

Investigating Quality (IQ) Early Learning Environments Project

2009–2010

Report on Activities in the Third Project Delivery

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Section I: Introduction

Promoting Quality in Early Childhood Education Settings

Several reports have expressed concerns about the quality of early learning and child care (ELCC) programs in Canada (Doherty, Friendly, & Beach, 2003; Doherty et al., 2000; Friendly & Prentice, 2009). Since 2005, the **Investigating Quality (IQ) Early Learning Environments Project** has worked to broaden and deepen discussions on quality in the ELCC field at local, provincial, federal, and international levels. The IQ is a research project of the Unit for Early Learning and Child Care Research and Professional Development (the Unit), which is located in the School of Child and Youth Care at the University of Victoria. The Unit conducts research and provides services and resources to organizations, agencies, professionals, communities and governments in relation to early learning and child care and the delivery of services to young children and their families.

The Unit is dedicated to advancing ELCC practices by recognizing that effective change requires the active participation of all sectors of the early learning community. Achieving higher quality in early learning and child care requires approaches that honour young children's rights and build on existing capacity within the field. The Unit's vision for the future of early learning and child care is one where families, childcare centres, schools and community organizations partner with children to support new ideas and create innovative spaces for early childhood education.

As one of the Unit's ongoing participatory action research pilot projects, the IQ Project promotes the active engagement of early childhood educators in discussions and actions leading to the formation of innovative, dynamic and sustainable quality caregiving environments for young children. **This report provides an overview of the third delivery of the IQ Project, outlining activities and research that took place between July 1, 2009 and May 31, 2010.**

IQ Project Phases

Since 2005, the IQ Project has proceeded in several phases, as follows:

| | |
|-----------|-------------|
| Phase I | 2005 – 2006 |
| Phase IIa | 2006 – 2008 |
| Phase IIb | 2008 – 2009 |
| Phase IIc | 2009 – 2010 |

This report provides an account of Phase IIc (2009-2010). Please see Pence and Pacini-Ketchabaw (2008, 2009) for details of the earlier phases.

IQ Project Goals

The IQ Project's objectives have been as follows:

- To broaden and deepen British Columbia's approaches to quality by considering diverse discourses currently found internationally regarding quality early childhood care and education.

- To promote the active engagement of early childhood educators in critical reflection and actions that lead to the formation of sustainable and innovative early childhood care and education environments.
- To promote the active engagement of ECE college instructors in discussions on different aspects of quality early learning environments.
- To enhance and augment existing early years training at the School of Child and Youth Care at the University of Victoria.

In Phase IIc, we have continued to address the first and second objectives through the activities described in this report.

Organization of the Report

Section I provides context for the IQ Project, describes its phases, and outlines its goals and objectives.

Section II describes the project's professional learning component. A series of six learning circles and one sharing circle were facilitated between September 2009 and May 2010. Three groups of early childhood educators from across British Columbia engaged in discussions around meaningfully engaged practice with the goal of applying what they learned in these discussions in their practice settings. The learning and sharing circles created opportunities for educators to engage in self-awareness activities; expand their knowledge and share the new knowledge with others; network; and feel empowered, valued and connected as professionals.

Questionnaires were used to collect feedback from the learning and sharing circle participants; these findings are also presented in Section II. The findings highlight how educators engaged in critical reflection with others in the ECCD field in ways that resulted in positive changes in their practice.

Section III describes how the Unit for Early Learning and Child Care Research and Professional Development, through the IQ Project, has promoted diverse discourses on quality through forums with international early childhood education leaders. The forums have placed British Columbia at the cutting edge of early childhood education theory and practice, both in Canada and internationally. In Phase IIc, the forum *Experiences in Moving Beyond Minimum Standards: A Vision for Early Learning and Child Care* continued this tradition.

Section IV details publications that emerged from the IQ Project during Phase IIc.

Section V summarizes the report and makes recommendations.

Section II: Learning and Sharing Circles

Promoting Early Childhood Educators' Professional Learning

To “promote the active engagement of early childhood educators in critical reflection and actions that lead to forming sustainable, innovative early childhood care and education environments,” (second project objective, as identified in Section I) in Phase IIc the IQ Project continued engaging early childhood educators in professional learning. Through a series of six learning circles and a sharing circle, educators from across British Columbia engaged in discussions around meaningfully engaged practice with the goal of applying what they learned in these discussions in their practice settings.

