



**BC** Aboriginal  
**ChildCare** Society

**EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE IN  
BC ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES:  
A REPORT ON FINDINGS FROM  
INFORMATION SHARING AND DIALOGUE SESSIONS**

November 30, 2005

BC Aboriginal Child Care Society (ACCS)

## Key Messages / Recommendations

Ongoing consultation, engagement and long-term planning with BC Aboriginal communities: the limited, rushed and inadequately resourced “information sharing and dialogue” process is unacceptable to Aboriginal communities and inconsistent with BC’s “duty to consult” Aboriginal Peoples on issues that can impact Aboriginal interests, rights and title and with the emerging “new relationship” between BC First Nations and the Government of BC;

Funding must be available to all BC children, families and communities, including rural, remote, on-reserve and off-reserve Aboriginal communities: ongoing, unresolved jurisdictional disputes between the Provincial and Federal Governments regarding service delivery responsibilities relative to First Nations communities must not be a barrier to the equitable access to Provincial Government funding resources;

Funding made available to Aboriginal communities must be provided on an *equitable* basis: “*equal*” access is not adequate as the foundation for the Aboriginal strategy, given the historical under-funding of Aboriginal services and the higher needs of Aboriginal children and families;

Spending decisions must be based upon current, accurate and comprehensive information about Aboriginal children, families and communities in BC: reliance upon information from the 2001 Census is not acceptable because of the flaws in the data; Aboriginal communities need to build capacity for data collection and analysis to support planning processes;

A first priority for the Aboriginal strategy must be supporting cultural and linguistic continuity through cultural and language programming in all aspects of child care and early learning services provided to Aboriginal communities: culture and language are sources of strength for Aboriginal children, families and communities and must be restored through concerted attention and investment to overcome the multi-generational impact of the residential school system and other features of colonization;

Services must be both child-focused and family-centred: BC’s ELCC strategy must include parent education and family support as well as center/family-based child care, and they must support the holistic development of the child, including cognitive, emotional, physical and spiritual development;

Curriculum, facilities, materials, regulatory mechanisms, staffing – all aspects of ELCC programs and services – must be based upon Aboriginal cultural traditions, values and practices and be resourced at levels that will ensure quality programs;

Services must be coordinated and collaborative, and be delivered through integrated / single window approaches: key service delivery systems - especially education, health and housing – need to be involved; integration is especially required at the Governmental level, i.e., a single Ministry.

## Process

ACCS advocated, with MCFD representatives present at the ACCS AGM in mid-November, for an Aboriginal-specific consultation on the BC Government's ELCC proposals, to coincide with the community consultation the Ministry planned for the month of November, subject to provisions in the Canada/BC Agreement-In-Principle (AIP), signed on September 29<sup>th</sup> 2005.

Aboriginal ELCC stakeholders, which ACCS has organized into different streams and list serves, were sent an "Urgent Message" by Karen Isaac, ACCS Operations Manager, late in the week of November 21<sup>st</sup>, about the importance of and opportunities to participate in consultations to inform the BC Government's Early Learning and Child Care Action Plan. Once MCFD confirmed funding for a limited Aboriginal dialogue process, ACCS prepared and forwarded a background document to the same lists of stakeholders.

Instructions contained in the background document indicated that, to facilitate discussion because of the pressing timeframe, ACCS had prepared some key messages, based upon statements that have been made by Aboriginal people in other ELCC consultation and dialogue sessions, i.e., the text contained within the blue text boxes on the MCFD Feedback Form. ACCS stressed the importance of ensuring that the Aboriginal voice is heard in the Ministry's consultation process. Aboriginal stakeholders were advised that they could use the content developed by ACCS, or build upon it to develop their own responses. The importance of giving the BC Government clear and consistent messages was emphasized.

Participants were also advised that, in addition to completing MCFD's on-line Feedback Form at <http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/childcare/questionnaire.asp>, they could also attend face-to-face meetings in Prince George on November 24<sup>th</sup>, from 1:00 to 4:00 pm, or in Vancouver on November 28<sup>th</sup>, from 1:00 to 4:00.

## **General Comments from Dialogue Sessions**

### **North Region Dialogue Session**

#### **Process issues:**

- Very short timeframe, consequently, no time for technicians to consult with their communities, organizations, agencies and Leadership;
- No-one present from MCFD to answer questions.

#### **Aboriginal Consultation**

- MCFD process didn't include Aboriginal consultation; had to be lobbied by ACCS to support an Aboriginal dialogue process and then provided only limited financial support;
- Meaningful consultations are required in all regions throughout the province;
- Realistic timeframes are required for consultation processes – not 'last minute'.
- Supported consultations are required to effectively engage Aboriginal communities;
- Where is the Aboriginal voice as to where/how the \$663 million in funding is to be spent?

#### **Spending**

- Budget details re annual spending plans;
- The decision-making process;
  - For this year's spending decisions?
  - To determine spending over the next 5 years?

#### **Data issues:**

- Where are the Aboriginal specific statistics? For example, 43% of CIC are Aboriginal children, but in the North, it is 73%;
- Necessary Aboriginal-specific information required includes:
  - How many Aboriginal children in BC overall? and,
  - How many Aboriginal children live in the North Region?
  - How many Northern Aboriginal children and families access child care and early learning services?
  - How many Northern Aboriginal children with special support needs? How many are able to access services?
  - Etc.

#### **Subsidies**

- There are issues arising from MCFD's administration of child care subsidies: The perception of Aboriginal parents/families/communities is that the Ministry is the Government agency that takes away our children. Therefore, individuals do not want to have to deal with MCFD in order to access subsidies. If some other agency were to administer the subsidies, we will likely see more Aboriginal access to those subsidies;
- Access to subsidies: The current process to access day care subsidies does not work, particularly for our Northern and remote communities. The 1-800 number itself is a huge barrier; for example, some of our communities / families do not have access to a telephone. Further, for those that do have telephone access, the 1-800 number process is confusing, with the result that many parents/families who are eligible for subsidies do not access them. A more 'user friendly' / culturally responsive application process is required.

## **Vancouver Aboriginal Dialogue Session**

### **Questions and Comments Arising from MCFD Power Point Presentation**

The following questions emerged from the Ministry's power point presentation:

1. Clarify whether these new ELCC dollars are Federal only?
2. Clarify whether and how much BC is contributing to ELCC programming?
3. Clarify whether this ELCC program is intended for all children?
4. Clarify whether there is an Aboriginal allocation within these new dollars?
5. Provide BC's definition of "consultation"?
6. Clarify whether Aboriginal communities are able to access the capital dollars?
7. Clarify whether there is enough funding over the next five years to address the demand for services by Aboriginal communities?
8. Confirm the accuracy of the data on Aboriginal children and needs, and identify the source of the data provided, i.e., how did BC obtain this data?

The following issues emerged from the discussion:

#### **Process Issues**

- We have had very little time to prepare but we felt that was important to bring people together;
- We are very concerned that our families and communities have a voice in the process;
- We have been very clear with the Ministry that we do not consider this session to be "consultation", because of the shortness of the time frame and the limited participation as a result of the inadequate notice;
- Consultation can't stop here; it must be ongoing.

