuing Education's ECE program. Ashleigh is a TEDx speaker and presents around the country on a variety of topics relating to ECE. She can be found online as pedagogyandchill.

A6 Belonging Before Behaviour Rethinking Inclusion and Ableism in Early Childhood

What if we looked beyond behaviour and asked what children are trying to communicate, what they need to feel safe and connected, and how our environments can better support different ways of being? This interactive workshop invites early childhood educators to explore how ableism can show up in everyday expectations, routines, language, and approaches to behaviour. Together, we'll shift from a focus on compliance toward curiosity, connection, and belonging, while exploring practical ways to create more inclusive environments where all children can participate, contribute, and feel valued.

By the end of this workshop, participants will be able to:

1. Recognize ableism in everyday early childhood language, expectations, routines, and practices.
2. Shift the lens on behaviour from compliance and correction toward curiosity, communication, and understanding.
3. Examine how routines, environments, language, and expectations can create barriers to participation and belonging for children with diverse needs and ways of being.
4. Apply practical, inclusion-focused strategies that support different ways of communicating, regulating, participating, and being.

Karen Lesage

Karen has over 30 years experience working with children and families. Throughout her career her focus has been on helping people to connect with themselves and others and find their place in the world. Her goal is to create safe spaces where all people are welcome.

A7 Stories Under the Open Sky: Where Adventure Begins

Calling all outdoor-loving educators! Rooted in the principles of the BC Early Learning Framework, this beginner-friendly workshop views the land as a shared learning space where belonging, inclusion, and curiosity are nurtured. Educators will explore practical ways to prepare for the outdoors, co-create engaging spark moments, and support play through games, storytelling, and inquiries. This experience honours relationships with children, place, and community, emphasizing learning that emerges through connection and reflection.

Jui-Jou Jasmine Chou (she/her)

Jasmine is rooted in forest school philosophy, emergent curriculum, and experiential learning. Outdoors since 2015, she weaves sustainability and play-based relationships through mentorship, guided by deep listening, daily reflection, and builds kinship with families, community and Mother Earth.

Nida Fatima (she/her)

Nida is a passionate early childhood educator with a culturally responsive, holistic approach to outdoor learning. Drawing on lived experience, she creates inclusive spaces for play and connection with land. With 18+ years' experience, she supports educators through collaborative work with ECEBC and the University of Victoria as a facilitator for the Fraser Valley Leaders of Inclusive Child Care Community of Practice.

A8 A Bridging of Worlds with A Community Approach

In this workshop, Kayla shares about the Blossoming Niños philosophy and pedagogical commitment to strengthening community. Ilam shares about the work that was happening with the children and more-than-human worlds before Ana's internship. Ana shares a high-level overview of the inquiry project, including what happened and emerged within the work while resisting deficit narratives.

Kayla and Ilam share about Spill the Tea, a monthly event that brings together children, educators, and families to bridge worlds and thereby co-constructing worlds and world-making within their situated context. Blossoming Niños is offered as an alternative to the current academic and non-academic discourse in early childhood education.

Ana Valle Rivera (she/her)

Ana is a public speaker and the founder of Early Years Thriving. Since 2007, Ana has worked in various capacities in the early years field. Ana has a background in ECE, a Bachelor's in CYC and a Master's of Professional Education in ECE.

Kayla Papalia (she/her)

Kayla is an early childhood educator, a college Instructor, the host of the ECE Honestly podcast, and the owner of Blossoming Niños Multi-Age Child Care program. Kayla has been in the field for over a decade, and she uses her voice and platform to advocate for educators.

Ilam Muralidharan (she/her)

Ilam is an early childhood educator, working in the Tri-Cities for nearly 15 years, a workshop facilitator, and has taught ECE and supervised practicums at post-secondary institutions. Ilam holds a bachelor's degree in ECE and is currently pursuing a Master's of Professional Education at Western University. She is passionate about creating and cultivating spaces for educators to engage in dialogue and reflection about the critical work we do with children and families.

A9 What Care Can Do: Hope-FULL within Early Childhood Education

What is a pedagogy of care? Can caring pedagogies be hope-full within Early Childhood Education? What might it look like to think and move within a pedagogy of care grounded in ethics and equity in our lives with children?