Learning circles

Three learning circle groups participated in Phase IIc, as follows:

| Group | Where held | # of participants |
|------------------------------------|------------|-------------------|
| Central and South Vancouver Island | Victoria | 11 |
| Lower Mainland | Vancouver | 11 |
| Online | online | 13 |
| Total # of participants | | 35 |

The online group allowed educators from all over the province to participate in the project via tri-weekly teleconferences and a password-sensitive web platform. Educators and researchers in the face-to-face groups also utilized an e-mail listserv to communicate ideas and circulate materials in advance of the learning circles. (For the history of the learning circles and their demographic makeup, see Pence and Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2009.)

Pedagogical narration and other practices that welcome and build on the knowledge and skills of all involved were incorporated into the learning circles. Like the BC Early Learning Framework (ELF; Government of British Columbia, 2008), the IQ Project frames early childhood practice within reconceptualist and culturally appropriate theories that acknowledge relationships, interaction, and the social and cultural contexts in which learning occurs (Cannella, 1997; Dahlberg, Moss, & Pence, 1999; Grieshaber & Cannella, 2001; MacNaughton, 2003; Mitchell & Cubey, 2003). Curricula based on these practices and theories were developed in Phases I and II, and we worked with these documents in combination with the ELF and its companion document, *From Theory to Practice* (Government of British Columbia, 2009).

Sharing circle

A two-day sharing circle held January 21-22, 2010 brought participants from the three learning circles together in Victoria to interact and further share ideas; 31 participants attended.

The sharing circle was timed to coincide with the Unit for Early Learning and Child Care Research forum *Experiences in Moving Beyond Minimum Standards: A Vision for Early*

Learning and Child Care. This timing allowed Dr. Margaret Carr, University of Waikato, New Zealand, a guest presenter at the forum, to lead a series of dialogues and conversations during the sharing circle. The sharing circle also featured workshops with Sylvia Kind (“Materiality and the Thingness of Things”), and Enid Elliot with IQ Project participants Peg Hasted, Kim Atkinson and Carol Rowan (“The Power of Story”).

Facilitators

Each learning and sharing circle workshop was delivered by a facilitator with extensive experience in early childhood education who had knowledge of and experience with reconceptualist theories and practices. The facilitators’ role was to assist participants in engaging in group discussions regarding early childhood practices. The facilitators were directed by Dr. Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw.

Outcomes

Inspired by their participation in the IQ Project, several educators have decided to return to their studies, three of them at the graduate level.

I am committed to ongoing professional development and will soon pursue graduate studies in Child and Youth Care while pursuing my ECE certification. Participation in the learning circles helped give me the confidence to pursue these goals. (comment from the Learning Circle evaluation; see next section for details)

One educator is moving into a leadership position as Executive Director of the Early Childhood Educators of British Columbia (ECEBC), two others have joined the ECEBC leadership project, and one has launched a community dialogue group in the Okanagan.

Evaluation of Professional Learning

Two questionnaires were used to collect feedback about the IQ Project's professional learning component:

- *Learning Circle Evaluation.* The LC evaluation consisted of a 9-page questionnaire with open-ended questions that was distributed to all participants following the final learning circle. Of the 35 project participants, 33 completed the evaluation.
- *Sharing Circle Evaluation.* The SC evaluation consisted of a two-page questionnaire handed out to all participants at the end of each day of the two-day workshop; 28 of 31 participants completed it.

Feedback collected through the questionnaires is presented in the following sections. Highlights of the quantitative results from the learning circle questionnaires are presented first, followed by qualitative feedback organized by themes.

Quantitative Results

- 94% of the respondents noticed a change in their practice setting as a result of their involvement in the project, and 39% "very much" noticed a change.
- 97% noticed a change in their perspective concerning quality child care and early learning.
- 97% noticed a change in their knowledge related to quality child care and early learning, and 48% "very much" noticed a change.
- 82% noticed a change in both their leadership skills and their presentation skills.
- 88% noticed a change in their initiative on the job, and 82% in showing initiative in taking a lead role.
- 88% noticed a change in introducing new ideas on the job; 39% "very much" noticed a change.
- 91% of the respondents were satisfied with the results of the project towards their professional development, and 55% were "very satisfied."
- 88% of the respondents had shared knowledge from the IQ Project within their work setting, and 91% felt they had contributed to the development of new practices or approaches.
- 97% reported that they had made useful contacts through their involvement in the project.
- Virtually all of the respondents felt that the topics covered in the learning circles were beneficial to them (ranging from 94% to 97% on individual topics).
- An overwhelming majority of the respondents liked working with the facilitators (88%), learning from other practitioners (91%), and participating in the group discussions (94%).

