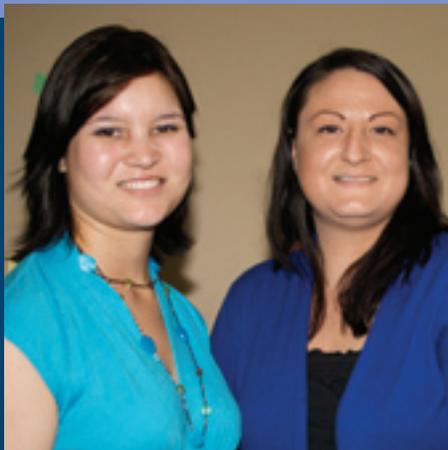


# ECEBC's Leadership Initiative

## *Creating a Culture of Leadership*



**ECEBC** | early childhood  
educators of BC



# How We Are Creating an ECE Culture of Leadership

## BEGINNINGS

ECEBC's work on the Leadership Initiative began in 2007 when we entered into a partnership with Vancity Community Foundation. With funds the Foundation received from BC's Ministry of Children and Family Development, we agreed to work with VanCity to develop a professional development program for early childhood educators. After a year of listening, reflecting, and learning, we agreed that it was time to focus on leadership and ECEBC's Leadership Initiative was born.

The Leadership Initiative was designed to support ECEs to take their values and practices outside the walls of their programs and into the broader community. Activities are designed so that participants understand and

acknowledge that as ECEs they already possess many leadership qualities before they begin to build on their existing leadership skills. This makes the ECEBC Leadership Initiative something different than any other leadership program, and it has been extremely successful.

## HOW IT WORKS

In our first year, we invited teams of two or three ECEs from diverse communities across BC to suggest community projects that would build their leadership capacity. We asked the teams to focus on projects that would raise respect and value for the work of ECEs. From the applicants, we selected 10 groups for that first year. Every year since, up to 10 new groups have participated in the year-long program. Since 2009, over 90 early childhood educators representing

34 diverse communities from across British Columbia have participated in the Leadership Initiative.

The participants attend three Leadership Institutes over the course of the year. The Leadership Institutes are designed to weave together three strands:

- Creating an ECE culture of leadership.
- Building leadership capacity.
- Supporting participants to lead their projects from the idea stage to implementation.

The Leadership Institutes give the participants the opportunity and resources to use their emerging leadership skills and bring the strong message about our sector to their communities through a community project. Some groups have built travelling exhibits, some have developed workshops and presentations, some have developed web sites and social media strategies, some have created successful events, and some have developed resources. The community projects are as unique as the participants themselves, but all projects bring a strong and confident message about the professional value of ECEs to the broader communities.

