



**16<sup>th</sup> annual**

# **National Child Day Conference**

**November 21 - 22, 2025**

*SpARCQEing Change In Children's Best Interests*

# Event Details

Join one of Canada's largest conferences celebrating **Children's Rights and National Child Day!** This year, ARCQE hosts its 16<sup>th</sup> annual National Child Day Conference, acknowledging the importance of children's rights and the country's commitment to upholding them.

This year's theme, **SpARCQeIng Change in Children's Best Interests**, is grounded in Article 3 of the United Nations

Convention on the Rights of the Child, emphasizing the importance of placing children at the heart of all matters that affect them.

Be a part of a supportive early learning community focused on SpARCQeIng conversations on children's rights, democratic practice, citizenship, community, and culture, ensuring children are uplifted and represented.

## Edmonton Convention Centre (ECC)

This year's conference is moving to a premier downtown venue, the Edmonton Convention Centre, to elevate the learning experience and better reflect the scale and passion of our dedicated community. Located along the scenic river valley, the venue's spacious facilities and commitment to sustainability reflect the core values of this event: encouraging growth, promoting responsible stewardship, and inspiring meaningful learning.

### Parking at the ECC

ARCQE has reserved the Grierson Hill surface parking lot, located across from the Edmonton Convention Centre. With a parking lot attendant and 110 complimentary parking spots available, attendees will have convenient access just steps away from the venue. Parking is available on a first-come, first-served basis. Additional street parking and paid parking lots are available in the surrounding area. Proof of a Conference or Dual Experience ticket purchase must be shown to the parking lot attendant to access the Grierson Hill lot. Please note: The Grierson Hill lot has two accessible parking stalls but may not be wheelchair-friendly.

## Ways to Save

Register during **Early Bird sales and save!** We offer different cost-saving options for the conference available for both in-person and virtual conference tickets. With all the ways to save, early bird pricing has a firm end date of September 15 with no exceptions.

- **Dual Experience Ticket!**
  - Conference + Alberta Program Study Tour
- **Study Tour**
- **In-person**
- **Full Table of 8** (in-person)
- **Half Table of 4** (in-person)
- **Virtual**
- **Group of 10** (virtual)
- **Group of 5** (virtual)
- **PTL Cardholder**

## Accommodations

### DoubleTree by Hilton Edmonton Downtown

9576 Jasper Avenue, Edmonton, AB, T5H 3V3

Enjoy exclusive attendee rates at the ARCQE host hotel, located just blocks from the vibrant Arts District and a short walk from the Edmonton Convention Centre. Visit the hotel's Gallery Lounge & Bar for an exclusive fast serve menu. Relax in a pool-sized hot tub, move at your own pace in the fitness center, and receive discounted underground parking.

ARCQE has reserved a block of 100 rooms for conference attendees. Room options include a Standard Two Queen Beds with a sofabed and a Standard King Room with a sofabed, both available at a rate of \$149.00 (plus tax) per night. **Rooms are limited. [Click here before they're gone!](#)**

- **Check-in: 4:00 PM, Friday, November 21, 2025**
- **Check-out: Noon, Sunday, November 23, 2025**

## Alberta Program Study Tour An Immersive Edmonton Experience

**Don't miss this opportunity to go beyond the conference!**

Join one of three Edmonton program tours and discover innovative child care practices in authentic settings. After the tour, dive into a panel and discussion session where you can ask questions, share insights, and connect with fellow professionals. Transportation is included! Choose the Dual Experience ticket to maximize your National Child Day Conference and bring your learning to life.

Visit our [website for more detailed information.](#)

## In-Person Experience

Be a part of a collaborative and co-learning environment! In-Person opportunities include access to the Study Tour, keynotes, Friday's interactive gala, Meet The Authors, breakout sessions, delegate resources, a mARCQEtplace, Collaborator Commons, and the opportunity to make meaningful connections with others beyond Alberta's early learning and care community. Perfect for attendees who want the full conference experience and to engage with everything the event has to offer.

