

Campbell River Binder

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SHARLENE
DEE
JAMIE

CAMPBELL RIVER

Communities of Innovation Community Project Proposal

2008/2009 ECEBC Leadership Initiative Application Information:

- **Please name and describe the community you have defined for this project:**

Our North Island community is based in Campbell River and extends upward to rural and remote areas including Sayward, Gold River, Tahsis, Zeballos, and the Islands of Quadra and Cortes. Our early childhood work has included these remote communities by sponsoring children's health fairs for example on Cortes and Quadra Islands as well as in the Village of Sayward. We have also hosted a BC Healthy Communities consultation (April 2007) in which outlying communities were supported to attend a one-day conference so that we could work collaboratively as a Region to better support all of our young children.

Our community also includes six Aboriginal bands and a significant off-reserve population who have succeeded in forming an Aboriginal Infant Development Table that includes local bands Campbell River Indian Band, Quinsam Strathcona/Cape Mudge Band, Homalco Band, the Klahoose Band on Cortes Island as well as the Nuuchahnulth Band in the Gold River area.

- **Please share your motivations for being involved in this leadership program:** Our Campbell River Region faces a crisis related to the shortage of ECE's. We have low attendance at ECEBC meetings and general low morale among child care providers. With no universal child care system in place and with the ambiguous implications of the school's new early learning mandate, our child care community is at risk of losing its sense of identity. At this critical juncture when ECEs may have the opportunity to contribute to vital discussions about the possibility of full day Kindergarten for preschool age children, it is more important than ever that we articulate for ourselves what our profession is about and why our work matters and deserves to be valued and compensated.



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Likely many communities across BC share our motivation, but what makes us a strong candidate for this grant is that despite the above challenges, we have had some significant successes in our ongoing campaign to challenge the status quo. We have a strong core of committed and capable ECE leaders in our community. This core successfully launched and executed the October 2007 Million Steps for Child Care campaign in which runner Shelagh Germyn raised awareness about the importance of child care by running from Campbell River to Victoria. Her journey culminated with a meeting of our local ECEs and Minister Linda Reid. We also took the lead by working with our local Campbell River Chamber of Commerce to put forward the May 2007 Resolution on Child Care that was successfully adopted by the BC Chamber of Commerce and has been cited in recent Council for Early Childhood Education and Human Early Learning Partnership national web-conference presentation "A Roadmap to Preschool Education" (October 2008). In short, despite the challenges we face along with the rest of BC's early childhood community, our Campbell River child care community has a track record of creating innovative strategies to raise the profile of early childhood educators both in our own region and across the province.

Project: How it will build leadership capacity? How it will help increase public understanding of ECE work? What community groups you will work with or reach out to? What outcome you hope for?

OVERVIEW:

Our project assumes that the energy, morale and leadership capacity of early childhood educators is tied both to

- a. the reflection of their role as it is mirrored in the world around them. Achievement is related to the respect, esteem, and expectation of the public

and

- b. each caregiver's personal and professional understanding of the dimensions of their work. This understanding involves having an appreciation for how their particular skill set and personal dedication advances early childhood development work.



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Our project is designed to address both these areas. We envision a compelling public awareness campaign partnered with an ECE leadership forum. Our project will leverage the considerable talents of our existing ECE leaders as well as the local media expertise of a BC young entrepreneur award winner. Together we will create a new vision of early childhood educators both within our ECE community and in the broader community.

OUR 3-5 YEAR PLAN:

Public Awareness Campaign:

1. 2-3 ECE's will work with Leah Tremain of Tremain Media (see attached biographical information) to co-produce a 2-3 minute powerful and professional video that will; with music, impactful narrative and impressive vignettes, expose what early childhood educators really do in the course of a day. The video will reveal how ECEs are not mere masters of activities such as art/circle time, but how they are master negotiators, architects, entomologists, conflict resolution experts, literacy/numeracy scholars, child development specialists, etc. The process of creating this video, of capturing moments of ECEs in action and explicating the full scope -- and at times genius-- of their work with children will by necessity initiate a heightened sense of professional identity and worth within our community. Simply identifying those moments will be a project that in itself inspires ECE professionals in their day-to-day settings to look more deeply and fully at what their work entails. The aim is to film in more than one center and to be inclusive of diverse populations. Our inspiration and model for this work comes from a highly successful German social marketing campaign and can be viewed at [this link](#)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qzj143nLGM>