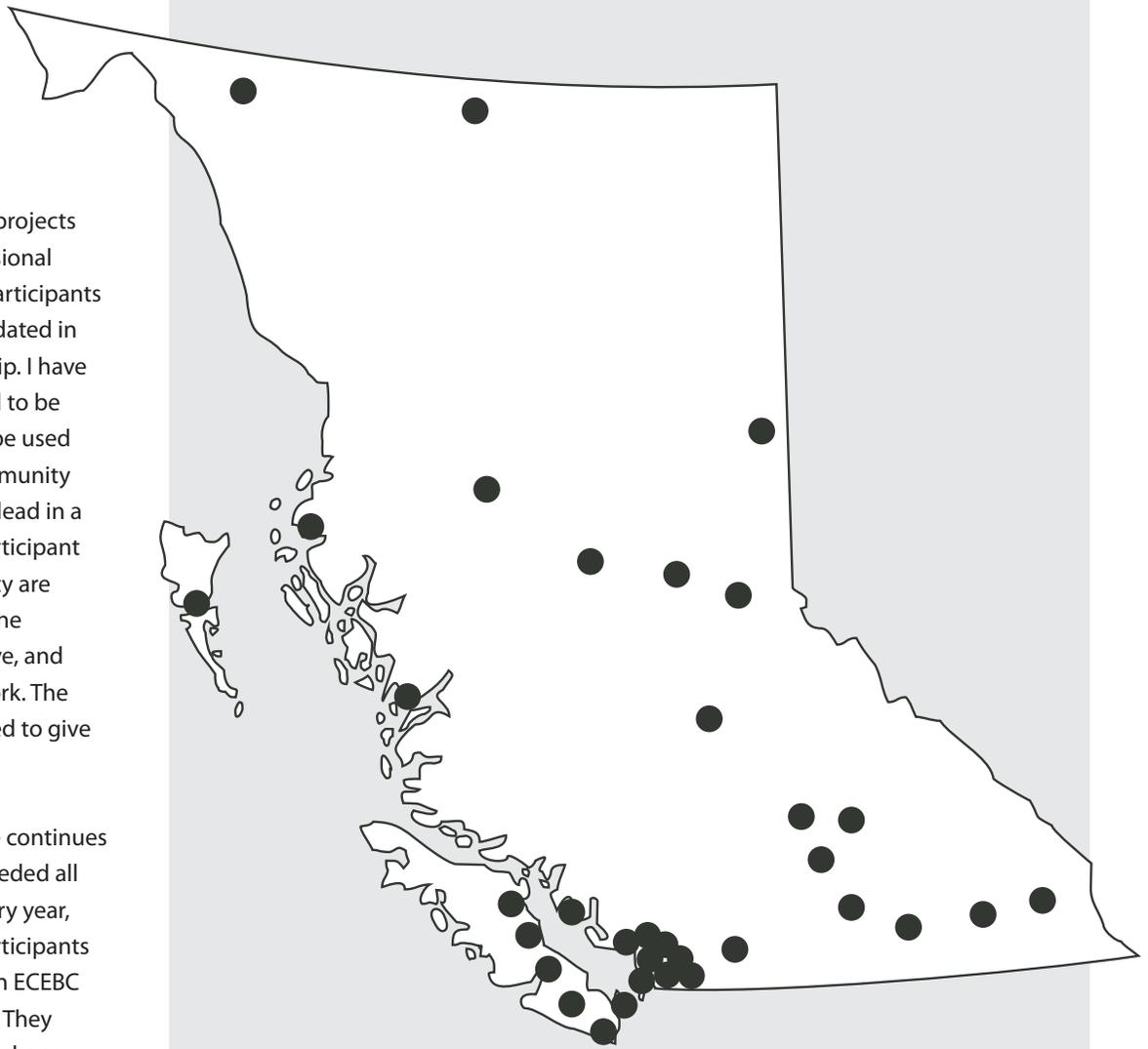
“From the start, ECEBC set out to do something different. Rather than take one of the many approaches to leadership developed by others, ECEBC was determined to support the field to develop its own culture of leadership.”

—Rita Chudnovsky, Leadership Initiative Coordinator,  
2009 to 2011

## THE IMPACT

Feedback on the Leadership Initiative has shown that it is incredibly valuable for participants to have time and resources to work on the projects as well as on their own professional development. As one of the participants said, "I didn't expect to be validated in a redefined model of leadership. I have been surprised and so pleased to be shown that our 'ECE' way can be used effectively in the broader community and that I don't need to try to lead in a way that isn't me." Another participant said, "We in the ECE community are ready to tell the world about the specialized knowledge we have, and the vital importance of our work. The Leadership Initiative has helped to give us a voice."

While the Leadership Initiative continues to develop, it has already exceeded all of our initial expectations. Every year, more and more leadership participants take on new leadership roles in ECEBC and within their communities. They are confident, capable, and, perhaps most importantly, they are able to give themselves and each other the gift of caring that they share with children every day.



### **ECEBC's Leadership Initiative is touching almost every region in BC**

*As of summer 2012 over 90 ECEs representing 34 communities—big and small, urban and rural, First Nations and immigrant communities—have built leadership through projects that have changed them and their communities.*

# Communities of Leadership Innovation



*The community projects are as unique as the participants themselves, but all projects bring a strong and confident message about the professional value of ECEs to the broader communities. Here is an overview of the leadership projects from the past four years.*

## **FIRST COHORT, 2009–2010**

### **Prince Rupert**

#### **Prince Rupert: A Child Friendly Community**

Focused on having Prince Rupert declare itself a child-friendly community and integrating child-friendly policies into Prince Rupert's community plan.

### **Seabird Island Band, Agassiz**

#### **Agassiz Cultural and Language Empowerment**

Engaged the community, Elders, Chief, Council, and cultural committee to determine what is important for young children and to learn more about how the holistic needs of young children were met traditionally.

### **Okanagan Branch of ECEBC**

#### **Fostering Your Gifts**

Showcased and shared early childhood educators' skills, talents, and strengths with families, each other, and the broader community.

### **West Kootenay**

#### **Salmon Speaks**

Shared children's perspectives on community issues to change the community's view of children as "innocents" to that of important members of their community. They created a website [www.salmonspeaks](http://www.salmonspeaks) to show children involved in thoughtful discussions and coming up with powerful insights into difficult human issues.

"Early childhood educators are ready to create the collective leadership we need to give a strong and confident message about our professional value and worth to the broader community."