## Virtual Experience

For those unable to attend in person, the virtual ticket gives you conference access from wherever you are. Ideal for the attendee wanting flexibility while still being involved in important conversations about children's rights. With upgraded streaming services, you'll enjoy high-quality access to Friday and Saturday keynotes, featured breakout sessions, receive digital resources, and the opportunity to be connected as part of the broader early learning community.

## Early Bird Giveaway

Register Early for a Chance to Win! Purchase any In-Person Conference ticket before September 15, 2025, and you'll be automatically entered into a draw to **win a complimentary 1-night stay and 25% off dining at the DoubleTree by Hilton Edmonton Downtown!** Unwind and explore at your own pace, at a time that works best for you. ARCQE gratefully acknowledges the support and generosity of the DoubleTree by Hilton Edmonton Downtown, our official conference host hotel.

The draw will take place on November 22, 2025, during the conference. The winner will be announced live and contacted through the email provided at registration. Redeemable for a stay **after** the conference ends.

## Capsule Collection

This is your National Child Day call to action! ARCQE is excited to release a limited edition Capsule Collection designed alongside children, inspired by Article 3 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in celebration of National Child Day. All proceeds (above manufacturing costs) will be donated to [UNICEF Canada](#), an organization dedicated to advancing and protecting children's rights around the world. Support National Child Day by wearing or using an item from the Capsule Collection on November 20th and at ARCQE's conference. Wear blue and use the hashtag #TideofBlue on social media to show your commitment!

## Student Tickets

Connect with passionate educators who are driving change in early learning. Add your spARCQE to powerful conversations with a professional community engaging in children's rights. Walk away inspired and informed as you continue your ECE learning journey. Students actively enrolled in an early learning-related program at a publicly accredited post-secondary institution will receive **40% OFF registration!** Student Tickets will be sold September 16 - November 9, 2025. Proof of student status is required.

## mARCQEtplace

This year, an entire ECC Hall is designed to support an expansive lineup of vendors! Shop early learning resources, educational tools, wellness products, handmade goods, playground and furniture, and everyday items that focus on spARCQEing joy and enriching program quality and educational needs of early learning experts.

Local businesses and entrepreneurs will join together to offer an intentional experience created with early educators in mind. See the growing list of vendors on our site!

## Collaborator Commons

Meet ARCQE's collaborators (Professional Organizations, Health Services, Post-Secondary, and Community Partners) and learn about the important work they are doing across the early learning sector. With their support, ARCQE is proud to offer high-quality professional learning that encourages continuous growth in early learning practices.

## Meet the Authors

Many of our conference speakers are accomplished authors! Take advantage of this chance to meet the voices shaping the sector through their published work. Grab your books for signing and engage with these thought leaders. Step beyond the page and into the conversation!





# NCDC 2025 At A Glance

## Friday: Alberta Program Study Tour

<b>7:45 AM</b>	Depart Edmonton Convention Centre on Bus
<b>8:30 AM</b>	Program 1
<b>10 AM</b>	Travel Time
<b>10:30 AM</b>	Program 2
<b>12 PM</b>	Travel to ECC
<b>12:30 PM</b>	Lunch
<b>1:30 - 3 PM</b>	Panel Discussion and Reflection at ECC

## Friday: NCD Conference

<b>5 PM</b>	Registration and Event Exploration
<b>6:15 PM</b>	Conference Welcome
<b>6:30 PM</b>	Keynote A: Nick Terrones <i>Supporting Children's Right To Inquiry</i>
<b>7:30 PM</b>	Meet the Authors and Networking