2. Once the video is produced, it can be used to reach parents and stakeholders alike. It can provide a fresh perspective on child care as an essential and healthy part of a vibrant community. We could reach parents through our established children's events that are attended by over 100 parents and young children. These events include our November National Child Day event, our February Community Centre Children's Health Fair and our March Laichwiltach Family Life Society Children's Health Fairs as well as our July Children's Festival. In addition we can reach stakeholders through our Success By 6 Community Council of Partners.



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Our Community Council has and can continue to support early years presentations among their network which include the City of Campbell River City Council, School District 72 Board of Trustees, School District 72 Pro-D Day sessions, Management of Child and Family Development leadership team, School District 72 District Parent Advisory Council, Campbell River Chamber of Commerce, Community Futures Board, and the noon-hour and day time Rotary Clubs. We also have established partnerships with our local CRTV television station and our Campbell River Mirror who could assist us in launching the video. Beyond these audiences we would also outreach to the broader community by seeking partnership with local movie theaters and ask them to be part of our May is Child Care month campaign by showcasing this video in their previews. In addition clips from the video can be translated into 15 second radio spots and one-page advertisements for print medium that can be posted in local papers and school newsletters.

ECE Leadership Forum:

- 3. The next step will be to kick off an ECE Leadership/Mentorship Forum** that will include a facilitated forum with keynote speakers using the video as a catalyst for elevating leadership, confidence, and morale as well as for inspiring dialog on topics such as: what does it mean to be an early childhood educator? This forum would be designed to engage and offer mentorship connections to early childhood care givers from our remote and rural areas and to isolated caregivers right here in our own immediate city. It would also be inclusive of our on- and off-Aboriginal communities urban as well as rural. Part of creating professional identity is breaking down the fragmented nature of our work and bringing together diverse members of the early childhood communities who may work in license not required settings, in licensed family child care settings, in licensed child care centres or in Headstart programs.

We have already succeeded in the difficult job of engaging family day home care givers in a pilot "Caregiver Training" project that shared local University of British Columbia research from the Early Development Instrument as well as Healthy Opportunities for Preschoolers activities with these caregivers to inspire a new level of confidence, excitement and belief in the significance of their child care work. This pilot was extremely successful (see attached evaluations) and it allowed us to better understand how best to engage caregivers outside licensed centre settings.



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We would like to use experiences such as these to create a forum that extends to and includes first-time participants as well as veterans.

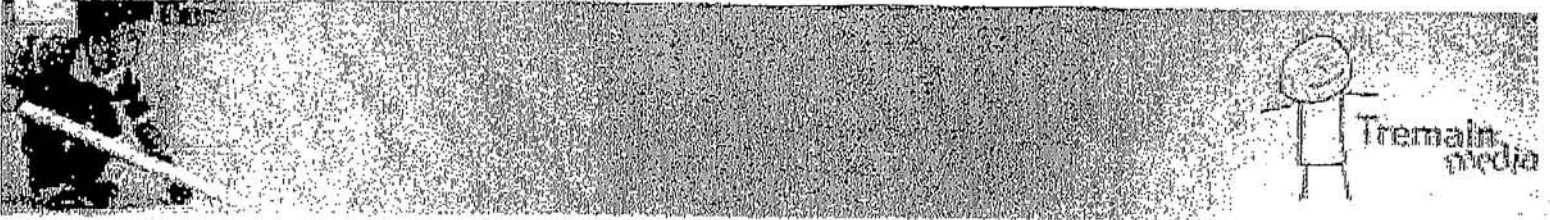
4. Our ECE Leadership candidates will develop this two-pronged approach to enhancing ECE leadership in our north Island area by:
 1. Collaborating with a steering committee
 2. Collaborating with the local videographer & team
 3. Collaborating with ECE peers
 4. Gaining partnerships and soliciting additional partnering funds (preliminary discussions with our Success By 6 Council of Partners suggest a willingness to commit Success By 6 implementation funding to this project)
 5. Securing public speaking opportunities

Outcomes:

1. Building morale/leadership capacity in the ECE field
2. Building a sense of community amongst all ECE centres
3. Create a culture of community support, value, respect for the ECE profession
4. Engaging community involvement and resources
5. Laying the ground work for the next provincial election
6. Laying the ground work for future conversations about a Universal Child Care system
7. Creating a clearly articulated vision of what it could mean to become a resourced, valued profession!