Qualitative Analysis

The qualitative analysis presented in the following sections draws on participant comments made on the learning circle and sharing circle questionnaires.

Learning Circle Content

Overwhelmingly, participants felt that **the topics presented in the learning circles were beneficial** to them.

I was able to explore articles that I know I would not have tackled independently, and [I have] broadened by learning.

Very helpful and inspiring.

The experience I had during the learning circles gave me more knowledge about the image of the child and ways to improve my curriculum practices.

This has broadened my knowledge base.

I am very satisfied with the way the new concepts I learn can be applied to the team at work.

The articles posted were meaningful to my practice and the discussions in our team helped a lot. Learned a lot about setting up the room to create learning spaces for children.

A large majority of the IQ Project participants (84%) felt that using pedagogical narrations in their centres had **changed the children's experiences in a positive way**.

The children love seeing their words up – they often ask me to read their and their friends' words over and over again. Sometimes they will come up with new interpretations of their "meaning" or the marks made on their art work. I believe that the narrations, with the children's dialogue and photographs showing them "in action," are a powerful signal to the children that not only their work, but also their feelings, ideas, [and] points of view are valued and respected.

Great learning experience [for the children].

The children have begun to look at the narrations regularly, and discussion and play [have] evolved from this exploration.

Most participants (84%) also felt that **parents' experiences had changed in a positive way** due to their centre's use of pedagogical narrations.

I think the narrations have shown parents that their children's learning processes are valued and respected as multi-layered and complex.

Parents were able to spend a little more quality time with children. Children became the teachers.

The parents through the narrations were given a glimpse at these moments. They were also able to reflect upon similar issues/learning that had occurred in the home. Most notably

parents were able to engage in conversation about their child that was driven by their experiences, their child's experience, and was not teacher driven. This process felt so collaborative, the feeling of walking alongside the parents added a more comfortable, equitable approach of working with parents in the centre.

Families became partners in the children's learning.

Sharing Circle Content

The opportunity to meet and learn from an internationally renowned early childhood leader at the sharing circle was highly valued by many of the project participants.

[The best part of the sharing circle was] the inspiring participants and the amazing Dr. Margaret Carr, whose ease of presence was an amazing tonic to me professionally and [afforded] a whole different understanding of activism.

Margaret Carr was and is an incredibly thoughtful and provocative communicator, doing this in a style that inspired me to come along side ... as she offered up some reassurance that this place of uncertainty offers up a myriad of possibilities.

[The best part of the sharing circle was] learning from Dr. Carr.

When asked which sharing circle topics had been of particular interest to them, many participants mentioned Margaret Carr's account of New Zealand's experience with Te Whāriki and the value of learning stories (pedagogical narration) for assessment and community transformation. Other comments included the following:

Valued stories, value of thinking outside the norm ... there can be a world beyond minimum standards.

Margaret Carr – possible selves.

Everything was interesting and thought provoking.

Materiality of things and power of story.

I really appreciated the thought-provoking art discussions. Even the storytelling brought out other thoughts to ponder and be aware of – awesome!

Opportunities for discussion and dialogue.

The interconnectedness of story as a thread right now in my work and life.

The art info and having such wonderful speakers.

The reflective practice throughout.

When asked the most important thing they had learned during the sharing circle, the participants' responses were rich and varied.

There is an inspiring, powerful, educated group working hard to improve the lives of families and children in BC and I have been welcomed to join them. I can be a tree with the other trees growing together to keep each other strong.

Dialogue is so important for best practice and learning stories.

“A teacher is a teacher is a teacher” (Margaret Carr).

The power of working in collaboration.

That I can be uncertain and still keep my identity as a rock solid awesome teacher.

Other perspectives/multiple learning stories and being more comfortable than previously with these notions – universal stories and local truths.

The ABC of being a transformative teacher. The importance of documenting, reflecting and revisiting.

There is always more to learn, more to read, more to reflect on.

To embrace the pedagogy of uncertainty, to keep asking questions.

The amazing work done locally. How the IQ work has grown.

Not to underestimate myself in this transformative learning process that I am going through. To let go of the self-doubt and fear I had previously been feeling and realize that I am a competent learner and have been re-inspired.

I have a lot more to explore. Those stories are so powerful and complex.

Networking – talking to other educators.