## Saturday: NCD Conference

<b>7:30 AM</b>	Breakfast and Networking
<b>8:30 AM</b>	Opening Remarks and Welcome
<b>8:45 AM</b>	Feature Presentation/ Performance
<b>9:15 AM</b>	Keynote B: Carol Garboden Murray <i>7 Lamps of Care</i>
<b>10:15 AM</b>	Wellness Break
<b>10:30 AM</b>	"A" Breakout Sessions
<b>12 N</b>	Lunch
<b>1 PM</b>	"B" Breakout Sessions
<b>2:30 PM</b>	Wellness Break
<b>2:45 PM</b>	"C" Breakout Sessions
<b>4 PM</b>	Wellness Break
<b>4:15 PM</b>	Keynote C: Tara M. Collins <i>How Can We Act in Children's Best Interests?</i> <i>Centring Young Children in Our Professional Practices</i>

See a more detailed  
Conference Schedule  
**HERE!**



Get more information  
about the **Study Tour**  
**HERE!**



# Speaker Information

## Nick Terrones

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATOR  
| UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON



Nick Terrones is a descendant of the Chumash people in Southern California (Los Angeles Basin), as well as of Mexican heritage. Nick served as the program director of Daybreak Star Preschool, an

Indigenous-based preschool, and is currently the Director of Community Relations in the College of Education at the University of Washington overseeing the development of a community-based early learning resource hub. He has been an Early Childhood Educator for over 18 years, 14 of those years specializing in toddler development and education at Hilltop Children's Center. He holds a B.A. in Early Childhood Education and a Masters in Indigenous Education, with a focus on Indigenous Resurgence through Land-based Curriculum and learning in early learning settings. Additionally, Nick co-hosts a podcast called Napcast with his pal Mike Browne and has published a book called *A Can of Worms: Fearless Conversations with Toddlers*.

## KEYNOTE A

### Supporting Children's Right To Inquiry

In every classroom and home, children ask big, bold questions—sometimes sparked by an unexpected moment or a keen observation of the world around them. These questions, far from being random, are opportunities for transformation. This keynote explores how educators and caregivers can become architects of understanding by honouring and supporting children's right to inquire.

Through real-life stories, we'll examine how our responses can turn moments of surprise—or even discomfort—into foundations for empathy, advocacy, and social justice. Join us to discover how courage and care, paired with a commitment to inquiry, empower children to shape a more compassionate, just world—starting with the questions they dare to ask and the statements they boldly make.

Featured at ARCQE's Meet The Authors event!

## Carol Garboden Murray

AUTHOR, ECE PROFESSIONAL | VASSAR COLLEGE



Carol is the author of *Illuminating Care: The Pedagogy and Practice of Care in Early Childhood Communities* (2021, Exchange Press). She holds a master's degree in early childhood education and early

intervention and has worked with children, families, and educators for over 30 years. She is currently the director of the Laboratory Nursery School and Infant Toddler Center at Vassar College. You can access many of her professional articles and find out more about Carol and her work at [carolgarbodenmurray.com](http://carolgarbodenmurray.com).

## KEYNOTE B

### 7 Lamps of Care

With the 7 Lamps of Care as our guide, Carol will shine the light on the path of the early childhood educator's central purpose, to care for young children. Together, we will pioneer a practice that elevates care as education, as an ethical encounter, a human right, and a public good. Carol will ask us to consider a new teaching paradigm - where we shift from a view of care as separate from education to revealing that care is education. Looking at our work through the lens of care ethics will allow us to see care as the strong backbone and core philosophy of our early childhood practice. Together we will analyze the art and science of practicing a pedagogy of care and love. One of the exciting applications of *Illuminating Care* is including ourselves in the caring equation. Using care as a pillar of our work leads us back to our purpose, our priorities, and ultimately, our joy.

Featured at ARCQE's Meet The Authors event!