Additional Points:

We are aware that our neighboring community of Courtenay/Comox shares our passion about a mentoring forum/conference and we would certainly be open to working with them on this project should our grant be chosen.



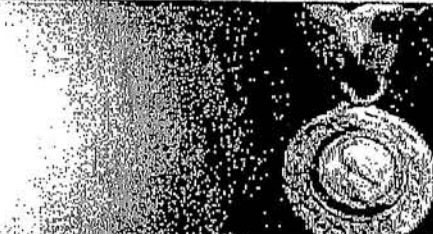

Awards

2007 BC Chamber of Commerce's first annual Young Entrepreneur of the Year Award

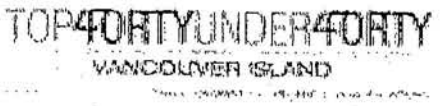
2007 Mid-Island Science, Technology and Innovation Council Finalist for New Media

2007 Paul Harris Fellowship awarded by Daybreak Rotary Campbell River



2008 Business Growth Award, Business Plan Contest, Small Business BC

Top 40 Under 40 for Media and Publishing: Vancouver Island 2006

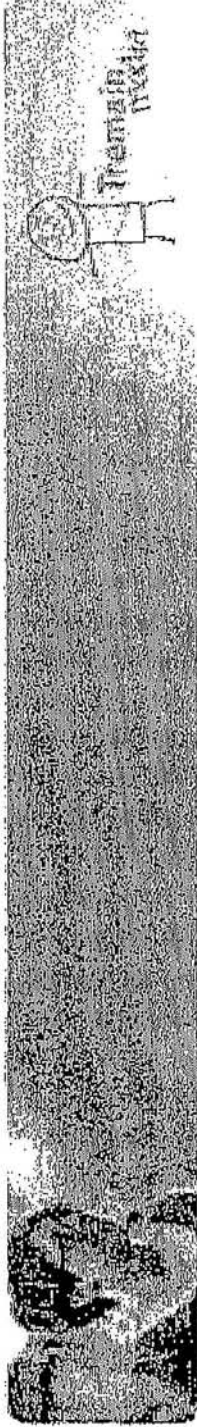


MarCom Creative Awards Honoring Excellence in Marketing and Communications
2005 Platinum Winner

Read-TV: Awarded the Dove Seal

Big Dog Was Bored: Winner of the People's Choice Award, Cortes Island Film Festival 2003



Biography

Leah Tremain, M.Ed. / Tremain Media

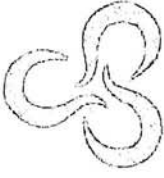
Leah Tremain is an award winning producer and director. She has a Master's in Education in Curriculum and Instruction from the University of Victoria where she specialized in children's educational video and television. She was named Young Entrepreneur of the Year by the BC Chamber of Commerce in 2007, she was awarded a Paul Harris Fellow for her work with Rotary and was a finalist for New Media in the Mid-Island Science and Technology Innovation Awards. In 2008 her business plan won a growth award in the Small Business BC Business Plan Contest and in 2006 she was named Top40 Under40 for Media and Publishing for Vancouver Island. Leah will be featured in the book "New Pioneers: Women Entrepreneurs of British Columbia."

Leah shows deep commitment to her community and to her family. She sits on the task force for LiteracyNow Campbell River, she is a member of Campbell River Daybreak Rotary, she is a board member of the North Island Employment Foundations Society and a volunteer for Literacy For All Campbell River. She is also a member of Toastmasters and a mother of two young boys. Through Leah's work with the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Children and Family Development, Rotary International, Altrusa Campbell River, the Alberta Board of Education and schools and libraries across Canada - over 50,000 families have received Tremain Media literacy DVD's for free.