#### **Data Issues**

- EDI – Given that the EDI has been and will be used by MCFD to make spending decisions, important to ensure that the information about Aboriginal children is accurate; need to recognize that there are "pockets of vulnerability" within the study areas; need for Aboriginal capacity building to use EDI data;
- Aboriginal-specific statistics? Including information such as:
  - Numbers and percentages of Aboriginal children not "school ready"; i.e., of the 25% of all BC children who enter school not "school ready", how many are Aboriginal;
  - Of the 4,000 providers in the province, how many of those are Aboriginal?
- Good data is needed for "targeted investments", i.e., targeting of low and moderate income families and special needs children;
- There are Aboriginal service providers that are now working on data collection issues; how can this information be used as part of the foundation for improved information on Aboriginal numbers and needs to support spending decisions?
- A research component needs to be part of the strategy;
- Will the Ministry draw upon the ECD Report of the Child and Youth Officer?

#### **Aboriginal Allocation**

- There is need for a separate Aboriginal allocation and an Aboriginal decision-making infrastructure relative to that Aboriginal allocation;
- How much has been budgeted for the new Aboriginal Capital Fund, and have decisions been made as to how it will be allocated, given MCFD's decision to allocate all capital funds according to EDI data?

- BC is not relieved of the responsibility to fund First Nations services by the funding to be made available through the Federal Government because that funding is extremely limited; i.e. \$100 million fund for all 10 provinces and 3 territories, over five years
- Were Aboriginal population counts including in the per capita calculation of BC's share of the funding, and, if so, what was the source of the data?

### **Capacity Building**

- Not a level playing field within BC Aboriginal communities: larger, more resourced communities are more able to access funding, i.e., to prepare successful funding proposals.

### **Integrated Services**

- Role of the Ministry of Education:
  - What is the nature of the mandate provided to the Ministry of Education, and how does that mandate support or detract from the creation of coordinated and/or integrated service delivery, given that integration is a specific BC principle?
  - Is/will the Ministry of Education be involved in spending decisions regarding the ELCC initiative?
  - What is the process for Aboriginal involvement in that Ministry's decision-making process regarding early learning in Aboriginal communities?
- What coordination and/or integration is taking place between other Ministries providing related early learning and child care programs and services, including the Federal and Provincial Governments?
- Strategies for targeted investments and integrated services need to assess and respond to the impact of factors such as the quality of education available on-reserve and in rural and remote areas – as reflected in graduation rates of 55% and the significant numbers of students who are graduating but are still illiterate - and the lack of adequate housing on-reserve, because both factors play a role in the residency issue; that is, many First Nations people are forced off-reserve because of the lack of access to quality education and the unavailability of housing;
- How will this program interface with existing programs, such as Aboriginal Infant Development Programs (AIDP)

### **Support for ELCC Programs Outside of Licensed Child Care**

- The majority of funding is to be allocated to licensed child care facilities; the majority of Aboriginal services do not fall under that category, so, how will First Nations communities have equitable or equal access to the funding?

### **Child AND Family Centred**

- The emphasis needs to be “child AND family centred’ practice, not just child-focused child care.

### **Individual Submissions**

#### **Extending services to children beyond 6 years of age**

- Focus is on early childhood, which is great. However, what about our 6-12 year olds. Do we just tell them it is too late? That we don't care cause they are too old to make a difference for them? It isn't right. Out of School Care Programs need to have dollars invested in them as well otherwise all the good work we do in early childhood is going to be lost.

# Aboriginal Responses to MCFD Feedback Form

## Early Learning and Child Care for Aboriginal Communities in BC

### Your Input is Needed

Your feedback and input is needed on the direction and priorities for BC's Early Learning and Child Care Program. MCFD has set out its proposals and initiatives in its November 2005 *Early Learning and Child Care in British Columbia* consultation paper. The following questions are a result of that document.

In addition, so that we will not have to start from the beginning, we have provided you with Aboriginal-specific responses to the questions derived from previous related consultations with Aboriginal peoples throughout British Columbia; that info is provided in the blue boxes. Responses from Northern Aboriginal ELCC stakeholders are contained in the yellow boxes. Responses from the Vancouver Dialogue Session follow the Northern report.

### 1. BC's VISION FOR CHILDREN

According to the BC Government, "British Columbia is committed to giving children the best future possible by increasing supports available for child care, early childhood development programs and early learning programs, all of which should increase the proportion of children entering school ready to learn".

"VISION" for Early Learning and Child Care in BC, proposed by the BC Government:

*Access to quality early learning and child care in all BC communities that meet the needs of all young children and their families.*

**What, if any, are your views on the "vision" statement for early learning and child care?**

### BC Aboriginal Child Care Society

BC's ELCC vision would include:

- An early learning and child care *system* that meets the needs of all young children and families in the province, including Aboriginal children and families living in rural, remote, on-reserve and off-reserve communities throughout the province;
- Children and families would access universally available, inclusive, high quality, culturally responsive, integrated and publicly funded, early learning and child care services that meet the needs of parents/families and the education, care and development needs of young children;
- A system built in collaboration with BC's Aboriginal communities;
- Support for BC First Nations to serve their community members regardless of locale (e.g. on-reserve and urban/off-reserve, remote northern and coastal areas);
- Federal / Provincial jurisdictional issues would not be a barrier to the equitable access of Aboriginal children and families to BC's ELCC resources.

## **Northern, Prince George**

- ✓ The vision statement must include recognition and support for Language and Culture;
- ✓ “Empowering families/parents/caregivers” should be included in the vision statement
- ✓ The language should be changed “funding” to “financing”, to reflect a partnership relationship and Aboriginal capacities;
- ✓ The first bullet of the vision needs to include specific provisions for additional support for child care and child development throughout the province, and funding for supported child care and supported child development;
- ✓ In second bullet – the words “special needs” and “rural and remote” need to be included: i.e., Children and families living in rural and remote on-reserve and off-reserve communities would access universally available, inclusive, high quality, culturally responsive, integrated and publicly funded, early learning and child care services that meet the needs of parents/families and the education, care, development and special needs of young children;
- ✓ Collaboration with BC’s Aboriginal communities would occur “at all levels” and include consultation, assessment, planning, implementation, evaluation and service delivery;
- ✓ Specific allocations are required for the different areas of the province to reflect the reality that rural and remote communities are under-funded and require more funding resources than urban areas;
- ✓ Funding needs to support First Nations authority, jurisdiction and governance;
- ✓ Needs to empower families, communities and caregivers!

## **Vancouver**

- ✓ A significant increase in amount of services available to families, and a variety of services;
- ✓ Support for communities in the development of new services;
- ✓ Family centred, locally focused and home focused services that meet the needs of the whole family;
- ✓ Capacity building – support for communities to build their capacity to meet the needs of their children and families
- ✓ Sustainable services – stable services available over the long-term, not year-to-year;
- ✓ Supportive of life-long learning;
- ✓ Community based and driven;
- ✓ Creative and innovative approaches to service delivery;
- ✓ Supports families AND the holistic development of children;
- ✓ Quality in the Aboriginal cultural context, including support for the development of mind, emotion, body and spirit;
- ✓ Services for children with special support needs without labeling children;
- ✓ Strive for excellence;
- ✓ Based upon long term planning;
- ✓ Available to all communities, including rural, remote, on-reserve and off-reserve;
- ✓ Prevention and Early Intervention programming;
- ✓ Collaborative; and
- ✓ Culturally appropriate, including the participation of Elders.