## Tara M. Collins

PROFESSOR | TORONTO METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY



Dr. Tara M. Collins is Professor in the School of Child & Youth Care at Toronto Metropolitan University (TMU) in Canada. She is Program Faculty with TMU's graduate programs in Early Childhood Studies,

Immigration and Settlement Studies, and Policy Studies PhD. In addition, she is Honorary Professor at the Children's Institute, University of Cape Town, South Africa. She has a Ph.D. from the University of London and her professional experience includes: universities in Canada, South Africa,

Brazil, and Ireland; the Canadian federal government, Parliament, and a national non-governmental organization. Research interests include children's rights, child and youth participation, and child protection. She is the Project Director for the International & Canadian Child Rights Partnership (ICCRP): <https://www.torontomu.ca/iccrp>

## KEYNOTE C

### How Can We Act in Children's Best Interests? Centring Young Children in Our Professional Practices

The principle of the best interests of children has been around for generations and often informs professional efforts concerning children. But it is useful to pause and consider what the principle means in practice. Has the requirement changed over time and how does it relate to early childhood education and child care? These questions and others will be addressed to critically reflect upon this principle and its connection to children's rights in our efforts with young children. Our professional attitudes, behaviours, and outcomes will be discussed in terms of how they inform our professional relationships with young children and others. As we celebrate National Child Day together at this conference this year, this presentation aims to 'spARCQE' action in favour of children's best interests and their other human rights in our efforts with children.

## Astrid Kendrick

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, DIRECTOR  
| WERKLUND SCHOOL OF EDUCATION, UNIVERSITY  
OF CALGARY



Before taking on her current role of Director, Field Experience (Community - Based Pathway), at the Werklund School of Education, Dr. Astrid Kendrick was a K-12 classroom teacher for 19 years, specializing in Physical Education

and Language Arts/ English. She has two main research areas: compassion fatigue, burnout, and emotional labour in educational workers, and developing effective interventions and tools to improve educator wellbeing. She was the recipient of the 2020 Online Teaching Award from the Werklund School of Education as well as an Emerging Scholar Award from the Learner Research Network in 2019.

## BREAKOUT SESSION A1

### Compassion Fatigue, Burnout, and a Way Forward

Working with children and youth in education demands emotional labour from educators, educational assistants, teachers, early learning education leaders and other education workers. Occupational hazards such as compassion fatigue and burnout can result from providing emotional labour without protecting your own well-being. In this interactive session, Dr. Astrid Kendrick will discuss five years of research into compassion fatigue and burnout in educational workers from Alberta and Canada, and she will introduce HEARTcare planning, a framework for building occupational well-being for all educators that goes beyond individual self-care into creating cultures of compassion and wellbeing.

## Angel Tuttle

MÉTIS EDUCATION CONSULTANT  
| RUPERTSLAND INSTITUTE



Angel Tuttle is a proud Métis woman and is honoured to be a member of the Otipemisiwak Métis Government, with ancestral roots connected to the communities of Lac Ste. Anne and St. Albert. A

graduate of the University of Alberta, Angel has been a certified teacher for 30 years, working with learners from preschoolers (ages 2.5) to adults. While teaching Kindergarten, she received the Teacher's Award of Excellence in recognition of her outstanding contributions.

With extensive experience in early learning and special education, Angel also served as an Indigenous Lead Teacher in her former school district. She is committed to lifelong learning and holds numerous certifications. Her journey with Rupertsland Institute began when she was selected for an expert focus group for Early Learning Education and Childcare Training (ELECT), where she became the lead educator. Passionate about reclaiming her culture, Angel now works as a Métis Education Consultant for Rupertsland Institute, focusing on early learning.

## Jackie Carson

ELECT PROGRAM COORDINATOR  
| RUPERTSLAND INSTITUTE



Jackie Carson is a proud citizen of the Otipemisiwak Métis Government, with ancestral roots connected to the historical St. Albert Métis Settlement. She graduated from the University of Alberta, specializing in

Elementary Education with a focus on Native Studies. She lives in Spruce Grove, Alberta, with her husband and three active teenage children.