ECEBC Leadership Initiative

Community Project Work Plan - February 1 - May 31, ECEBC

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Sponsoring Society's Name Christian Life Daycare

Community Name Campbell River BC

Name of Project "Creating Connections"

Key Contact (From Sponsoring Society)

Name _____ Position _____

E-mail _____ Phone _____

Mailing address _____ City Campbell River BC Postal Code _____

Name of Lead ECE's

1. Jamie Anderson
2. Sharlene Postlowsky
3. See Ross

Project Description (1 paragraph that affirms or refines the 1 sentence project description from the ECEBC website and adds a bit more detail)

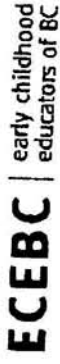
We will create a data base of ECE's in our area; create unity + strength through thoughtful dialogue on our values. This will increase our skill at being able to articulate the value of our profession to the greater community.

A year from now, we expect that increased leadership capacity of participating ECEs in our community will be evident through...

Initiatives we will set up and follow, and the increasing opportunities we will

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Community Project Work Plan - February 1 - May 31, ECEBC | early childhood educators of BC



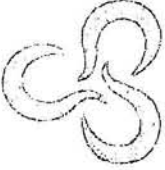
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have to facilitate discussions & speak publicly at forums.

The 3 or 4 key activities we will focus on from February 1 to May 31/09

KEY ACTIVITIES	WHO	WHEN	PLANNED OUTCOME/RESULT	HOPED FOR LEADERSHIP CAPACITY DEVELOPED
1. Develop and submit Budget and Work Plan to ECEBC.	lead ECE's Shawlene, Dee + Janine	Before Feb. 28/09	Cheque from VanCity Community Foundation and contract to sponsoring society by March 15.	Work as a team.
2. Build a data-base of ECE's on N.V. Island through personal contact + internet tools.		Ongoing	Visiting + Connecting ECE's in our region. Learning their strengths + needs as ECE's.	Building Morale + a sense of community
3. Engaging ECE's in thoughtful dialogue about our profession	lead ECE's + Branch Mtgs.	once a month.	Increase our knowledge + respect for our profession.	Facilitating groups.

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Community Project Work Plan - February 1 - May 31,

<p>4. giving a powerful presentation at a forum.</p>	<p>Lead ECE's</p>	<p>May 11/09</p>	<p>Take the info we received at the Institute and share it with the ECE community</p>	<p>Putting together a presentation + public speaking.</p>
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Leadership Initiative
2009 Communities of Innovation
Project Reflection Form #1 (Feb 1 - May 31, 2009)

This Project Reflection Form is designed to let you do two things at once.

1. Complete your first Project Report
2. Prepare to share your Community Project Story at our Leadership Institute on May 22.

Please complete and bring copies of this Form with you for our morning session on May 22. Also bring materials for a 'show and tell' table display about your project and one extra copy of these materials to go along with this report. We will ask you to leave a completed Form and a package of materials with us. If you have any questions – please contact Rita Chudnovsky at leadership.ecebc@look.ca. Thanks....

Name of Community Project _____ Creating Connections
Name of Community _____ Campbell River
Sponsoring Society _____ Christian Life Daycare
Names of Lead ECEs
1. _____ Sharlene Poslowsky
2. _____ Dee Conley
3. _____ Jamie Anderson



As a team, please complete the following statements based on your community experiences over the last 5 months.

1. The key leadership challenge we faced was...

*Defining our vision and developing our sense of ownership of the project

*Encompassing the information and experiences from the first leadership Institute into the project while honouring and embracing the steering committee's initial ideas and vision.

2. The toughest issue, situation or question we faced was....

*Developing our personal leadership capacity- public speaking, working on our interpersonal skills within group.

*Finding mutual convenient times to meet as a team.

3. The most helpful lessons from the first Leadership Institute were...

*Shannon Dobb Communicating Value -framing our key message

*Lynell Anderson –The Economic rational

*BC Childcare Policy Landscape

*Tips for Presenting

4. The key leadership success we experienced was ...



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- *Slideshow presentation at Care for the Caregiver event with 50 audience members.
- *Dialogue and making connections with ECE's at monthly ECEBC meetings where the attendance has steadily increased since the start of our project.