## **Individual Submissions**

- ✓ Aboriginal interests need to be specifically provided for in the Vision Statement, not just assumed as part of “all children”, because Aboriginal interests and needs are distinct and can get lost; that is, Aboriginal children and families have distinct cultures and

languages that must be respected at all times; because culture and language are priorities for our services and programs, specific provisions are required in the vision statement;

- ✓ The vision needs to include statements to the effect that services are available regardless of residency, inclusive, accessible, and available in remote and isolated First Nations communities.

## **2. "GOALS" for Early Learning and Child Care in BC**

- ✓ More children will enter school better prepared to succeed
- ✓ More BC families will have access to quality child care
- ✓ More families will have access to a range of early learning programs and services
- ✓ More children with special needs will be supported in order to be included in quality community-based child care settings
- ✓ More children will be cared for by qualified child care workers in regulated child care spaces
- ✓ More BC families will have access to community hubs where a range of integrated family services are located

**What, if any, are your views on the "goals" for early learning and child care? Is a goal missing or does something need to be changed, added or deleted? And, if so, why?**

### **BC Aboriginal Child Care Society**

ELCC goals for Aboriginal children would include:

- Seamless, integrated service delivery (integration of ELCC with services such as child and family services, education and health programs).
- ELCC services have a direct link to the ELCC workforce including planning and resource allocation.

Goals need clear timelines and targets. To ensure that the goals of providing all young children and families with access to affordable, high quality early learning and child care are met within the next five years, it is suggested that each goal identify definite targets and time frames, including Aboriginal service delivery targets along with of success and monitoring mechanisms.

### **Northern, Prince George**

- ✓ Supported child care and development services in the north!
- ✓ Accessible education for ECE/ECD service providers / labour force;
- ✓ Service delivery gaps must be addressed across Ministries, and especially in the north in the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Children and Families, and others;
- ✓ Services should not have a narrow focus on Child Care;
- ✓ BC's ELCC "Action Plan" needs to provide for meaningful inclusion of northern Aboriginal communities and address Aboriginal community needs;
- ✓ Access to funding for rural, remote, isolated and small communities;
- ✓ Quality early learning and child day care programs in EVERY First Nation community – regardless of size (universal access);
- ✓ Equity of resources in Aboriginal programs:
  - Same as Ministry programs;
  - Based on the NEEDS of northern communities;

- Resources and Flexible of policy (we know what we need);
- ✓ Seamless transitions for our ECE students into the public school system;
- ✓ Systemic changes and more First Nations ECE teachers;
- ✓ All early learning services for Aboriginal communities to be designed and implemented by Aboriginal communities; (First Nations authority, jurisdiction and governance)
- ✓ BC continues to shift funding resources to First Nations.

## **Vancouver**

- ✓ Quality programs and services;
- ✓ Services must be grounded in Aboriginal cultures, and include support for Aboriginal language development and the involvement of Elders;
- ✓ Equity not just equality; i.e., program goals must provide equitable access to resources for Aboriginal communities, including support for Aboriginal capacity building and service delivery targets that provide “equitable” access to resources, in recognition that Aboriginal communities are not starting at the same place as non-Aboriginal communities; i.e., providing “equal” access to service delivery resources isn’t an adequate development strategy for Aboriginal services because of the historic and continuing under-funding of Aboriginal communities, which means that Aboriginal services are minimal or non-existent;
- ✓ An understanding that Aboriginal communities will define the QUAD principles according to their own cultural context;
- ✓ Recognition of diversity; i.e., the QUAD and BC specific principles may be defined differently in different regions;
- ✓ Integrated “one-window” service delivery, including children’s mental health services;
- ✓ “Nation based” rather than “community-based” or “regional”, to ensure that Nations can take responsibility for their own children and support their own families;
- ✓ Ongoing consultation with Aboriginal communities and service providers;
- ✓ Planning and resource allocation based upon accurate and adequate information, i.e., statistical data describing Aboriginal populations other than the Census, which is fundamentally flawed when it comes to statistics on Aboriginal populations;
- ✓ Streamlined administration;
- ✓ Quality child care includes inclusive early learning, early intervention and prevention services (add to bullet #2 above);
- ✓ Quality services for Aboriginal communities are culturally appropriate (add to bullet 2&4 above );
- ✓ Responsive to the political landscape.

## **Individual Submissions**

- ✓ Programs in and for Aboriginal communities need to be community-driven in order to be successful;
- ✓ Programs need to be delivered in Aboriginal communities preferably by Aboriginal service providers.
- ✓ Early identification of health and developmental problems prior to birth;
- ✓ Early identification of children with special needs, accessibility to assessments, and the timely availability of support services (speech/language, OT, PT);
- ✓ Accessibility for children to diagnosis of psychological and FASD disorders - currently there is no money available for psychological assessments or education assessments - we have to come up with the money on our own.

### 3. "PRINCIPLES" for Early Learning and Child Care

As agreed to by the Federal, Provincial and Territorial governments, the QUAD Principles will apply to the BC Program:

- Quality
- Universally Inclusive
- Accessible
- Developmental

In addition to these four principles, the BC Government has adopted the following three principles:

- Choice and Flexibility
- Targeted Investments (to low income families and children with special needs)
- Integrated Services

**If you have any comments on the principles, please indicate below.**

#### **BC Aboriginal Child Care Society**

- Culture and Language - embodies the essence of our identity, our cultural context and our practical realities;
- ELCC services support cultural and linguistic continuity through the integration of culture and language into all aspects of service delivery, and through the participation of Elders and ancestral language speakers and teachers in ELCC programming;
- Excellence - Our communities are committed to the established of ELCC services that meet or exceed any service delivery standards that are established as a result of the QUAD principles and the additional BC principles;
- Holistic and Integrated Programs and Services;

Children and parents/families should experience "seamless" service delivery through the integration of ELCC services with relevant education and health care services, especially services provided to children in kindergarten programs (K4 and K5) and maternal child health services; integrated service delivery should apply to all levels and should begin at the earliest stage in the planning and development of new service delivery initiatives;

- Real "Choice" - depends upon having access to a comprehensive range of available, affordable, high quality, culturally responsive early learning and child care service delivery options;
- Universal Access - creation of a high quality universal service delivery system that entitles all BC children and families to equitable access to services;

#### **Northern, Prince George**

- ✓ Make sure there is ongoing community consultation on these visions and give people reasonable notice of meetings – One day is not enough in the north!!
- ✓ Early Learning and Child Care should not be separated. Early learning happens in Child Care – Programs should be in the same Ministry;
- ✓ Have mobile Child Development Centres (CDC) where specialized services including speech and language (SLP), occupational therapy (OT), vision, hearing, PT and other

specialist services visit each reserve; to be replaced, eventually, by trained/qualified Aboriginal community members delivering on-site SCC/SCD services on-reserves throughout the north;

- ✓ We need decision makers to be involved in this dialogue, including Chief and Council, Municipal Politicians, City planners, etc.;
- ✓ Transportation is an issue for the north – we need funding to make services accessible;
- ✓ We need more community-based/on-site Aboriginal training opportunities and ongoing training/professional development for trained people that stay in their community;
- ✓ Recruitment and retention:
  - Increase wages and benefits for those who work in ECD/ECE programs – based on skills, education, training;
  - A recognized degree program for ECD;
  - A ECD/ECE college to give workers recognition as a profession and to give them more political “clout” as well as standardized and consistent wage grids;
- ✓ The QUAD language should be changed, where “universally inclusive” is also “universally accessible” and means a fully publicly funded system;
- ✓ Seamless day for kindergarten students – “accessibility” needs to also include quality care choices for children enrolled in kindergarten programs and also requiring care;
- ✓ “Accessibility” also means that children’s developmental needs need to be met by First Nations Counselors, who are available to the children whenever needed – accessibility of service (means being available all the time - based on student/counselor ration needs).