Be comfortable with the uncertainty.

Learning stories – tell the story of what children did and tell why that is important.

Being an author and co-author, how that can change things.

Getting together, face to face, so much more worthwhile. Being isolated in the interior doesn't often allow opportunities to interact with other ECEs and build on our skills or hear others' perspectives, opinions and experiences. It also leaves a feeling of inclusion in a profession we love. We are sharpened, as metal against metal, with gentleness.

Project Outcomes

Awareness and Knowledge of Quality Child Care and Early Learning

An important focus of the IQ Project learning circles was to create new knowledge and awareness among the participants. It was thought that participants would then extend this awareness and education to others in their centres and possibly even further.

The vast majority of LC participants (97%) noted **a change in their perspective concerning quality child care and early learning** as a result of their involvement in the IQ Project.

Absolutely! I have been influenced greatly by the articles I read and the presentations that were made. I am definitely going to practice pedagogical narration once I return to the classroom.

The image of the child and practices that support children's thinking is an area that I have been interested in since I became an ECE. The IQ project has given me a tremendous opportunity to discuss and reflect on practices that support these philosophies.

I think I am listening to children more and I am consciously trying to not impose my perspective on the children and am becoming more open to learning from their perspectives even if they do not match my own. The children have led me in many unexpected directions: I have felt (and continue to feel) challenged by these unpredictable directions. However, I have learnt from the LC that I need to let go of set "learning goals" and follow the children's desires – I find this to be something that is not easy and that I am still working on – giving up power, and embracing the unpredictability of learning together with the children.

I feel more joy doing the work I do, knowing about these amazing committed people from around the world and the work they do.

[I have an] increased appreciation for the depth of teachers' reflections and children's relationships.

Extending Awareness and Education to Others

The learning circles allowed educators to engage in collaborative discussions and distribute knowledge within the workshops. The project's goal was for participants to take this knowledge and use it in the broader ECE community. For the work of the learning circle project to spread, participants must be willing to share the information, resources and contacts they acquired through the project.

Almost all of the LC participants (94%) said they had **noticed a change in their practice setting** since their involvement in the project.

I feel that our centre is moving in new directions because of the learning stories.

I look for ways to make visible the voices of children and teachers.

Reflection and re-evaluation is ongoing.

Discussion with other ECEs has helped to clarify and consolidate my practice and given me courage to try new approaches.

The knowledge I have gained and been able to pass on to my staff is invaluable!

I have noticed changes in many aspects. All my staff have become active participants in discussing the stories. We have all become more engaged in current early child theories. We have realized how competent children are by the discussions we have had after capturing everyday moments. We take time in our busy schedules to really see the children now.

I do more pedagogical narrations than ever and use them in a way that is beneficial to my program.

Being a part of the research project has inspired me and I refer to what I have learned when I try to add or change my environment. I have been also trying to find more ways to include the parents in the documentations. Of course there is always the issue of licensing regulations and needing to work within those boundaries. It is easier to do this now because of the worldwide research we have been made aware of.

Many project participants noted that, as a result of their involvement in the project, they had **expanded their knowledge, made useful contacts, and increased their attendance at conferences, forums, and meetings**. Others talked about wanting to extend the work.

I would like to find ways to incorporate this model in Nunavik.

Through my involvement with IQ my confidence has increased such that I have presented workshops on pedagogical narrations with associates who have been involved with the IQ Project.

I have learned so much and [I am] excited about learning more.

The depth and breadth of my knowledge has increased significantly. I feel I am a better educator and professional because of the IQ project.

This has been a wonderful experience for me in terms of the connections made with educators and researchers. I found a warm, respectful, and non-judgmental environment in the learning circles. Despite not previously knowing most of the participants and being a very shy and private person, I quickly felt comfortable enough to share my pedagogical uncertainties, difficult/sensitive questions and self-doubts. Also, as a relatively inexperienced child care provider who is still in the early stages of my educational training, I feel honoured to have been a part of this group and am grateful that they shared their perspectives and also challenged me, always in a very respectful way.

An overwhelming majority (91%) of the IQ Project participants would like to see others in their child care setting take part in the project, and most (73%) recommended that early childhood educators in other settings have the opportunity to participate. Their suggestions for who might benefit from participating in the project include First Nations communities; staff of other childcare centres, particularly family childcare settings, group daycares, and centres with children with special needs; ECE and primary education students; pedagogues from the public school system; Strong Start staff; nonprofit society boards; Child Care Resource and Referral program staff; kindergarten and elementary school teachers; principals; parents; staff of Queen Alexandra Centre for Children's Health; college instructors; licensing staff; staff of out-of-school programs and summer camps; transition house staff – and “basically anyone who touches children's lives in any way, shape or form.”