For each of the 3 or 4 key activities outlined in your Feb. 1 – May 31 Work Plan, please complete the following chart.

KEY ACTIVITY	PROGRESS OR RESULTS	LEADERSHIP CAPACITY DEVELOPED
1. Develop and submit Budget and Work Plan to ECEBC.	Completed	-teamwork skills -creating and meeting deadlines
2. Create a database of all ECE's in the North Island and a communication plan.	-Ongoing -Facebook site with 28 members -We have a master list from licensing of all the Licensed Childcare Centres in our region. The local licensing officers have noted all centres that employ ECE staff.	-building morale and a sense of community with local ECE's -interpersonal skills -develop innovative ideas



<p>3. Engaging ECE's in thoughtful dialogue about our profession</p>	<p>-Ongoing -Presenting a topic of discussion regarding practice at ECEBC branch meetings. Observed increased attendance at mtgs.</p>	<p>-group facilitating skills</p>
<p>3. Create a powerful presentation (based on the information we received at the institute) and present it at a forum for regional ECE Community.</p>	<p>-May 11, 2009 Care for the Caregiver Event -ongoing</p>	<p>-public speaking skills -presentation creation skills</p>

Please use this page to add any other comments, reflections, questions or ideas you would like to share about your experiences.



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ECEBC Leadership Initiative

Community Project Work Plan #2 – June 1 – Dec. 31, 2009

RECEIVED JUL 02 2009
Name of Project Creating Connections

Sponsoring Society's Name Christian Life Daycare
Community Name Campbell River

Key Contact (From Sponsoring Society)

Name _____ Position Daycare Director
E-mail _____ Phone _____

Mailing address _____ City Campbell River Postal Code _____

Name of Lead ECE's

1. Sharlene Poslowsky
2. Jamie Anderson
3. Dee Conley

Project Updated Description (1 paragraph that updates the short project description you initially submitted)

Our vision for "Creating Connections" is to nurture unity among Early Childhood Educator's on the North Island. We believe that together our collective ECE voices will have the power to bring the change that is so desperately needed to move our field forward.

Based on our work to day, we NOW expect that increased leadership capacity of participating ECEs in our community will be evident through...

- Being able to identify and connect with other ECE's
- ECE's will be able to articulate the value of their work, with in their programs, as well to the to larger community
- ECE's will create a vision for change in our field
- ECE's will participate in the process that will affect change
- Creating connection between ECE's and the political/policy level

The 3 or 4 key activities we will focus on from June 1 to Dec. 31/09



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Community Project Work Plan #2 – June 1 – Dec. 31, 2009

KEY ACTIVITIES	WHO	WHEN	PLANNED OUTCOME/RESULT	HOPED FOR LEADERSHIP CAPACITY DEVELOPED
1. Questionnaire	Dee, Jamie & Shar	Mid Sept	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify ECE's Obtain information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Writing skills Data entry
2. On going Data Base	Dee, Jamie & Shar	Mid July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communication Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organization skills Record Keeping
3. Create a third Community Presentation	Dee, Jamie & Shar	October 6th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create connections between regional ECE's Create a higher level of enthusiasm/involvement of local ECE's Professional Development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public speaking Group facilitation Organizing an event Team work



ECEBC Leadership Initiative

Community Project Work Plan #3 – Jan. 1 – June 30, 2010

Sponsoring Society's Name Christian Life Daycare

Community Name Campbell River Name of Project Creating Connections

Key Contact (From Sponsoring Society)

Name _____ Position Director

E-mail _____ Phone _____

Mailing address _____ City Campbell River Postal Code _____

Name of Lead ECE's

1. Sharlene Poslowsy
2. Jamie Anderson
3. Dee Conley

Project Updated Description (1 paragraph that *updates* the short project description you initially submitted)

Our vision for 'Creating Connections' is to nurture unity among Early Childhood Educator's on North Vancouver Island. We believe that together our collective ECE voices will have the power to bring the change that is so desperately needed to move our field professionally forward.

Based on our work to day, the domain of change we will focus on during the final phase of our project is...

...building ECE's leadership capacity.