## **Vancouver**

- ✓ Quality services promote the healthy, holistic development of Aboriginal children; “seamless” services must be defined in the Aboriginal cultural context;
- ✓ ELCC is more than just “education” i.e., “preschool”; also includes family support and parent education; a “holistic” approach in the Aboriginal context includes supporting families;
- ✓ A concerted and priority focus on each child’s culture and language, i.e., Nation-specific programming; incorporation of Elders’ teachings and ensure involvement of Elders and language speakers; understanding that “holistic” in the Aboriginal context must include spiritual and cultural development because culture and language are critical to child’s healthy development, in part because they help to establish positive identities, pride in one’s cultural heritage and high self-esteem;
- ✓ A broad definition of “special needs”, avoidance of labeling, and an Aboriginal allocation for services for children with special support needs and their families, because of the high number of Aboriginal children with special needs;
- ✓ We need to raise our expectations of children and programs, i.e., expect more, expect excellence;
- ✓ Creativity and innovation;
- ✓ Prevention and Early Intervention;
- ✓ Programs need to help children be healthy; services delivered to children and families at high risk of neglect, abuse and involvement of the child protection system must avoid removing children from their homes because of long-term emotional and psychological impacts, i.e., feelings of guilt and abandonment; ensure that no more children are lost to their families, communities and Nations;
- ✓ Home-based parent education and family support services, such as home visiting, are also required to overcome the inter-generational / multi-generational impact of the residential school system; specific measures are required to re-establish family closeness and openness;

- ✓ Parent education, family support and the preparation of ECC teachers must include awareness of the multi-generational impact of racism and the residential school system;
- ✓ Cooperation and collaboration with other services; ELCC services should not operate in isolation of other programs and services because there are a number of different ways of supporting families and promoting child development.

### **Individual Submissions**

- ✓ Portability needs to be a principle: an Aboriginal child with a special need who is accessing services in one community should get the same quality and level of service no matter where he or she moves, on or off reserve. The dollars for his/her care should follow them wherever they relocate;
- ✓ Accessibility needs to address the shortages in health care coverage: families need to have access to medications, health care and equipment...what ever their child needs. Right now, this is not so and families have to try and find the money to purchase non-prescribed medications (such as children's Tylenol) and any specialized equipment for their child that isn't covered by a program;
- ✓ Timely access to specialized services / elimination of waitlists for children's services: If a child is need of a treatment, program or service (mental health or speech therapy), they should get that service in a timely manner (get rid of all waitlists!)
- ✓ We need our own service delivery "hubs". We need a full range of programs and services within our communities to meet the full range of needs.
- ✓ Culturally responsive "hubs" are required: when 'community hubs' are mentioned, there seems to be a vision of mainstream society's idea - such as a Neighborhood House or Community Centre. First Nations' community hubs include pow-wow, canoe races, sporting events, and other healthy cultural events, where families attend together with their children and learn language, music, and traditional knowledge. More support is needed for children's group activities, such as traditional dance, singing, drumming, and so forth. These kinds of activities are the basis of community hubs, because people enjoy being there (positive, asset/strength-based approaches).
- ✓ Seamless service is important so that children can go from one stage of development to another with supports in place; prevention programs prevent early failure and later drop out.

## **4. Towards Quality Early Learning and Child Care: Building Blocks**

### **4.1 Enhancements to Child Care Subsidy - Effective October 1, 2005**

- increase in income threshold from approximately \$21,000 to approximately \$38,000 depending on individual circumstances;
- increase in subsidy rates to better reflect the cost of care;
- funding for children who do not attend a licensed group or preschool setting to allow them to benefit from a preschool experience

**What, if any, are your views on the changes to enhance the child care subsidy program. Is there some way the program could be improved or changed?**

### **BC Aboriginal Child Care Society**

Although enhanced subsidies will result in additional access to services, they fall well short of what is required for an affordable, universally available, high quality service delivery system. That is:

- Enhanced subsidies do not mean that families will be able to find a space;

- Enhanced subsidies do not mean that services will meet the needs of children and families;
- Increases in subsidy rates can lead to increases in fees.;
- Subsidies do not promote sustainable services.

Rather than limiting the strategy to enhanced subsidy provisions, BC should shift its funding priorities from subsidies to the full public funding of a universal early learning and child care system for all children and families in the province.

### **Northern, Prince George**

- ✓ There needs to be recognition of the numbers and percentage of Aboriginal families living below the poverty line;
- ✓ Universal ELCC and subsidies – Just because ELCC is available does not mean it is accessible; services must be affordable to families;
- ✓ All children should be able to access/attend early learning and child care programs regardless of whether parents work outside of the home or not; Parenting is a job itself;
- ✓ Other countries have fully funded ELCC systems – why not Canada and BC?
- ✓ BC Government Ministries can't define "need" – only Aboriginal parents, families and communities are able to define their own needs;
- ✓ Parental subsidies should be administered by organizations other than the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD); because of the Ministry's historic and ongoing role in Aboriginal communities, many community members will not access subsidy programs if it means dealing with Ministry;
- ✓ Make subsidies more accessible by providing assistance beyond the 1-800 number, i.e., assistance in filling out forms, streamlining or eliminating forms, etc.

### **Vancouver**

- ✓ Easier Access;
- ✓ Some parents experience discrimination for accessing subsidy dollars if their child attends a Head Start program; Ministry staff thinks the parents are "double-dipping";
- ✓ Need to have more information sharing between Aboriginal Head Start and Ministry.

### **Individual Submissions**

- ✓ I think that this is just a band aid. Money needs to be put into support services to ensure that there are enough Aboriginal childcare programs for every Aboriginal child. And, not only licensed child care programs - Family Drop-in Programs also - because not everyone works and needs childcare spaces. We need to address the needs of all Aboriginal children's and families needs.
- ✓ First Nations families are not accessing parental subsidies. Urban Aboriginal parents may access it more because they have to pay for child care. On reserve, where there may be programming provided through the band, people don't apply for subsidy. Subsidies are a hassle for many parents who do have to access subsidies - the forms can be confusing and there isn't enough support. Hopefully this is changing. This is an example of the mainstream value of individualism in operation, rather than working collectively and having services available for all.