—Kim Atkinson, Victoria

### **Pemberton, Mt. Currie, D'arcy Early Childhood Educators Retreat**

Organized public awareness activities for Child Care Month in May and organized a retreat to celebrate and value the work of ECEs in the area.

### **Sunshine Coast ECE Voice**

Developed and delivered workshops on leadership and helped ECEs develop a stronger voice to communicate the important role of ECEs in society.

### **Campbell River Creating Connections**

Established a leadership/mentoring forum that set the stage for creating a video, which paints a new picture of the work of ECEs in the region.

### **Victoria Images of Learning**

Created a travelling exhibit called the Images of Learning Project to make visible the competencies of children and the specialized knowledge of ECEs. They also developed workshops and a website and blog (see [www.imagesoflearningproject.com/info/](http://www.imagesoflearningproject.com/info/)) and continue to present and exhibit throughout BC.

### **Lower Post Leadership within Culture**

Integrated traditional knowledge and culture at Ts'Udane Kq Day Care Centre by engaging parents, Elders, and community members, and involved ECEs in organizing language and culture through the Elders and community members.

“Working with the participants from the other Communities of Innovation was amazing. It was great to hear about their projects and to be able to put a face to each project.”

—Angela Roy, Kelowna





### **SECOND COHORT, 2010–2011**

#### **Atlin and surrounding northern communities**

##### **Atlin Children's Festival**

Built a network of ECE professionals in the north to organize a children's festival that generated awareness about the importance of ECE practitioners.

#### **Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC Building Advocacy and Leadership Capacity**

Developed and delivered advocacy-related public presentations and workshops using shared presentations and resources.

#### **Comox Valley**

##### **Project Child Sign in Comox Area**

Gained community support and approval for posting universal picture signs on public buildings that welcome children and make them more visible in the community.

#### **Ktunaxa Community**

##### **Project Ktunaxa Nation ECE Team**

Created a cohesive Early Childhood Team throughout the Ktunaxa Nation that coordinated traditional knowledge and language initiatives and special events.

"The Leadership Institutes exceeded all my expectations. I came away renewed, reaffirmed, and equipped with skills and knowledge to build on."

Kim Atkinson, Victoria



**Kaslo and surrounding rural communities**

**Strengthening Early Childhood Supports in Kaslo**

Raised public awareness about ECE and early childhood supports through speakers, demonstrations, and participation activities and information at community events and services.

**Vancouver Renfrew – Collingwood Children Are Everybody’s Business**

Advocated for the field of early childhood education by producing and distributing information materials to the public and businesses, hosting open houses, and reaching out to Grade 12 students to consider ECE as a career choice.

**Shuswap Region**

**Ambassadors of Play**

Promoted the value of play by recruiting and supporting play ambassadors to take the message to the Shuswap area.

“I’ve learned that the qualities of leadership that ECEs possess, such as listening, validation, encouragement, sharing, making space, and caring, are incredibly transferrable and useful in the larger world.”

—Stephanie Smith,  
Vancouver



“Without a doubt, the Leadership Initiative has come to be one of the most meaningful years in our early childhood education career. And now we say with great pride, ‘I am an early childhood educator claiming my voice!’”

—Grace Yu, Megan Brooks,  
and Lyndsay Spencer,  
Prince George

### **South Asian Community of Surrey Our Children Our Future**

Engaged South Asian ECEs to raise public awareness about the importance of early childhood education in the South Asian community.

### **Southern Gulf Islands Early Childhood Educators of the Gulf Islands**

Created a display and presentation featuring innovative practices in local early childhood programs to take out to the community.

## **THIRD COHORT, 2011–2012**

### **Bella Bella**

#### **Early Childhood Educators, We Are the Difference**

By organizing and hosting community events to educate the community about the role of ECEs, this project is reaching out to inform those who are considering ECE as a profession, with a focus on attracting more males to the field.

### **Prince George**

#### **I Am an Educator Claiming My Voice**

This group is helping to building the confidence of ECEs so they are inspired to share their passion about their profession with the broader community. They are cultivating relationships with those outside the child care profession and supporting recent ECE graduates to assume leadership roles in their community.

### **Smithers**

#### **Book Study**

This group established a book study group for ECEs to read and discuss professionally related literature and submitted book reviews to the local newspaper to raise the profile of early childhood education. The books will become part of the public library collection to be shared with all.





### **Cowichan Region**

#### **Money in Your Pocket**

This group is developing a social media campaign to provide the public with “real life” snapshots of early childhood educators’ work and increasing people’s understanding of ECEs’ responsibilities, complexities, and abilities.

