

## Recognizing Outstanding ECEs at ECEBC's Annual Conference

### Gayle Davies Award: DON GIESBRECHT

Congratulations to Don Giesbrecht, this year's winner of the Gayle Davies Award. Below is the presentation speech made at the Gala during ECEBC's Conference.

*The Gayle Davies Award was established in 1998 by the ECEBC Board of Directors to honour the life work of Gayle Davies, and to create a living legacy of her passion and commitment to the ECE field. Gayle is the former acting director of the Community Care Facilities Licensing Branch. She was, and remains, a strong and active advocate for quality early childhood practice and professionalism.*

*The ECEBC Board chose the Aboriginal symbol of a bald eagle to symbolize the award. The eagle represents the four main characteristics of peace, power, friendship, and vision. These four characteristics represent the criteria for the award—qualities for excellence in caring—which is presented to award recipients in sincere recognition of someone very special to the ECE field.*

*The ECEBC Board has and continues to retain the selection and keeps the name of the award recipient a secret until the date the award is given.*

*This evening we honor a person who has been working in early care and learning for over a quarter of a century. A spouse and a parent—this person exemplifies the characteristics*

*of this award in both their personal and professional life.*

*When considering the characteristic of "friendship" a colleague described this person as "a great supportive, interested listener—warm and caring with a willingness to learn and be informed." A past award recipient recalls the first time she met this person—even in their role, they can make you feel instantly comfortable with their genuine personality and great sense of humour.*

*This person can lead courageous conversations and diverse dialogues among a group of individuals with differing opinions and ideas. They demonstrate the characteristic of peace in their work locally, provincially, nationally and even internationally with work with the OECD.*

*This person is a natural leader—a true example of power and vision—someone who can harness energy and ideas and put them into a well thought out plan. One of their favorite sayings is that they have "walked the walk"—working as a front line ECE, as well as an executive director. This person believes in the power of educating our youngest citizens through empowering practitioners to do their best work.*

*Spending the first half of their career as a champion at the local and provincial level, this person now devotes their career to remaining well informed about the issues of Early Care and Learning across the country. One of this person's colleagues says "in all conversations,*



Don Giesbrecht

*they always bring out the good in people and inspires people to see the good in others. Their sense of humour is contagious. And demands more from society and our government."*

*Not only are they a champion for child care but also for champions for their home town sports teams! Its not uncommon for me to receive a text boasting when my Canucks or Lions are losing.*

*Braving tough conversations all across Canada, while braving even tougher weather conditions when at home, this is someone who has our back.*

*He inspires others through his actions to do a little better and shows appreciation for the smallest gestures. Above all, he is always positive! He reminds us always to keep our focus on the heart of what matters—children, families and the vision of doing a public good for Canada. A past president of the Manitoba Child Care*



Jacky Hughes

*Society—and the current CEO of the Canadian Child Care Federation—our award recipient has dedicated his life work to the pursuit of quality early care and learning for all children in Canada.*

*If you haven't already guessed, it is my pleasure to present the Gayle Davies award to Don Giesbrecht, Early Childhood Educator and CEO of the Canadian Child Care Federation.*

**Sue Fraser Student Award:  
KATHERINE CUNNINGHAM**

Katherine “Kat” Cunningham is a student at North Island College in Comox who has shown dedication to her studies and practice experience, frequently taking on leadership roles within the classroom. Outside of her studies, Kat attends the Comox Valley and Campbell River ECEBC branch meetings and spearheaded the class fundraising committee to support students to attend ECEBC’s Conference in Vancouver. She was also a volunteer at the mini-conference on trauma-informed care in November and represented her class at the Kinder-



Katherine (Kat) Cunningham (left) with Sue Fraser.

garten Transition Dinner and the Dean’s ECE Advisory Committee meeting for the North Island College. She was invited by the executive vice president of the college to provide input on a student housing and learning community initiative. Congratulation to Kat for showing such exemplary commitment and leadership during her studies.