This collaborative interactive workshop will invite educators to investigate and go deeper into what a pedagogy of care is, and what is possible when our practice reflects this approach. Participants will have an opportunity to contemplate, investigate, and build theories together with others about the potential that pedagogy of care can have on what kind of world we can represent and create with children.

Shelley Cranstone (she/her)

Shelley is a community-rooted leader who has dedicated over 28 years to supporting children, families and educators through advocacy, care, education, and relational leadership. She is passionate about creating spaces of belonging, safety, and connection where communities can thrive.

A10 From Surviving to Reflecting: Reclaiming Connection and Well-Being in Early Childhood Education (Part 1)

THIS IS A FULL DAY WORKSHOP, YOU MUST ALSO REGISTER IN P10

Early childhood educators are working in increasingly fast-paced and emotionally demanding environments, often moving through the field in survival mode. This interactive workshop explores how reflective practice can support educator well-being, strengthen relationships, and improve the quality of care experienced by children and families. Through discussion, lived experiences, and practical reflective strategies, participants will explore meaningful ways to reconnect with presence, professional identity, and everyday practice. The workshop will also draw connections to the BC Early Learning Framework and Indigenous perspectives that value relationships, belonging, reflection, and learning through connection with self, others, and the land.

Zahra Rahbari

Zahra, M.Ed. (ECE), is an early childhood educator, mentor, instructor, and founder of Together in Childcare. With over 30 years in the field, her work focuses on reflective practice, educator well-being, meaningful relationships and creating spaces where educators reconnect with themselves..

A11 Reimagining What Early Learning Can Be (Part 1)

THIS IS A FULL DAY WORKSHOP, YOU MUST ALSO REGISTER IN P11

What happens when we begin to question the practices that have long been considered "normal" in early childhood education? In this reflective and thought-provoking workshop, educators will explore the origins and purpose of traditional practices such as circle time, calendar routines, teacher-directed activities, and theme-based curriculum. Together, we will examine whether these approaches truly support children's curiosity, autonomy, play, and deep engagement.

Through discussion, real-life examples, pedagogical narration, and connections to contemporary early learning research and the BC Early Learning Framework, participants will reflect on how responsive, child-led environments can emerge when we move beyond predetermined outcomes.

Alisha Inch

Alisha has been an ECE educator for over 25 years. In 2000, she moved to Romania where she lived and worked with orphaned children for 8 years. After returning to Canada, she began teaching preschool, opened her own center, presents workshops and is a college instructor.

Victoria Lim

Victoria has been dedicated in the early years field for over a decade as an educator, college instructor, and a child care center program director. She has always been passionate about providing a safe environment for children to explore their authentic selves.

A12 Using Story to Support Empathy, Connection, and Belonging

Stories help children discover who they are, understand others, and develop a sense of belonging. In this interactive workshop, Leona explores how children's literature and storytelling can support empathy, emotional well-being, identity, and meaningful relationships in early learning settings. Drawing on Indigenous Storywork principles and practical classroom experiences, participants will leave with simple, engaging strategies to extend stories beyond the page and create learning environments where every child feels seen, valued, and connected.

Leona Prince

See 'Saturday Afternoon Keynote' page for bio.

P1 Strategies for Confidence and Growth: Understanding Imposter Syndrome

This session is a deep dive into the psychology of how imposter syndrome can show up in, and impact, daily life. Whether you're a creative, a team member in a fast-paced work environment, or a high achiever, Coach Carey uses an interactive survey to personalize effective strategies that will combat imposter syndrome. You'll leave with the tools you need to feel confident in your decision-making, less stressed with deadlines and open to taking leaps without the fear of failure.

Raia 'Coach' Carey (she/her)

See 'Saturday Morning Keynote' page for bio.

Sign language interpreters will be provided for this session.