Decision makers in the field so they can see what we do and then they can perhaps think differently about decisions and policy changes they [make] without consulting us.

Anyone who wants to feel empowered and enlightened. This program has opened my eyes to how important our field is and others would benefit from the knowledge I have obtained.

On-site support/mentoring that includes the whole team would be great ... finding ways to get group attendance would make a big difference.

Professional Development

Effective professional development in the ECE field aims to increase skills and competencies in three important areas: enhancing pedagogy, contributing to children's learning, and building linkages between early childhood education and other settings (Mitchell and Cubey, 2003).

Learning circle participants were asked to comment on their satisfaction with the results of the IQ Project toward their professional development.

I was inspired to move forward.

The IQ Project enhanced my critical thinking skills.

I have had the opportunity to see myself reflected in work others are doing with young children and families and I have found myself challenged to strive for "better" from myself, my colleagues and the ECE community as a whole.

I feel that I have a much better understanding of pedagogical narrations in general, even though I think that the IQ Project is sometimes more academic than I professionally/personally am willing (ready?) to be.

It gave me the opportunity to take a step back, listen, and then reflect. Sometimes in our busy day [we] are too busy putting out fires to be able to reflect as to why [we] became an ECE in the first place.

I feel much more educated, and feel as though I know what is happening in our field. I am more "global."

I am very satisfied with the results of IQ. It has been one of the best professional development experiences of my career.

[Being] part of the IQ Project came at a perfect time for me professionally. I am in a place in my centre where changes are happening and [it was possible for] this learning to find its way into our program.

This was the best professional development experience I have had in 30 years working in the ECE field. It goes beyond what is normally available and experienced. I feel very privileged to be allowed to join.

I have enjoyed the professional opportunity to re-examine the way I think.

I am very happy with the results for my professional development. It has provided lots of food for thought and reflection. I still struggle with balancing my ideals with “on the floor” mechanics in a setting where I am the only ECE with 14 and 17 children.

I feel very privileged to have participated. Being part of the circle has given me a positive focus in my daily journey with the children. The IQ Project has been a place to be responsible to. Delivers good standard of practice.

This is a fantastic way to bring professional development to one’s home! It is difficult for some, especially in rural and northern BC, to have opportunities to travel for Pro-D. This is one way to stay connected with other practitioners in the province.

Networking and Professional Revitalization

Many of the project participants, when asked what aspect of the learning and sharing circles they valued most, were enthusiastic about the opportunities to network and share ideas with colleagues.

Being able to get reenergized.

Getting together in a room with a group full of passionate educators ready to share ideas, thoughts and questions.

Listening to my mentors speak. Becoming inspired again.

The ability to be inspired, this really recharged the battery. Being away from home, many thanks. To really be immersed with the learning.

Meeting other educators, listening to inspiring talks and feeling like part of a community.

Seeing people who share the same vision for children and their educators.

Meeting and having the chance to get to know and network with other educators, sharing stories and information.

Being with other passionate educators.

Gathering people together that share common passions and uncertainties.

Meeting and hearing discussion with a diverse group of experienced educators. Thoughtful presentations on pertinent subjects with lots of food for personal thought.

Everything was empowering.

Being with other ECEs that we can talk with about many topics.

Being part of a diverse, intelligent, experienced group of educators. Realizing how important all of our insights and dialogue are to raise the profile of our profession.

Wonderful sharing with open-minded, like-minded individuals.
Both in the presentations and during chats.

To be surrounded by amazing people in a field that continues to fascinate me.

Areas for Improvement

When asked for their thoughts on ways to improve the IQ Project and advance its goals, one participant in the online group noted problems she had encountered with the web-based platform. Other participants offered comments, questions and suggestions.

More face-to-face meetings with participants. The sharing circle in January in Victoria was extremely inspiring. This year I have participated with no financial incentive. It is such an important learning opportunity that I feel fortunate to be involved. Truthfully my family would benefit with financial support.

Spread it around.

It would have been great to have an opportunity to earn credit toward an Early Years Specialization course.

Could we use Skype? Could we have more face to face opportunities? Could we have speakers that are knowledgeable and dynamic more often? Also, how about forming an IQ group with kindergarten teachers?