ECEBC Leadership Initiative

Community Project Work Plan #3 – Jan. 1 – June 30, 2010

The end date for our project is June 30, 2010

The 3 or 4 key activities we will focus on from Jan until that date are...

KEY ACTIVITIES	WHO	WHEN	PLANNED OUTCOME/RESULT	HOPED FOR LEADERSHIP CAPACITY DEVELOPED
1. North Island College ECE Students Presentation	Dee, Jamie, Shar	March 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create connections between regional ECE's Create a higher level of enthusiasm/involvement of local ECE's Professional awareness is increased. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public speaking group facilitation event organizing teamwork rolemodelling
2. School Board Presentation	Dee, Jamie, Shar	March 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase community's awareness of the value of our work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public speaking teamwork advocacy
3. Port Hardy Presentation Port McNeil Presentation Gold River Presentation	Dee, Jamie, Shar Dee, Jamie, Shar Dee, Jamie, Shar	April 2010 April 2010 May 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create connections between regional ECE's Create a higher level of enthusiasm/involvement of local ECE's Professional awareness is increased. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public speaking group facilitation event organizing teamwork rolemodelling
4. Bi- Monthly Newsletter	Dee	February April June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A tool to sustain the work of our project during and after the project is finished. Keep ECE's informed and connected. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Writing skills advocacy communication skills

ECEBC Leadership Initiative

FINAL PROJECT REPORT

Nov. 30th 2010



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Sponsoring Society's Name Christian Life Daycare

Community Name Campbell River Name of Project Creating Connections

Key Contact (From Sponsoring Society)

Name _____ Position _____

E-mail _____ Phone _____

Mailing address _____ City Campbell River Postal Code _____

Names of participating ECE's

1. Dee Conley
2. Jamie Anderson

Initial Project Description (the paragraph that you used to describe your project)

Our vision for "Creating Connections" is to nurture unity among Early Childhood Educator's on the North Island. We believe that together our collective ECE voices will have the power to bring the change that is so desperately needed to move our field forward.

ECEBC Leadership Initiative

FINAL PROJECT REPORT

Nov. 30th 2010



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Key project activities and events

*Provide a summary of key project activities and events in each of the following 3 time periods.
Include comments about any significant differences between project plans and what actually happened.*

February – May 31, 2009

- **Create Power Point Presentation**
- **Data base-** Comprehensive list of centres in our region that employ licensed ECES, compiled a list of ECE's and their contact information
- **Create Questionnaire** –ECES interests, strengths, needs as a part of building our data base. We visited local centres individually to introduce ourselves, the project and to distribute questionnaires.

June 1- Dec. 31 2009

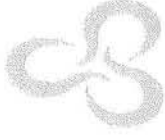
- June 8th
Presentation: Local ECEBC branch meeting
- October 14th

Inspirational Event: Hosted event at Campbell River, Maritime Heritage Centre

ECEBC Leadership Initiative

FINAL PROJECT REPORT

Nov. 30th 2010



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Key project activities and events cont'd.

January 1 – June 30, 2010

- March 16th

Presentation: Campbell River School District 72 Board of Trustees

- April 23rd

Presentation: Celebrating Childcare Conference

- April 28th

Presentation/Workshop: North Island College, Comox Campus- ECE Program

- May 12th

Presentation/Workshop: North Island College, Campbell River Campus- ECE Program

ECEBC Leadership Initiative

FINAL PROJECT REPORT

Nov. 30th 2010



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KEY ACTIVITIES	WHO	WHEN	PLANNED OUTCOME/RESULT	HOPE FOR LEADERSHIP CAPACITY DEVELOPED
1. Connect with North Island communities and share our presentation.	Dee and Jamie	Sept/October	Given the time of year, and programs starting up, the timing was not good for Gold River/Port McNeil. We did not connect with Port Hardy at this time.	Contact information was gained for centres/staff and connections made through phone calls with Gold River and Port McNeil.
2. Images of Learning Project Presentation In Campbell river	Dee and Jamie	Oct. 16 th		Share the learning of other community projects ECE's examine
3. Connect with North Island communities to offer travel bursary to attend ECEBC Branch meeting Nov. 22nd	Dee and Jamie	November	Discussion re: Briefing Note on the Emerging Plan for an Integrated System of Early Care and Learning in BC. Gold River, not able to attend and Port McNeil asked (and was sent) a copy of the briefing and web links. Port Hardy expressed interest/intent to attend; but	Port Hardy expressed interest/intent to attend; but weather conditions affected driving Plans.