### **4.2 Enhancements to Child Care Operating Funding - Effective October 1, 2005**

- increase of 36.6% in operating funding for eligible licensed child care providers for services to children under six to support a stable supply of child care spaces

- link future operating funding increases to quality enhancement

**What, if any, are your views on the changes to enhance the child care operator funding program. Is there some way the program could be improved or changed?**

### **BC Aboriginal Child Care Society**

Increasing the Operating Funding of Early Learning and Child Care providers to levels that will ensure the provision of affordable, high quality services, through strategies focused on improving the ELCC work force – including increased recognition, compensation rates and human resource development – as well as other aspects of “quality”, should be a high priority for BC’s ELCC program.

Linking future operating funding to increases in quality enhancement may be the only way to achieve the identified principles and to ensure accountability for public funds. Culturally responsive indicators and mechanisms to measure quality will be needed.

### **Northern, Prince George**

- ✓ Professional development - education is the future of First Nations;
- ✓ Development of First Nations resources and curriculum;
- ✓ Recognition of Elders and language speakers as resource people;
- ✓ Wage subsidy – increase wages for the ECE/ELCC labour force.

### **Vancouver**

- ✓ Capacity building a high priority; same high priority as Capital funding;
- ✓ Staff need to be paid more; i.e., increase staff wages;

### **Individual Submissions**

- ✓ Increases to operating funds need to address the wages of our childcare staff who often get paid less then the person bagging your groceries: that needs to be a building block. We need quality staff working in these childcare programs, providing quality programs, or there is no point in offering a childcare program;
- ✓ Funds should be built in to address our cultural and language needs. We should get an extra percentage that will enable us to make sure our children learn their culture and language.

### **4.3 Enhancements to Child Care Capital Funding - Effective October 1, 2005**

- increase in maximum Major Capital Funding Program for the creation of new licensed group child care spaces from \$250,000 to \$300,000 with a provincial contribution of 50%;
- new Targeted Major Capital Funding Program for Aboriginal communities and priority communities identified with the Early Development Instrument (EDI) to a maximum of \$500,000 with a provincial contribution of 90%;
- increase in the Minor Capital Funding Program for emergency repair and replacement from \$4000 to \$5000; child care providers with multiple licensed care types at the same facility are eligible for up to \$10,000.

**What, if any, are your views on the changes to enhance the Child Care Capital Funding Program. Is there some way the program could be improved or changed?**

### **BC Aboriginal Child Care Society**

Targets and timeframes should be established for the Capital Grants Program.

Rural, remote and urban Aboriginal communities should have equitable access to capital grants funding.

Capital funding should be tied to credible community plans that identify short and long term priorities.

BC Aboriginal communities need to be supported to develop their capital plans and, once plans are developed, adequate capital funding must be provided to ensure that publicly supported early learning and child care are permanent community assets.

Competitive, proposal-driven processes should be eliminated and replaced by supported community planning and the development of services according to demonstrated needs; targeted funding mechanisms must be replaced by universal access.

### **Northern, Prince George**

- ✓ Sustainability needs to be built into capital construction plans – if you build it, make sure it is sustainable!
- ✓ Attach transportation to the capital funding program at the beginning, and then include as an ongoing operating cost – the lack of transportation is a huge barrier in the North;
- ✓ All buildings need to be wheel chair as well as child/infant stroller accessible – funding need to ensure this accessibility in new construction plans and enhance existing sites;
- ✓ Capital plans should include wages especially when a new program is starting;
- ✓ Professional Development costs need to be included – plans need to budget adequate funds to train everyone consistently;
- ✓ The extra expenses related to travel in and from the North need to be considered and accommodated – distance are immense in the North;
- ✓ Agree the proposal-driven approach doesn't work for us; we need to identify and develop a system that will ensure that all communities get what their children need (universal services);
- ✓ CUT RED TAPE- Administrative processes related to accessing funding and reporting need to be streamlined, made more logical for smaller populations/communities, who don't always have access to proposal writers who write in government language.

### **Vancouver**

- ✓ Cut the red tape – reduce administration costs;
- ✓ Should include the purchase of transportation – this allows our families to access our programs;
- ✓ Priority to increase spaces;

- ✓ Need for community centres that include child care programs – there is cost sharing amongst all the programs in the community centre;
- ✓ Utilize “Green Energy” – geothermal reduces heating costs, and maintenance fees long-term.

### **Individual Submissions**

- ✓ Inequity – some agencies, including ours, received our expansion dollars for our daycare when we had to come up with 50% of costs. Now you only have to come up with 10%. Although I could withdraw my applications and put in another application under the new arrangements, but my application will be one of 150 that is on their desk and will probably not be accepted;
- ✓ Also, this funding is for capital costs, but ongoing operational costs are also an issue because the current Child Care Operating Funding is not enough to support the programs, and funding is needed for our Family Programs that are vital to our Aboriginal Communities, and are not eligible for this funding;
- ✓ In addition to capital funds, we need to have money for the capital costs of Family Programs, on-going operational costs, and adequate funding through the Child Care Operating Funding to increase staff wages.

**4.4 Supported Child Development** - Supported Child Development (SCD) provides support to children with special needs to participate in child care and preschool programs in their communities.

- improve access to child care for children with special needs
- reduce wait times
- access to culturally appropriate SCD services for Aboriginal children

**What do you think about these changes to improve access and reduce waiting times and build partnerships with Aboriginal communities to deliver Supported Child Development Services? Is there some way the program could be improved or changed?**

### **BC Aboriginal Child Care Society**

Culturally appropriate services are essential; Aboriginal communities should be supported to provide services to their children and families.

Aboriginal children with special support needs and their families living in rural, remote and urban communities throughout the province must have equitable access to high quality, culturally responsive services.

To achieve real inclusion, a strong, accessible system that meets the needs of all children and families is needed. Children with special support needs and their families may be best supported through participation in licensed, regulated child care and early learning programs.

### **Northern, Prince George**

- ✓ Aboriginal Supported Child Development Program Coordinator for the North;
- ✓ Early intervention (OT, PT, Speech Pathologist, AIDP, Infant/Mental health) for northern communities;

- ✓ In addition, a mobile unit out of Burns Lake to go out to outlying areas, to provide a full range of services - assessment to all services of a Child Development Centre (CDC);
- ✓ Aboriginal perspective essential: partnership with an Aboriginal /non-Aboriginal focus, for all services, including FASD, Early Intervention, and services for adolescents and adults affected by FASD;
- ✓ Support the creation of a labour force from Aboriginal communities, and provide First Nations specific certified ECE education and training, on-line and on-site;
- ✓ Fund research through UNBC;
- ✓ Business plan to assist Aboriginal groups in the north prepare cost analysis;
- ✓ Build capacity
- ✓ ECE one-stop shop to support communities, minimize travel, etc.;
- ✓ Ministry to recognize that communities need time and resources to build SCD Program;
- ✓ Provincial Supported Child Care Advisor located at BC ACCS.