**Kay Britton Mentor Award:  
JACKY HUGHES**

Jacky Hughes is the program director of SFU Child Care Society (SFUCCS). Through her leadership and skills, she oversees the early care and learning of nearly 200 children in eight different programs and mentors and manages 26 early childhood educators. Since 2001, she has also coordinated the Investigating Quality research project at SFUCCS through Learning Circle workshop with Capilano University and inspires others to practice in an ethical and professional manner than honours both the educator and the children.

She was part of the ECEBC Leadership Initiative that better connected

the SFUCCS community to SFU departments and the museum. The project culminated in a conference that was attended by participants from BC and Washington state. Jacky has continued her involvement with the Leadership Initiative and has been a key contributor to a number of ECEBC Leadership Days.

Jacky also coordinated an infant and toddler conference at SFU on reflective research with infant and toddlers. Not only did she do an outstanding job organizing the conference, she encouraged many educators at SFUCCS to become facilitators. As her colleague, Saalqa Bhanji writes, “her ability to actively engage educators within SFUCC to become facilitators for this conference really demonstrated her ability to serve as an outstanding mentor for promoting ongoing professional development in the field of ECE. In my view, her commitment to identifying emerging leaders and in leading specific initiatives truly brings out the best in others.”

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ments, instructors can become the “experimenter” who supports ethical practice through positive reinforcement such as “you are an advocate of young children” and “you care for young children enough to ensure their safety.” Practising early childhood educators are encouraged to use writing exercises to reflect on their practice and to slow down ethical decision-making. I encourage written reflections that go beyond brain-dump journaling. Instead, early childhood educators are recommended to write down their stories, particularly stories of when they were challenged to do, to stop, to listen, or to talk.

### Conclusion

Early childhood educators must be constantly aware that inappropriate workplace culture, poor role-modelling, and incorrect beliefs around how children remember or articulate experience can undermine their ethical practice. Post-secondary instructors who teach early childhood education must be aware that they play a vital role in establishing the moral fortitude students need to engage in practice that is consistent with the Code of Ethics. Finally, early childhood educators must also acknowledge that they are responsible for their own practice, and that influences from the work environment may sway their ethical decision-making, so that as educators they take extra steps to incorporate strategies that support decisions grounded in the Code of Ethics.

### Focus of This Research

I want to acknowledge the early childhood educators included within my research. Also, in acknowl-

edgement of the recommendations from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and my experience as part of the colonial or settler culture, I do not include the practice of Indigenous early childhood educators as I lack the historical and cultural awareness necessary to include their concerns or practices adequately.

### References

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*When not reflecting on ethical decision-making, Denise Pawliuk can be heard singing children's songs, or storytelling, while teaching at Langara College.*

### Awards, Continued from 6

#### Horizon Award: EMILY GAWLICK

ECEBC's Executive Director Emily Gawlick was presented the first Horizon Award. Below is the speech made at ECEBC's conference.

*The field of early care and learning is vast and it is complex. It is a sector like no other. It pulls at our heart-strings and tugs at our purse strings. It is filled with the most dedicated and passionate women and men you will ever know. ECEBC is very proud to be the professional organization that not only supports each and every one of us, but also leads the way in innovation, collaboration and professionalism.*

*That does not come together by accident. It takes someone with exceptional skill and dedication to be at the helm. This year, like no other year before, we have relied on that very leadership to guide us and to make space for all that has come our way and is yet to come.*

*The Board of Directors of ECEBC felt it was extremely important to not only recognize the work of our leader, but to celebrate and honour it. This morning I am very blessed to be presenting the very first Horizon Award. This award is dedicated to visionaries, those who can thrive in the realities of the present day AND look towards the future and imagine the possibilities—someone who can guide everyone else to see that vision too.*

*I am honoured to present the Horizon Award to Emily Gawlick.*

Congratulations to all award recipients. You make us proud to be early childhood educators!