ECEBC Leadership Initiative

FINAL PROJECT REPORT

Nov. 30th 2010



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Based on our work to day, we NOW expect that increased leadership capacity of participating ECEs in our community will be evident through...

- Being able to identify and connect with other ECE's
- ECE's will be able to articulate the value of their work, with in their programs, as well to the to larger community
- ECE's will create a vision for change in our field
- ECE's will participate in the process that will affect change
- Creating connection between ECE's and the political/policy level

Childcare MAY IS Childcare Month

What We Don't Know About Child Care

Three local ECEs were selected to become "lead" early childhood educators for the Communities of Innovation grant project. Below each discusses what the lay person may not know about child care.

Sharlene Proslowsky, Early Childhood Educator, Christian Life Day Care

Q: What do Early Childhood Educators (ECEs) want voters and governments to know about child care?

Sharlene: If we just added one percent to the GST, that would fund child care for all of Canada. It is so simple.

Q: Many other good causes might also be helped by this one percent, is there anything else voters should know about investing in child care?

Sharlene: Yes, I think many Canadians would be embarrassed to know that we in Canada spend less of our Gross Domestic Product (GDP) on child care than any other developed OECD country – even the US.

Spending on Early Learning and Child Care Programs: Percent of GDP by Country



Data Source: OECD. (2006). Starting Strong II: Early Childhood Education and Care. Annex C, pg. 246

Q: What might the ordinary parent not understand about our child care system?

Sharlene: Some parents don't understand that Early Childhood Educators bring special skills to the job.

Q: What kind of skills?

Sharlene: As a mother of four I thought I knew a fair amount about children, but when I got my ECE I realized there was even more to learn.

Q: What didn't you know as a mother of four?

Sharlene: When I trained to become an ECE, I learned that at certain developmental stages children just can't get the concept of how to follow the rules of a game or how to share. Parents don't always have this training. I didn't. As a parent there were times when I thought my child's behaviour was just wilful disobedience.

Q: How does your training help children and parents?

Sharlene: Parents who share everyday parenting dilemmas with a child care professional can better bridge the gap that extended family used to fill. Raising young children alone can be quite isolating. Parents need others to check-in with them, to help them, to give them ideas about how to handle certain behaviours if things aren't going well. I think when I was a child there were not so many mothers working. Grandparents were around a lot more. Parents weren't just on their own. Now a parent of a young child can easily be alone all day for several days.

Q: Are there other ways your early childhood training helps parents?

Sharlene: Well, part of our job is seeing things like the red flags. That is a very important part of our job. We see a child up against all the other children, and we see how a child may not be reaching certain developmental milestones. The child's parents often don't know this because they have nothing to compare that child to – especially a parent with a first child or an

only child.

Q: So how can parents find a good quality child care? What should they look for?

Sharlene: Room set up and routine are signs of good quality care. I can tell immediately if the room is not set up properly. There will be more chaos. The place can turn into a "raining centre" with kids racing around uncontrolled. When the room is arranged properly children feel secure. There is an air of calmness in the room. Children should have quiet places they can go where their play will not be interrupted by loud boisterous play. Also, routine is very important. Children love the predictability of routine. They feel more secure when they know what comes next.

Dee Conely, Director Quadra Children's Centre

Q: What might the ordinary parent not understand about our child care system?

Dee: Well, for one thing – there is no "system." There's just a loose collection of different child care options that range from superior to risky.

Q: What do you mean there is no "system"?

Dee: One of my ECE (early childhood educator) colleagues explained it this way: when you use the Community Centre, you tend to just notice the services that are offered. These services are like the "tip of the iceberg." What you don't see, what is submerged, is the system: the massive infrastructure of funding, regulation and coordination that supports those services.

When the average lay person thinks about child care, they tend to picture a service that is offered. What they don't know is that this service is all there is. There is no system just below view. There is no large ongoing funding/organizing structure underneath. Child care centres in today's world are just like pieces of loose ice floating around randomly in the sea. And it is to this "non-system" that we entrust our youngest children during their most impressionable years.