### **Vernon and surrounding communities**

#### **Children as Active Citizens**

This group is creating street banners, permanent signage, and a song to deliver the message that children are active citizens in the community.

### **Fraser Lake**

#### **Fraser Lake Junior Leadership Initiative**

By welcoming “latch key” children back into early childhood programs to help as junior leaders, this project is creating a sense of ownership and belonging for



children at all ages and demonstrated ECEs’ commitment to children and families.

### **Port Alberni**

#### **Showcasing the Significance**

This project is showcasing the significance of young children and the people that work with them. Emerging leaders and mentors are co-creating a strength-based plan to reach out to the broader community.

### **Robson Valley**

#### **Promoting the ECE Field**

Through an interactive children’s fair, this project is highlighting the importance of play and the role of play in children’s development. They are increasing community awareness and promoting the ECE profession to Grade 11 and 12 students.

“Leadership participants are taking on new leadership roles in ECEBC and beyond. They are confident, capable, and, perhaps most importantly, able to give themselves and each other the gift of caring that they share with children every day.”

—Rita Chudnovsky

“Together we have the ability to create a culture of leadership that does not focus on one individual. Rather, it is a cohesive team that is confident in the values of the ECE field. This allows us to stand strong together and to reach our full potential as leaders.”

—Katie Wahl, Prince Rupert and Kim Bowan, Okanagan



### **FOURTH COHORT, 2012–2013**

#### **Williams Lake**

This project is raising public awareness of the important role of early childhood education through a comprehensive advertising campaign. The advertisements are insightful and memorable statements about the benefits of early care and learning to our communities.

#### **Sorrento**

##### **Early Childhood Educators—Discover Our Team**

This project is targeting local schools, parents, and other community members to highlight the importance of early

childhood education to every child's development and to create enthusiasm about the possibilities in the field of early childhood education.

#### **North/West Vancouver**

##### **ECE Community Connections**

In collaboration with various community organizations including the Child Care Resource and Referral, school districts, First Nation bands, and Capilano University, this group is using social media (blogs and Twitter) to unify the ECE community, promote the profession, and educate and advocate the role of the early childhood educator to the broader community.



### **Vancouver**

#### **The Value of Childcare**

Through a series of focus groups and dialogues with families, researchers/policy makers, and ECEs, working so a shared understanding will emerge about the similar aims of these three communities. The focus groups will be documented and shared with the broader community through a public forum. The purpose of the forum will be to express a vision of early care and learning that makes sense to all community members.

### **Langley**

#### **Langley Face to Face**

Using social media, this group is reaching out to early childhood educators, other ECE professionals, and parents for discussions on early childhood education and the importance of the work of early childhood educators in our community.

### **South Peace Region**

To address the shortage of ECEs in the South Peace region, this group is developing a travelling road show to bring to schools throughout the school district for grades 7 and up. The presentation is highlighting the world of early childhood and the importance and professionalism of early childhood educators.

### **Vancouver**

#### **Circle of Community Care and Learning**

By creating resource materials and promoting the inquiry-based curriculum approach with ECEs and families, this project is helping ECEs learn how to stand up for the ECE profession and advocate for the values of ECE.

### **Skidegate**

#### **Family Experience Days**

This group is reaching out to various community groups including local Headstart, daycares, preschools, and the Skidegate Haida Language Program to collaborate on cultural resource materials. The new materials and the collaboration process will support the sharing of traditional knowledge, increase the pride of the early childhood educators, and build awareness of their work.



## A special thanks to all sponsoring agencies:

Alberni Valley Community School Society  
Arcadia Road Combined Daycare  
Communicare Society  
Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives  
Cariboo Chilcotin Child Development  
Centre Association  
Christian Life Daycare  
Collingwood Neighbourhood House  
Comox Valley Children's Day Care Society  
Early Learning for Families  
Heiltsuk Tribal Council  
Ki-Low-Na Friendship Society  
Ktunaxa Nation Traditional  
Knowledge and Learning

Langley Community Services Society  
Liard Aboriginal Women's Society  
Nechaka Valley Community Services  
North Kootenay Lake Community  
Services Society  
North Shore Neighbourhood House  
North and South Community  
Resources Association  
Options Community Services  
Prince George United Way  
Q'ayllnagaay Heritage Centre Society  
Robson Valley Support Society  
Social Planning Cowichan  
Smithers Community Services Association

School District 61  
Seabird Island Band  
Sea To Sky Community Services  
Shuswap Children's Association  
Sunshine Coast Early Childhood  
Development Planning Table  
The South Peace Building  
Together (BLT) Society  
Tlingit Family Learning Centre  
W.E. Graham Community Services Society  
Westcoast Child Care Resource Centre  
United Way of the North Okanagan  
University of Northern BC Childcare Society