She has taught a wide range of ages and subjects in the K-12 system and extended her contributions to education by serving as an Elected School Trustee. In recognition of her leadership, Jackie received the Esquao Award in Education from the Institute for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women.

Jackie is deeply committed to weaving Métis-centric knowledge and ways of being into all learning spaces. She continues to grow her understanding and share her passion as the current Program Coordinator for the Early Learning Education and Childcare Training (ELECT) program through Rupertsland Institute.

## BREAKOUT SESSION A2

### Métis Identity in Early Learning: In the Best Interests of All Children

This interactive and informative learning opportunity explores why understanding and uplifting Métis identity is essential in early learning and how it supports the best interests of the child. It also speaks to our shared responsibility in responding to Canada's Calls to Action, particularly those that support Indigenous children in early years education.

Presented by two proud Métis educators, it offers introductory foundational knowledge rooted in lived experience and cultural insight, shared through story, language, and practical examples. Touching on Land-Based Learning and other key aspects of Métis ways of Knowing, Being, and Doing, the content highlights ideas that can be meaningfully adapted into early learning spaces.



## Amaka Amadike

EARLY CHILDHOOD INSTRUCTOR  
| BOW VALLEY COLLEGE



Amaka Amadike is an Early Childhood Education (ECE) professional with over 20 years' experience. She is driven by a deep passion for young children and their nine learning journeys. Amaka emphasizes

the importance of understanding cultural contexts in addressing challenges in the ECE space, and she brings this lens to her teaching and practice. Amaka currently teaches Early Childhood Education as a faculty member at Bow Valley College in Calgary and has taught Indigenous Early Childhood Education with Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technology. Amaka is also the Spark Mentorship Project Coordinator with ARCQE, and she is involved in the Spark Guide as an advisory committee member and a storyteller. Amaka worked with ARCQE as a Project Coordinator for the Creating Cultural Connections program focusing on Southern Alberta.

Amaka holds a diploma in ECE, dual bachelor's degrees in Early Childhood Studies and Human Services, and two master's degrees in Child and Youth Studies and Open, Digital, and Distance Education. She is also an alumna of the ELECT Métis language program in Alberta. Outside of work, Amaka enjoys travelling and watching tennis.

## Daisy Iyeh

EARLY CHILDHOOD INSTRUCTOR  
| BOW VALLEY COLLEGE



Daisy Iyeh (Mrs.) is an Early Childhood Education instructor and has experience working with several colleges in Alberta and British Columbia. She has managed child care programs in Calgary and is a

mentor to educators in training, a Coach, and Pedagogical Partner with the Alberta Resource Centre for Quality Enhancement. She holds both a bachelor's degree and a master's degree in education and business- with a masters in education in view. She holds various diplomas in Education and Management in areas such as Curriculum Development and Instructional Design from Mount Royal University; Advanced Teaching from Harvard; Observation and Assessment; Blended Learning; and ICT in the Classroom. Globally, she has worked in Educational Management, having run and headed an Elementary School (K-6); been a Partner in an Educational Professional Development Practice, where educator professional development was promoted; and in Business Development, Corporate Communication, and Customer Relationship Management, all experiences she uses in her current roles today.

## BREAKOUT SESSION A3

### Culturally Responsive Play:

### Where Play Meets Identity in the Best Interest of Every Child

This presentation will explore how early childhood professionals can embed culturally responsive play into their daily practices to honour and reflect the cultural identities of all children. Grounded in the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989), particularly Article 30, we will examine children's rights to maintain and celebrate their culture, language, and religion without discrimination.

Participants will learn practical strategies to create culturally rich play environments through intentionality, family engagement, and reflective practice. Examples will include integrating authentic cultural artifacts, storytelling traditions, multilingual materials, and caregiving routines that affirm diverse ways of being. We will also discuss the importance of moving beyond tokenistic displays to deep, sustained cultural inclusion that supports holistic development.



## Nick Terrones

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATOR



Read Nick's biography next to his Keynote Session Description!