P2 Home Away from Home: Creating Meaningful Spaces for Children and Educators

This topic explores the importance of designing nurturing, safe, and engaging environments that foster learning, comfort, and community for both children and educators. As educators often spend more time in their working environments than in their own homes, creating spaces that are warm, inclusive, and supportive is essential not only for children's development but also for educators' well-being. By emphasizing thoughtful and intentional design, these spaces can serve as a haven that encourages exploration, emotional safety, and meaningful relationships.

Amanda Murphy

With over a decade of experience in early childhood education, Amanda is the founder of Forest Learning Tools, creating natural play resources. She currently lives, works, and travels around in a 22ft trailer, connecting with ECE communities throughout BC.

P3 How to Talk to Parents About Their Child's Behaviour

This presentation highlights evidence-based practices for engaging families to foster collaboration, respect, and shared responsibility in early education of their children. It outlines the roles of parents and ECE personel, emphasizing how they intersect to create an inclusive, supportive environment for children.

The session reviews Family-Centered Practices and Trauma-Informed Practices, prioritizing cultural responsiveness, equity, and dignity to strengthen family-professional partnerships. It provides practical strategies for warm, empowering and collaborative communication with families, ensuring conversations focus on the child's holistic growth. This presentation includes a case study and tools for implementation.

Malgosia Tomanik M.Ed.

Malgosia is a Family Consultant supporting children (preschool to high school) and their families in homes, schools, and child care settings. She specializes in addressing behavioural challenges and guides caregivers raising children who require support.

P4 Supporting Neurodivergent Children and their Families

This session will explore current disability terminology and the strengths we all have. Participants will learn about barriers people may face when accessing assessments, wise practices for supporting neurodivergent children and how to support families when a concern has been identified.

Karen LeSage (she/her)

Karen has over 30 years of experience working with children and families. Throughout her career, her focus has been on helping people to connect with themselves and others and find their place in the world. Her goal is to create safe spaces where all people are welcome.

P5 The Art of Being a Responsive Educator

Knowing when to step in and when to step back is at the heart of responsive teaching. In this workshop, educators will explore three key stances - playworker, facilitator, and teacher - and how moving between them supports children's play, learning, and autonomy. Through reflection, dialogue, and classroom scenarios, participants will deepen their ability to observe, interpret, and respond to children's learning in thoughtful and intentional ways.

Participants will:

- Explore three stances that support children's play, inquiry, and emerging competence.
- Reflect on their own tendencies and decision-making in the learning environment.
- Discuss real examples from early learning environments.
- Strengthen the dispositions that support responsive practice.
- Gain a deeper understanding of how to observe, interpret, and respond.
- Leave with actionable next steps.

Cathy Belgrave

Cathy is an early childhood and elementary educator, podcast host, and founder of The Intentional Educator. With 25+ years of experience, she supports educators in creating authentic, consistent practices that centre children and help all thrive.

P6 Stories in the Soil: Métis Land and Play

This workshop introduces Métis perspectives on land, nature, and play, highlighting the strong relationship between Métis people and the land. Participants will explore how land-based play supports children's holistic development and reflect on how environments shape growth and well-being. The workshop offers practical ideas educators can apply in their programs to foster meaningful connections between children and the land. Through a Métis lens, educators deepen their understanding of place and learn to support intentional, land-connected play experiences.

Violeta Savic

Violeta is a Child Care Navigator for Métis Nation BC. With 25 years in early childhood education, she supports Métis families and communities by delivering programs, sharing cultural resources, leading workshops, and partnering with professionals to strengthen Métis early years services.

Larissa Torisselli Foncesa

Larissa is a Child Care Navigator at Métis Nation British Columbia with 10+ years in education. She supports Métis children and families through workshops, cultural sharing with educators, and partnerships with community agencies to help meet Métis families' needs.

P7 Using Story to Support Math in the Early Years

How might young children use storytelling as a way to explore and learn mathematical concepts and engage in mathematical problem-solving? In this session, Janice will share key concepts important in early mathematics and share ways of exploring these concepts through story. We will look at children's picture books as well as story materials such as puppets and small world play as ways to put mathematics in context to support children's learning. Come prepared to play along as we think about how storytelling can support mathematical thinking.