### **Vancity** Community Foundation

*ECEBC would like to thank Vancity  
Community Foundation for their  
ongoing support of this important  
Leadership Initiative.*

#### **For more information about ECEBC's Leadership Initiative**

- **Visit our web site at [www.ecebc.ca](http://www.ecebc.ca)**
- **Follow us on Facebook: [Ecebc-Leadership](https://www.facebook.com/Ecebc-Leadership)**
- **E-mail us at [leadership@ecebc.ca](mailto:leadership@ecebc.ca)**

*All photos by Shawn Nygren*



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# Fifth Cohort, 2013 - 2014

## Kitwanga

### Quality Wilna t'ehl Values: Early Care and Learning

Realizing that as Early Childhood educators we do have strengths and leadership skills, our group plans to reach out to our community and the neighbouring communities to create a collaborative relationship with band council and the schools to plan and implement community day conferences for parents that would showcase the importance of early childhood and the early childhood educators in the community. Stronger connections with young families will help us support the parents with their involvement in their young children's lives and their understanding of early care and learning. We are also interested in developing policies and procedures for ECE programs that reflect and integrating ECE best practices and Gitksan values.

## Salmon Arm

### T.R.U.E. in the Trees

In collaboration with our community partners and building on the strengths in our ECE community, we plan to inspire residents to enjoy our natural environment with their children through family centred activities. By educating parents and caregivers of the value of learning and brain development that comes with outdoor play and social interaction between families and

community we will enhance the knowledge of early childhood while enhancing community capacity. We plan to reach out beyond Salmon Arm to other communities in our regions including 4 nearby aboriginal communities to encourage partnerships and sharing of their perspective on our natural environment, child development and culturally appropriate events.

## Burnaby Mountain

### Burnaby Mountain Community Educators

With the intent of enhancing the relationship between childcare and the Burnaby mountain community and services we will use pedagogical narrations and BC Early Learning Framework to promote ECE's work in the Burnaby mountain community. By making children's learning visible (art displays, newsletters, workshops) and collaborating with other groups and faculties on campus, we hope to raise the profile of Early Childhood Educators in the community and build bridges between staff, students, families and educators.

## Terrace

### Bridging the Gaps

Thinking about the next generation of Early Childhood Educators in our community we plan to strengthen ties with other ECE communities in our region by coming together for

inspirational and reflective practice retreats. Deeper more cohesive and meaningful relationships among ECE's in Northwest with help us to further create awareness of our work and enthusiasm for what we do.

## Prince Rupert

### The Early Childhood Educators of the City Of Prince Rupert bring you "National Children's Day"

Our project will include partnerships with community stakeholders to highlight the importance of the Rights of the Child and acknowledge Universal Day of the Child. We will be inviting our community to partake in the day and extending an invitation to our surrounding communities such as Lax Kw'alaams, Metlakatla, Gitga'at, Kitkatla and Port Edward.

The event at the Civic Centre will welcome families and children for a day of fun events, activities and performers that will highlight the vital work that ECE's undertake day while encouraging parents to ask questions and be more involved in the early childhood programs. The positive impact and development of the domains of the whole child that they are teaching the children they work with. Greater community understanding of our work will bring more support for our sector and the children in our community while

also empowering the Early Childhood Educators.

Booths will highlight Childcare Centre's in our area which are staffed by ECE's as well as a slide show showcasing ECEs and the work they do.

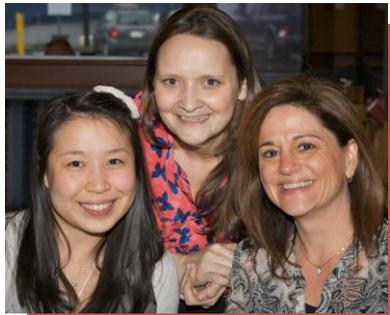
## Prince George

### Our Image of the Child

By bringing workshops and motivational speakers to parents, caregivers and educators, we will find our voice through greater self confidence. By finding confidence in ourselves we can pass that on to our sector and the children in our care. We will raise the "consciousness" of early childhood educators of the importance of their work, which will in turn encourage our sector to share that knowledge with parents and the community. We will learn and grow together with other ECE's as we make strong connections through this journey.

"What I learned is so extensive. I can't wait to get home and share this with my colleagues, network agencies, sponsors and anyone who'll listen."

Fifth Cohort Participant



“If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, become more, you are a leader.”  
John Quincy Adams



ECEBC's Leadership Initiative

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**Communities of Innovation  
Fifth Cohort**