## BREAKOUT SESSION A4

### A Place to Fight: Supporting Rough 'n Tumble Play

Children bring many gifts to us as educators, and sometimes, these gifts make us nervous, and sometimes, they downright terrify us! One of those gifts is the reminder that human beings need opportunities to test and re-test their personal boundaries in being physical. Together we'll discuss and unpack our hesitations around risky play and, specifically, Rough 'n tumble play, and consider ways educators can support it.

Featured at ARCQE's Meet The Authors event!

## Wendy Lee

DIRECTOR | EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP PROJECT



Wendy Lee is a passionate advocate for early childhood education and the director of Educational Leadership Project (ELP), which provides professional learning for educators throughout New Zealand and inter-

nationally. A former kindergarten teacher, lecturer, and ECE leader, Wendy has spent her career championing Learning Stories as a powerful way to make children's learning visible, meaningful, and grounded in Te Whāriki. Her long-standing collaboration with Professor Margaret Carr has shaped national research and assessment practice, including co-directing the National ECE Assessment Project and co-authoring several influential books. Wendy's work reflects a deep commitment to social equity, lifelong learning, and strengthening the professional voice of educators.

She has shared her expertise in many countries such as the UK, Germany, the USA, Japan and China, where Learning Stories are increasingly seen as a transformative approach to assessment. Wendy brings energy, warmth, and vision to every encounter with educators and communities.

## BREAKOUT SESSION B1 AND C1

### The Quiet Revolution of Deep Curiosity

Assessment is never a neutral act—it is a profoundly ethical, relational, and courageous responsibility. It takes brave and thoughtful educators to move beyond compliance and policy, and instead connect deeply with children, families, and colleagues. This is how we grow communities where lifelong learning identities can take root and flourish. “Do you know me? Can I trust you? Do you let me fly? Do you hear me? Is this place fair for us?” These questions, born in the early days of Te Whāriki, still guide us. They invite us to be deeply curious, to listen with care, and to document with love. Learning Stories emerged in response to this call, grounded in a credit-based view of children as competent, creative, capable, and full of potential. They offer us a way to resist narrow, outcomes-driven models and instead embrace assessment as a rich, relational practice, one that makes learning visible and honours the unique identities, cultures, and pathways of every child.

Our role is not to measure, fix, or control, but to walk alongside children, co-constructing a curriculum of joy, wonder, and possibility. In all we do, may we protect the vision of acting in children's best interests and move forward with curiosity, creativity, courage, and deep respect for every learner.

This is a 2-Part Breakout Session.

## Don Giesbrecht

CHAIR | NATIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL ON ELCC



Don has worked in Canada's Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) sector for over 34 years, starting his career as an Early Childhood Educator in Winnipeg and most recently as Chair of the National

Advisory Council on ELCC (he is on leave as CEO of Canadian Child Care Federation (CCCCF)). He believes that the transformational change that the Canada-wide child care plan will bring for Canada's children, families and ELCC sector and that it needs to address the interconnected issues of affordability and accessibility of child care services for families along with enhancing quality for children together with a specific focus on and the importance of holistically supporting Canada's ELCC workforce.

## Christopher J. Smith

ASSOCIATE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
| THE MUTTART FOUNDATION



Dr. Christopher Smith is the Associate Executive Director for the Muttart Foundation, a private charitable foundation based in Edmonton. Christopher serves on the Steering Committee for the

Community University Partnership for the Study of Children, Youth and Families at the University of Alberta and is a member of the Edmonton Council for Early Learning and Care. In Fall 2022, he was appointed to the National Advisory Council on Early Learning and Child Care which provides advice to the Federal Minister of Jobs and Families on Canada-wide early learning and child care system building. He formerly served as a member of the National Expert Panel on Early Learning and Child Care Data and Research from 2019 - 2021 which provided advice to federal ministers Yves Duclos and Ahmed Hussein. He is the former chair of the Success by 6 Council of Partners for the Alberta Capital Region.