## **Vancouver**

- ✓ Lack of ECE's in small communities; trained people unwilling or unable to stay; wages/salaries too low; lack of resources to increase wages;
- ✓ Supported child development assistance is paid by Ministry (referral).
- ✓ Regarding an Aboriginal office:
- ✓ Consultant needs to have objectivity (someone outside of the community)...but...
- ✓ We need workers we trust, and who understand our needs.
- ✓ We need workers who are trained and can be objective (sometimes training doesn't guarantee objectivity).
- ✓ We need to be able to build/maintain good relationships with helping agencies outside reserve.
- ✓ "Mentoring" is a good idea but we need to agree on time frames and knowledge sharing so that mentors aren't there for years. It has to be 'equitable'.
- ✓ Maintain the positive—avoid the idea that special needs are a problem.
- ✓ Access needs to be equitable (consider distances for services and have the funding available).
- ✓ Innovative. It is important to hear voices of people who have good ideas.
- ✓ Training for parents: Parents need awareness and knowledge to be able to support their children. They need to be able to work with SCD workers in a close relationship to understand their children's needs and how to best assist them to success. More parenting programs suggested and more in-home assistance.

## **Individual Submissions**

- ✓ Aboriginal Supported Child Care and Development has to be a building block. All our communities need to have access to an Aboriginal-driven, community-based SCD Program.;
- ✓ Waitlists need to be abolished. Our children are at enough of a disadvantage not to get the service they need...when they need it;
- ✓ SCDP need to have our own therapy services (OT/Behavioural/Mental Health etc);
- ✓ All Aboriginal children need access to AIDP as well.

## **4.5 Community Planning and Partnerships**

- community grant funding for community planning and development
- greater support and resources for Child Care Resource and Referral Centres (CCRR)

- integrated service delivery models for child care and early childhood development programs

**What do you think about this proposal to work with communities to build child care planning capacity and to identify and develop early learning and child care programs that meet specific community needs? Is something missing or does something need to be changed or added? And, if so, why? Do you have some specific ideas about how we should partner with communities to ensure that individual needs are identified and met?**

### **BC Aboriginal Child Care Society**

Credible, transparent, community-based early learning and child care planning processes are essential to the identification of local, regional and provincial child care priorities.

Effective community-based planning requires the clear identification of planning mandates and resourced structures at local, regional and provincial levels through which early learning and child care plans are developed.

Planning processes in rural, remote, on-reserve and off-reserve Aboriginal communities must be adequately supported; all Aboriginal communities need a level of support to build capacity to meet the needs of their children and families.

Aboriginal Leaders and communities are best placed to create their own planning processes and structures, and to determine their own priorities.

### **Northern, Prince George**

- ✓ More notice for meetings and consultations;
- ✓ More support for communities to get to point of being able to apply for funding (capacity building);
- ✓ We shouldn't have to apply for funding – it should be available to all communities (universal access to funding);
- ✓ Recognition that planning is an ongoing process that needs to be supported.

### **Vancouver**

- ✓ Planning is a good idea and needs to be supported by policy
- ✓ Priority should be given to supporting communities where “minimal” or no early learning or child care services exist if the goal is to achieve equity
- ✓ On-reserve children’s services are under resourced. Barriers, e.g., jurisdictional, need to be addressed at the provincial level
- ✓ An environmental scan of existing services and gaps is needed to inform planning at all levels (local, regional and provincially)
- ✓ “Mobility” needs to be built into service delivery systems / mechanisms if improved access is to be realized for small and remote Aboriginal communities
- ✓ Aboriginal research and data collection should be supported locally and provincially, e.g. Aboriginal ECD Secretariat
- ✓ Aboriginal communities will need to put in place criteria / process for involving community membership and identifying partnership
- ✓ Key outcome goal: Aboriginal / First Nations controlled and regulated ELCC system (no interference from BC). Federal ELCC funding goes directly to our nations not BC. Authority, jurisdiction and responsibility of our Nations is recognized in policy.

## Individual Submissions

- ✓ If Government is going to use grants...make them flexible enough to meet our needs. Don't make us have to fit the molds established by a non-Aboriginal system like MCFD. If there is a 25,000 grant, for example, make it an open-ended one where we can apply for what we really need;
- ✓ Greater support for base funding and ongoing funding for the BC Aboriginal Child Care Society is needed. Isn't it about time? ACCS is the organization that our programs utilize, therefore, it should be supported;
- ✓ In terms of partnerships, truly consult with us, without the time limits. Meet with us; Work with ACCS so we know you are being culturally sensitive. Prove to us that you truly want to partner with us. Develop a relationship with us. Listen to us. Hire Aboriginal consultants to do the work with us. Talk to all the communities. Work with us. To serve us, you need to know us.

### 4.6 Human Resource Development

- establish a body of knowledge about the provincial child care sector
- develop strategies to recruit, train and retain new and existing workers

**What do you think about this proposal to enhance child care human resource planning and development? Is something missing or does something need to be changed or added? And, if so, why?**

#### BC Aboriginal Child Care Society

Human resource development is key to high quality services. A human resource recruitment and retention strategy must be an essential part of BC's ELCC strategy. There is a general consensus that the key problem is inadequate wages. Wages tend to be a reflection of the value attached to the work being done, and a reflection that the ELCC work force is largely female. The public profile of early learning and child care needs to be raised to raise the regard of caregivers responsible for the care and well-being of our children. As parents/families, we want to know that our precious children are being cared for by caregivers who enjoy caring for children because they feel recognized, respected and valued for the work they are doing.

Public funds available through the ELCC initiative should be used to bring caregiver wages, benefits and working conditions up to levels that match the education, experience and responsibilities required on the job, and that are comparable to similar positions in the education and health care systems.

Once these issues are addressed, access to education and training, including "laddered programs" delivered through a combination of on-site and distance education methods, that leads to credentials is essential. However, without addressing compensation issues, public investment in training will not work as caregivers will avoid and/or continue to leave the field.

Increases to compensation levels, and access to post-secondary and employment training resources, must be equally available to Aboriginal communities.

#### Northern, Prince George

- ✓ Training funding increased;
- ✓ Preparatory Program, such as for home support services;

- ✓ Racism is often still an issue within the post-secondary education system – where can go for racism-free education and training – CNC ECE courses are the only ones available;
- ✓ Strong advocates are needed to trouble shoot problems with training/education;
- ✓ WHERE ARE THE MEN?
- ✓ Need Aboriginal training to support a holistic approach to ECD curriculum;
- ✓ On-reserve / on-site training is required;
- ✓ Apprenticeship for ELCC certification and qualification available on-reserve;
- ✓ Ensure that education on theoretical approaches is delivered in stages, followed by practicum opportunities, to give students time to absorb and integrate knowledge;
- ✓ Language and cultural training is essential;
- ✓ Funding to support cultural programs and activities;
- ✓ Fully funded Aboriginal Licensing Board.

## **Vancouver**

- ✓ Include increasing Aboriginal human resources to ECD sector, not just to child care.
- ✓ Quality of service provision (not just funding for wages).
- ✓ Incentive towards accreditation.
- ✓ Incentive toward value of occupation (i.e. perception to be 'proud', 'privileged').
- ✓ Support development of Aboriginal specific training (more than Capilano College and University of Victoria).
- ✓ Aboriginal specific training to be supportive, practical, Aboriginal practice.
- ✓ Acknowledge cultural assets in wage scales.
- ✓ Allowance (\$) for Elder participation.
- ✓ Develop Aboriginal HR management strategies/resources in schools and training, and in agencies.
- ✓ Elder inclusive curriculum development for new staff.
- ✓ More accessible (to remote communities) culturally appropriate training.
- ✓ Funding for qualified replacement/back-fill staff (i.e. fly-in ECE's).
- ✓ Funding for professional development.
- ✓ Succession Planning \$.
- ✓ Campaign for more men (no to Pink Ghetto).
- ✓ Incentives for remote employment.