Janice Novakowski (she/her)

Janice is a retired BC teacher, teaching preschool, kindergarten, and primary grades and school-wide and district positions. Janice is an adjunct professor at UBC where she teaches mathematics education courses and investigates young children's mathematics learning in different contexts.

P8 Listening Beyond English: Supporting Home Languages, Identity, and Belonging in Early Learning Programs

Drawing on research with immigrant families and early childhood educators in British Columbia, this workshop examines how home and heritage languages shape children's identity, relationships, and sense of belonging in early learning spaces. Together we will look at what educators may miss when English becomes the only language they listen for, and how everyday practice can make more room for children's full communicative lives. Participants will engage with examples from practice, key reflective questions, and realistic strategies for working with multilingual children and families in respectful, relational ways.

Julia Magacho Borsari

Julia is a bilingual early childhood educator and Child Care Manager at Kiwassa Neighbourhood House in Vancouver. She is particularly interested in how early learning programs can create space for children's home languages, family stories, identity, and belonging.

P9 Thinking Together: Cultivating Collaborative Reflection

This engaging 90-minute interactive workshop equips ECEs with practical tools to strengthen reflective practice. Grounded in the BC ELF and the principles of continuous professional learning, participants will explore simple yet powerful reflective models. Through mini case studies, discussions, and exercises, we will examine daily practices, unpack challenging moments, and identify opportunities for pedagogical growth, emphasizing culturally responsive reflection and strategies for building reflective communities in early learning programs. Participants will leave with practical ideas for individual and team reflection, techniques for ongoing self-assessment, and renewed confidence in using reflection to enhance their practice.

Nicole Clements

Nicole is an experienced educator who has managed preschools and developed play and STEAM-based learning curriculum throughout Australia and British Columbia. Nicole is an avid outdoor enthusiast whose nature-based and community-focused summer camps have been highly successful in Vancouver.

Amy Jessa (she/her)

Amy is an experienced and passionate educator with over 12 years of experience working with children in B.C, and in the U.K. before that. Specializing in creating nurturing, warm, inclusive, differentiated, safe and culturally responsive environments that not only celebrate diversity and uplift each child's and educator's unique identity, but also foster a deep connection to place and a sense of belonging.

With Initial Primary Teacher Training from the U.K, an ECE Diploma from B.C, and AMI Montessori Training, Amy is well-versed across a variety of pedagogies. She brings a wealth of knowledge through her time in leadership and management of early years programming.

P10 From Surviving to Reflecting: Reclaiming Connection and Well-Being in Early Childhood Education (Part 2)

THIS IS A FULL DAY WORKSHOP, YOU MUST ALSO REGISTER IN A10

See A10 for details

P11 Reimagining What Early Learning Can Be (Part 2)

THIS IS A FULL DAY WORKSHOP, YOU MUST ALSO REGISTER IN A11

See A11 for details

P12 Emotional Regulation through Storytelling

This workshop explores how storytelling can support emotional regulation in early childhood settings. Participants will learn practical, research-informed strategies using stories, puppetry, visual cues, and character creation to help children identify emotions, build vocabulary, and practice calming techniques. Through collaborative activities and make-and-take materials, educators will learn, engage, and explore emotional regulation through stories and leave with ready-to-use tools that foster connection, resilience, and relationship-based learning in early years environments.

Please bring a pair of scissors.

Barbara Schneider

Barbara is an early childhood educator who has her inclusive practice and infant and toddler certification. She is an artist at heart and a long-time advocate for nurturing meaningful relationships with children. Her passion stems from experience supporting families, guiding emotional development, and using creative approaches to teaching.

Taryn Graham

Taryn is an ECEA with years of experience working in Aboriginal Head Starts. The past few years have seen her transition into creating resources for early years with Qualicum First Nation and now working with families and children, creating cultural experiences.

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.

2027 CONFERENCE CO-CHAIRS

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

2027 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	The 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 & Child Care
Karen Norman	Early Childhood Educator (Retired)
Rachel Oulton	Child Care Options CCRR (Options Community Services)
Jessica Parker	REACH Child and Youth Development Society
Karina Roman	Alexandra Neighbourhood House
Violeta Savic	Métis Nation BC
Crystal White	The Centre for Child Development