## BREAKOUT SESSION B2

### In The Best Interests of the Child: Opportunities for ELCC System Building Under the Next Round of the Canada-Wide Agreement

**Supporting children's best interests in early learning and child care environments from a National perspective.** The Canada-wide early learning and child care system building agreements signed in 2021 and 2022 have provided the federal funding and new public policy direction required to transform child care sectors across Canada. During the first phase of system building all provinces and territories have made progress in reducing parent-paid fees and in expanding services. It is critical that the next phase of system building builds on this progress with a strong focus on quality and inclusion to ensure that all children have equitable access to the high-quality child care they need and deserve. Early learning and child care stakeholders must draw on the findings from research and their own experiences to support system building that remains grounded in the best interests of the child.

## Carol Garboden Murray

AUTHOR, ECE PROFESSIONAL | VASSAR COLLEGE



Read Carol's biography next to her Keynote Session Description!

## BREAKOUT SESSION B3

### Reclaiming Love: The Heart of our Work

A discussion that seeks to define love and legitimize love in early education and care. We will examine love through the lens of care ethics. We look at how important it is not to conflate love and care but to analyze care as one component of love. Naming love as part of our professional practice brings depth and strength to caregiving relationships.

Featured at ARCQE's Meet The Authors event!

## Patrick Makokoro

SOCIAL ENTREPRENEUR, EDUCATIONAL  
RESEARCHER, CONSULTANT  
| HUUBUNTU CONSULTING



Dr. Patrick Makokoro is a social entrepreneur and educational researcher specializing in community development, grant making, social justice, and early childhood education. With extensive international

experience, he has supported communities to establish early childhood development advocacy networks, co-developed strategic plans for organizations in Canada, USA, and globally, and provided consulting services to major international nonprofits, including UNESCO. He previously served as Regional Director for Africa at Childhood Education International in Washington D.C and founded the Nhaka Foundation, which provides comprehensive early childhood development services to orphaned and vulnerable children in Southern Africa. Dr. Makokoro is an active advocate in the Black Canadian community, working to address systemic inequities and strengthen community support systems. He holds three degrees, including a PhD in Educational Studies from the University of Victoria in Canada. He enjoys playing tennis and going for hikes in Victoria, BC.

Featured at ARCQE's Meet The Authors event!

## BREAKOUT SESSION B4 AND C4

### Centring Community, Culture, and Context in Children's Best Interests

This presentation will challenge early childhood professionals to redefine Article 3's "best interests of the child" through community, cultural, and contextual lenses rather than universal standards. It calls for moving beyond consultation to genuine partnership with communities, treating culture as a curriculum foundation rather than a decorative add-on, and recognizing how local contexts shape what thriving looks like for children. Truly serving children's best interests requires shifting from cultural competence to cultural humility—moving from programs that ask families to adapt to institutional norms toward co-created spaces that honour community wisdom, linguistic diversity, and culturally rooted ways of knowing.

This is a 2-Part Breakout Session.



## Christina Pickles

OUTDOOR PLAY SPECIALIST | GET OUTSIDE AND PLAY



Christina Pickles is an outdoor play advocate and founder of Get Outside and Play. This organization promotes more outdoor play in early learning and care settings, schools, and communities through

events, presentations, workshops, and consulting services. She has been supporting outdoor experiences for people of all ages for over 20 years, and 9 years ago, she pivoted her work to put play at the center of everything she does. Along with supporting educators to get outside with children, she works outside in an urban park with children aged 1-12 years old. She believes that play is the best way for children (and adults) to connect with the land, their communities, their bodies, and each other. She lives along the Bow River in Calgary, Alberta, and can be found walking her dog, Clover, or chasing after her adventurous 11-year-old.