## **Individual Submissions**

- ✓ First bullet of the MCFD question is confusing; not sure how to respond;
- ✓ Recruitment strategies must be a building block. I've heard that if all the people trained in ECE came back to ECE, we would not have a staff shortage. How about giving ECE staff a salary they deserve and which reflects the work and contribution they are making. And, how about building in money for the ongoing training that they need as per their licensing requirements;
- ✓ We really need more of our people trained in all aspects of Early Learning because staff tend to come and go and programs are left dangling without enough staff, especially in the more remote areas.
- ✓ We need an Aboriginal ECE training institute that can work in our communities to deliver programs that reflect our cultural diversity.
- ✓ Community-driven ECE training and education will ensure that we have our people trained on an ongoing basis;

#### **4.7 Early Learning Initiatives:**

- families of preschool children have increased choice for early learning programs
- new options for families

**What suggestions do you have for other early learning opportunities for children in BC?**

#### **BC Aboriginal Child Care Society**

The false separation between early learning and child care must be eliminated through support for the development of high quality child care services, including services delivered in family, group or pre-school settings.

Narrowly defined, part-time early literacy programs that focus on 'school readiness' do not meet children's developmental needs and do not meet the needs of the majority of BC's working and studying parents/families.

Early learning initiatives must support cultural and linguistic continuity by the integration of culture and language programming into all aspects of service delivery, and through the participation of Elders and ancestral language speakers and teachers in early learning initiatives. The Maori Kohanga Reo (language nests) initiative provides an effective, culturally responsive model to support cultural and language continuity; however, culture and language can be built into all early learning and child care programs.

Initiatives must be equally available to rural, remote and urban Aboriginal communities; all Aboriginal communities require support to build capacity to meet the needs of their young children and families.

#### **Northern, Prince George**

- ✓ Child needs to be in the centre of prevention and support;
- ✓ Holistic approach – integration of other Ministries and jurisdictions, not just MCFD and Ministry of Education;
- ✓ Jurisdiction policies reflective or driven by First Nations;
- ✓ Timely communications to inform communities about the availability of funding opportunities, and support for communities to access available funding, including support for community capacity building so that communities can involve and work effectively with ELDERS, parents/families/caregivers, centers and other service providers in the development of service delivery proposals;
- ✓ There needs to be systemic change and public education to address the fact that a significant percentage of First Nation children are not making it through Kindergarten – there must be a seamless transition from early childhood to kindergarten and to the public school system;
- ✓ Culturally supported child care – cross-cultural training is needed, and our own people trained to deliver the training;
- ✓ Licensed, regulated child daycare centers;
- ✓ Longer term planning;
- ✓ More support for Head start;
- ✓ Equity of services between on-reserve and off-reserve; standards of care available through non-Aboriginal, such as in FASD services are unaffordable on-reserve;
- ✓ Collaboration between all involved Governments Departments and Ministries, such as Aboriginal Head Start, Health Canada, and Licensing, BC Ministry of Health;

- ✓ Licensing system that meets our needs (First Nations authority and jurisdiction);
- ✓ Staff ratios to reflect the needs of children and families;
- ✓ Recognition of costs/time impact on children of access to services issues in the north.

## **Vancouver**

- ✓ Culture and language programming are a priority to ensure positive exposure to, reinforcement of and attachment to culture and identity from the earliest years, including recognition and reinforcement of the traditional roles of grandparents, and relationships and practices within the extended family system, which often includes “non-blood” relatives as well, all of which are fundamentally different than mainstream relationships, values and practices;
- ✓ Language teaching begun in the earliest years, even if only a limited number of words, because it helps the physical aspect of language acquisition, i.e., even a few words are better than none at all because they train the vocal cords in the language patterns, and builds a platform for later fluency through more intensive and/or immersion programs;
- ✓ The Maori Kohanga Reo “language nests” model is an important resource for the teaching of First Nation languages;
- ✓ Culture and language programs must also include all of the “senses”, including: singing and drumming; the arts and appreciation of beauty, i.e., support artistic, aesthetic development; access to tactile representations of First Nations cultures, i.e., fabrics, regalia, roots, herbs and other traditional medicines; and access to traditional scents/fragrances;
- ✓ Exposure to traditional foods and the preparation of traditional foods, including use of “Traditional Food Guides” to support nutritional awareness;
- ✓ Re-establishment of traditional, cultural and spiritual practices around pregnancy, birthing, parenting, child development, transitions/rites of passage;
- ✓ A balance between child care and early learning, as well as options and choice, to include:
  - ✓ Aboriginal Infant Development Programs;
  - ✓ Home visiting;
  - ✓ Aboriginal HIPPY;
  - ✓ Outreach Programs;
  - ✓ Parent education;
  - ✓ Family Support;
  - ✓ Peer Parenting Programs;
  - ✓ Elders Teachings
- ✓ Sometimes the best child development program is a parent education or family support program, because children are with their parents/families and in community settings more than in formal child care and early learning programs;
- ✓ Programs for prenatal and birth to 3 years of age should be provided through home-based / home visiting programs, to promote attachment and support parent/child relationships, especially with young/teenage parents, including infant stimulation and Aboriginal infant development programs;
- ✓ Provide opportunities for “hands-on learning”, recognizing the importance of family as the first teachers;
- ✓ Systematic positive reinforcement of identity, behaviour, etc.
- ✓ Parent education programs need to address the historical injustices to help parents understand how parenting skills and family structures were lost through the residential school system, and help to re-build family closeness, attachment and physically nurturing contact;
- ✓ An integrated service delivery model, delivered by a single Government Ministry, i.e., not divided between “care” and “early learning”;

- ✓ A “life long learning” focus rather than “school readiness”; help to reduce, eliminate or overcome barriers to learning, ensure the doors are kept open through exposure to all forms of learning; i.e., build the brain pathways;
- ✓ Recognize that all cultures have strengths and things of value to share.

### **Individual Submissions**

- ✓ This will only work if it is true. All the new funding is for child care spaces, not preschool spaces. They made it easier for children to access programs, but where are the programs. We only have space for 20 children....where do all the rest of our children go?
- ✓ Other early learning programs need to be recognized...our family programs are the first place a child goes to learn.
- ✓ Other initiatives required to better reflect Aboriginal needs and priorities:
  - Family Programs;
  - AIDP/IDP;
  - Home visiting programs;
  - Healthy baby clubs;
  - A continuum and a variety of services.

### **5. "PRIORITIES" for improving quality of Early Learning and Child Care in BC.**

Based on the Building Blocks or other ideas you may have, please indicate your five major priorities for early learning and child care in BC for the next five years. Please indicate why these priorities are important and list them in order of their importance to you (for example, the first item on the list should be the one that you consider the most important).