Q: That makes me wonder if anyone should send a child to child care?

Dee: That's not today's reality. Parents do send their children to child care. Recent reports show that across BC 70% of mothers with children between the ages of 3-5 are working. A 2006 survey of Campbell River Kindergarten children showed similar results: 67% of our local families report using child care.

Q: So what can a parent who wants quality child care do?

Dee: When you go to a child care centre, watch how ECEs support children's play. Are the ECEs supporting this play by noticing what a child has done, by asking the child about their creation, by wondering with the child what comes next? Learning in these preschool years is not about drills and skills or ingesting facts. Learning is about nurturing the child's natural curiosity and passion to know "why?" Why is the sky blue?

Q: What do children need to be ready for Kindergarten?

Dee: I think many of my colleagues in the school system would agree that a child's preschool years should not be narrowly trained on "getting ready" for school. Young children deserve to have a place that celebrates them for who they are right in the moment.

Q: There seems to be a lot of contradictory messages for parents right now. Some stress the importance of early learning and others say don't push your child. Don't raise a "hurried child." Who's right?

Dee: Well meaning parents can inadvertently interfere with a child's development if they think their child has to be the best, the first, ahead of the others. Parents

have to ask themselves: "What might my two year old be missing if I'm pressuring him or her to learn the ABC's?"

Q: But isn't early literacy important?

Dee: Sometimes parents hear the words "early literacy" and think they have to be teaching their child to count to ten, to write their name and to sound out words so that they'll enter Kindergarten "ahead" of all the other children.

What parents need to understand is that early literacy should not be stressful. Easy everyday things like really stopping and listening to your child is early literacy. So is singing with your child or reading nursery rhymes and stories to your child – all of these activities allow a child to develop oral language skills. All of this is early literacy.

I guess the simplest way to say it is that early literacy is about enjoyment. I knew I had succeeded with my seven year old son when he put down a book and as he was running out the door he called back, "I like reading. Mom."

Q: We've talked very broadly about child care, but to wrap up, what's the next step?

Dee: We are blessed on Quadra to have quality child care. What if all parents could afford this kind of quality care? Imagine. What might schools be like if every child entered school with a love of learning, a sense of security and the ability to get along with others? Quality child care can go a long way toward making this happen.

Jamie Anderson, Early Childhood Educator, Cari's Infant Toddler Centre

Q: Some say child care is in crisis. What's the crisis?

Jamie: There's not enough affordable quality spaces. This means there are families who have to work that have no safe, healthy place to put their children when they go to work.

Q: So what happens?

Jamie: Parents struggle and the child struggles. Just as an example, in some families one parent will work the graveyard shift so he/she can take care of the child during the day while the other parent works the day shift. In other families, children are shuffled back and forth between grandparents, friends, and ad hoc child care providers. These children have no real structure to their days. Many end up eating poorly or spending hours in front of the TV. No one is able to take care of how their day unfolds and what is best for them.

Q: What is the child missing in situations like these?

Jamie: We know from recent research that a child's brain development is shaped by their early experiences. Young children need stable, predictable caregivers in their lives who they trust and who have the energy and time to interact with them and support their early learning.

Q: How would the lay person know what quality child care is? What are the signs?

Jamie: Quality child care centers are not only licensed, they also employ licensed staff. This staff has taken specialized college training, they adhere to a code of ethics, and they each have an individual license to practice in the province of BC.

Q: Are there any other signs of quality care?

Jamie: I tell parents to sit and watch a child care centre in action. Is the staff squatting down at the children's level – engaging the children face to face? Are the children playing with each other? Quality child care offers rich opportunities for children to learn social skills. There should be an air of calm, productive,

contentment in the room.

Q: Right now one in three children is not ready for Kindergarten. Could more quality child care help Campbell River?

Jamie: Yes. Even children whose parents don't work can benefit from a few days a week of quality child care. Children learn from each other. They also learn from being exposed to interactive learning experiences that allow them to explore and discover – like finger painting or playing at a sand table. When you pair these sensory experiences with well trained ECE staff who know how to expand a child's play, all children can be enriched.

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