## BREAKOUT SESSION C2

### Intentionally Planning for Outdoor Play and Nature Connection

Freedom, imagination, active play and exploration – all words educators mention when asked about outdoor play. The outdoors, whether it's the fenced-in area at your program, your backyard, or a local park, provides essential experiences for children that support healthy development in all domains. Are you taking full advantage of everything the outdoors has to offer you and the children? How do you plan for your time outdoors? Is it intentional or an add-on? In this session, we will consider how to prepare for outdoor play and connect to nature by intentionally:

- Embracing seasonal opportunities
- Incorporating daily or weekly observations that support connection to place
- Learning about the common ways children experience and connect with nature
- Wandering and noticing the world around us
- Considering how to expand indoor interests outdoors

Instead of discussing this indoors, join me for an outdoor session where we can experience all the environment has to offer together. **Come prepared to be outside!**

## Therese Wiart Jenkinson

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR | MOUNT ROYAL UNIVERSITY



Therese Wiart Jenkinson is a dedicated Associate Professor at Mount Royal University, and a promising PhD candidate at the University of Toronto's Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. With 10+

years as a kindergarten teacher and experience as an early childhood educator and director of a preschool, she brings deep practical experience to her teaching. Therese has taught in postsecondary early learning programs across Alberta. Her research passions include play-based learning, curriculum, and pedagogy in the early years. She is also a proud wife, mother, grandmother, and sister—roles she holds most dear.

## BREAKOUT SESSION C3

### Curriculum as Kaleidoscope: How Educators Co-Create Meaningful Moments with Toddlers

Discover how early childhood educators make intentional, responsive decisions while co-constructing curriculum with toddlers. This immersive session explores the interplay of ecological context, pedagogical relationships, and curriculum goals—revealing how deep listening and reflection spark growth and learning of children's interests through play.

## Funding

ARCQE's event has been approved by the Professional Development Grant Funding Program, qualifying the conference fee (not including GST) for Professional Development funding (PD), up to \$375. The amount of Release Time Funding available is dependent upon the type of ticket you purchase.

### Attendees can claim

- 13.5 hours for In-person attendees
- 10.5 hours for Virtual attendees

Note: No hours may be claimed for the pre-conference Alberta Program Study Tour and Panel discussion.

**You are required to attend the full conference, in-person or virtually, in order to receive your certificate at the end of the event.** If you do not check in on both Friday and Saturday and attend all of the sessions, you will not be eligible for a certificate of attendance. Partial attendance certificates will not be issued.

Each attendee must complete ARCQE's digital post conference survey to receive their NCDC Certificate of Attendance, which is needed to apply for PD funding. Release Time funding allows educators to be compensated for time spent attending approved conferences, with rates of \$17.50 per hour (up to 45 hours per fiscal year). ECEs certified at Level 1, 2, or 3 can apply for up to \$500 per year to cover the cost of ARCQE's conference registration, and funding has been expanded to include all certified staff working in licensed child care programs, such as those in preschools or licensed family day home agencies.

We strongly encourage those interested in attending and planning on accessing PD funds to submit PD applications as early as possible, as funding might be depleted prior to application deadline.

If you have any questions about the Alberta Child Care Grant Funding Program, please contact 780-422-1119 or email [cs.childcarefunding@gov.ab.ca](mailto:cs.childcarefunding@gov.ab.ca).

## Policies

### Cancellation Policy

ARCQE has a cancellation policy that attendees agree to when purchasing any conference or study tour ticket. For the complete details on this policy, please refer to the registration details.

### Media Consent and Release Policy

By attending ARCQE's National Child Day Conference or the pre-conference Alberta Program Study Tour, you agree to ARCQE's Media Consent and Release Policy. This includes consent to being photographed or filmed. Any content captured may be used by ARCQE for promotional, educational, and archival purposes, including but not limited to use on our website, social media, newsletters, and printed or digital publications.



[arcqe.ca](http://arcqe.ca)



# NOVEMBER 21 - 22, 2025

*SpARCQEing Change In Children's Best Interests*