#### **List of Priorities in Order of Importance:**

*Context for the identified priorities: Any priorities must sit within a context that recognizes Aboriginal authority and jurisdiction for young Aboriginal children and families.*

#### **Priority #1 - High Quality, Affordable, Universally Available Services**

##### **BC Aboriginal Child Care Society**

High quality, affordable programs and services equally available to rural, remote, urban and on and off reserve Aboriginal communities

- BC’s ELCC program would move beyond the current user fee system to a publicly funded system for all of BC’s children and families;
- Establishment of more culturally responsive programs and services that meet the diverse needs of children and families regardless of locale;
- At a minimum, equitable access to resources designed to ensure that children and families have access to early learning and child care programs and services.

#### **Northern, Prince George**

- ✓ First KIDS! Then programs;
- ✓ Equal access does not ensure that everyone is on the same level;
- ✓ No strings;

- ✓ Do not take funding away from established programs such as Aboriginal Head Start;
- ✓ Priority #1 must be Human Resource Development – without this none of the others can fall into place;
- ✓ Increase wages!!!
- ✓ Attract more people to stay in ECD/ECE field with high wages (substantially higher) and benefits as well;
- ✓ Compensation rates should consider the huge responsibility that ECE/ECD staff have – the impacts on society years down the road – because children’s early experiences shapes the type of citizens they will become;
- ✓ Very well trained people should have more than adequate wages;
- ✓ Cross cultural training/anti-bias curriculum training is a key to success;
- ✓ Recognize Indigenous languages/ESL/First languages in assessment tools for children;
- ✓ Each community has unique needs - rather than trying to apply the same priorities and ranking throughout the province, services should be based on community needs; for example, Prince George has different needs than McBride;
- ✓ Sustainability needed to ensure ongoing funding;
- ✓ Funding for:
  - Capital costs;
  - Operating funds to ensure frontline workers can attend training;
  - Funding for substitutes, adequate to ensure attractive;
  - Funding to cover tuition costs for training/education, plus regular staff wages while attending training, and the cost of substitutes;
  - Travel budgets;
- ✓ Important to keep up-to-date on new research etc and make this accessible to staff working on the floor with children;
- ✓ Prevention/early intervention - be proactive, less reactive and crisis oriented;
- ✓ More daycare spaces needed – facilities/centers are needed throughout our northern communities;
- ✓ Funding – seats/spaces needed to match the increasing First Nations population rates
- ✓ Funding to match needs, especially in North, i.e. studies show more children in North not ready for Kindergarten.

## **Vancouver**

- Of the four priorities initially identified by ACCS, this was the second rather than first priority, i.e., 9 of 31 participants; (i.e., Priority Ratings for the four suggested priorities: # 1=9; # 2=13; #3=7; #4=2).

## **Individual Submissions**

- Money needs to be invested to ensure we have quality Aboriginal child care workers at all levels, from early childhood to youth;
- Child Care programs need to be accessible to all children regardless of whether or not a parent works or does not make the income cut off. Parents who are not working but may require support or help to address lack of parenting, needs to have this modeled in child care centers. Their needs are just as important. Childcare Programs need to be accessible for all children regardless of residency, regardless of income, regardless of employment status of parents.

## **Priority #2 - Human Resource Development**

### **BC Aboriginal Child Care Society**

- Training incorporates Aboriginal-specific courses that will prepare Early Childhood Educators to meet the needs of Aboriginal children and families;
- Recognition and adequate compensation for Early Childhood Educators.

### **Northern, Prince George**

- ✓ Supportive wages and staff to train and supervise the ELCC workers in training;
- ✓ Wages reflecting the jobs done! Caregiver wages (compensation) need to be increased;
- ✓ More training opportunities, such as Vancouver Native Education Centre in the North, Interior, remote and rural areas, not just in Prince George;
- ✓ Change Priority 2 in ACCS response to Priority 1;
- ✓ Providing supports.

### **Vancouver**

- ✓ Of the four priorities initially identified by ACCS, the majority of participants - 13 of 31 - participants selected this as their first priority; (i.e., Priority Ratings for the four suggested priorities: # 1=9; # 2=13; #3=7; #4=2).

### **Individual Submissions**

- ✓ Our families need access to a range of supports. They need parenting programs. They need to have access to whatever supports they need (Family Support/Life Skills/Counselling). They need to be involved in their programs. Programs need to identify the needs of the child and the family so that proper referrals can be made.

## **Priority #3 - Integrated, Seamless Services**

### **BC Aboriginal Child Care Society**

- Support the integration of ELCC programs and related services that promote children's holistic development while at the same time meeting the needs of families, especially parents who are working and/or enrolled in education programs.

### **Northern, Prince George**

- ✓ Dislike the wording especially "parents working or enrolled in education"; services and support should be available for all parents regardless of circumstances;
- ✓ Community By-law should be explored as a means of establishing and supporting community goals and objectives.

### **Vancouver**

- ✓ Of the four priorities initially identified by ACCS, this was the third priority, i.e., 7 of 31 participants (i.e., Priority Ratings for the four suggested priorities: # 1=9; # 2=13; #3=7; #4=2).

## **Individual Submissions**

- ✓ All childcare programs need to have built-in funding for nutrition. Programs need to have enough money to meet the nutritional needs of the children, especially for low income families.

## **Priority #4 - Restoration of Funding and School-aged Programs**

### **BC Aboriginal Child Care Society**

- The BC Government should restore provincial child care funding to 2001/02 levels and make investment in licensed school age child care the top priority for those funds.
- All services provided to Aboriginal children need to be culturally responsive and must support cultural and language continuity, through the integration of culture and language into service delivery, and through the participation of Elders and ancestral language speakers and teachers in service delivery.

### **Northern, Prince George**

- ✓ The funding was inadequate to start with, so we need it to not just be restored but enhanced to meet needs (universal access).
- ✓ Mentor ECE students and build community capacity – (Ministry, Colleges, M.Ed).

### **Vancouver**

- ✓ Of the four priorities identified by ACCS, this was the fourth priority, i.e., 2 of 31 participants; (i.e., Priority Ratings for the four priorities identified by ACCS: # 1=9; # 2=13; #3=7; #4=2).

## **Individual Submissions**

- ✓ There needs to be Early Identification of children who have special needs and services need to be delivered in a timely manner. All communities need access to Aboriginal Infant Development Programs and services. All communities need access to Health services for children. All communities need these programs so that we can identify children early. Once they are identified, though, they need services immediately....not after being on a wait list for 3 years;
- ✓ Focus is on early childhood, which is great. However, what about our 6-12 year olds. Do we just tell them it is too late? That we don't care cause they are too old to make a difference for them? It isn't right. Out of School Care Programs need to have dollars invested in them as well otherwise all the good work we do in early childhood is going to be lost.

## **Priority #5**

### **Vancouver**

- ✓ Program design and development should incorporate collaborative, integrated, joint approaches to support comprehensive, seamless ECE and ECD services for Aboriginal children and their families;
- ✓ Need more opportunity for input by Aboriginal communities in the design of BC's ELCC framework for BC;
- ✓ BC needs to develop an appropriate framework for consulting with Aboriginal / First Nations in the design and implementation of an ELCC program for BC.

### **Individual Submissions**

- ✓ Aboriginal children are given opportunities to get services from an agency that recognizes and supports the cultural and language diversity of the children.