For the online groups, it is challenging to maintain momentum. If one call gets missed, then the gap is huge. Thus, it is difficult to engage in as deep a collegial dialogue as one can face to face.

Maybe a couple of extra conference calls.

I think the facilitators have done an excellent job throughout the year and try very hard to listen, lead, challenge and support the learners/practitioners/academics in the group. I cannot think of anything to improve.

I would enjoy a few more sharing circles each year.

Sometimes during our discussions, conversations bogged down and moved away from the focus of the articles that had been forwarded. I spent considerable time making my way through the articles and I would have appreciated more time to spend with them as a group.

Involve more front-line childcare workers; also get the college ECE programs involved. There are large inconsistencies in the training amongst college ECE programs, and introducing or reinforcing the ideas behind the IQ Project would benefit the project and the colleges.

Meeting more often would be great, but probably impractical.

Make [the project] accessible to more and fight for funding to get release time.

I think it would help if there were groups further out such as Maple Ridge or Coquitlam and into the Fraser Valley such as Mission as it would give opportunity to ECEs who prefer not to travel far at night an opportunity to become involved and develop a clearer understanding of ways to implement the Early Learning Framework, etc.

I would like to see two or three new educators join each group (new to the field of ECE). They would bring the insights gained during their recent education, and [they] could begin, at an early stage of their practice, to think and share on a deeper, more reflective level. This could build into an important kind of mentoring.

Section III: Forums

Promoting Diverse Discourses on Quality

The Unit for Early Learning and Child Care Research, through the IQ Project, has promoted diverse discourses on quality through a series of forums with international early childhood leaders. The forums have placed British Columbia firmly at the cutting edge of early childhood theory and practice, both in Canada and internationally. In January 2010, the forum *Moving Beyond Minimum Standards: A Vision for Early Learning and Child Care* continued this tradition. (The poster for the event is included as Appendix A.)

The forum's overall purpose was to develop a vision for ELCC that is informed by innovative policies and practices found internationally and that brings IQ-related developments in BC into closer contact with key developments in Ontario. It was hoped that this collaborative work would lead to meetings with leaders from other Canadian provinces who are committed to pursuing creative and innovative ways forward for ELCC in their jurisdictions.

Dr. Alan Pence and Dr. Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw of the IQ Project were joined for the event by Dr. Peter Moss, Professor of Early Childhood Provision at the Thomas Coram Research Unit, Institute of Education, University of London; Dr. Margaret Carr, Professor of Education at the University of Waikato, New Zealand; and Dr. Charles Pascal, Executive Director of the Atkinson Charitable Foundation, Toronto. This group of early childhood leaders (please see Appendix A for their bios) engaged in a two-day think tank (January 18-19), met with representatives of the Ministries of Education and of Children and Family Development, including the Deputy Minister of MCFD, Assistant Deputy Minister of Education, and Education Minister Margaret MacDiarmid (January 18), and participated in a panel discussion co-sponsored by REACH (Research in Early Childhood, Care and Education; January 19) that included the following presentations.

Professor Peter Moss

ELCC: A European Perspective (or the Perspective of a European!)

Acknowledging that Europe is a large and complex entity, making generalizations difficult, Dr. Moss offered his observations based on his particular perspective: Very broadly, two European early childhood systems can be defined: the Nordic countries (and Slovenia) feature well-paid short parental leaves coordinated with a fully integrated ELCC system that offers universal entitlement from at least 12 months; the remaining countries feature weaker and/or longer parental leave and a split ELCC system with universal entitlement for children over 3 and in which 'childcare' and 'early education' are conceptually and structurally separate. Present directions include expansion of services with a European Union (EU) objective for 2010 (the Barcelona Targets); spreading marketization; and creeping 'schoolification.' Dr. Moss argued that many examples of innovative projects must be set against growing normalization and standardization that are driven by a discourse of quality and a belief in the magical effects of early intervention using 'evidence-based' technologies. Against this backdrop, the EU is increasingly involved in the early childhood field. Dr. Moss presented recent proposals for a European approach to ELCC based on ten common principles as outlined in a European politics of early childhood recently published by the magazine *Children in Europe*.

Dr. Margaret Carr

Moving Beyond Minimum Standards: A Vision for Early Learning and Child Care from Aotearoa New Zealand

Dr. Carr's presentation outlined New Zealand's vision for learning in early years settings – and beyond. This vision was set out in 1996 in the national early childhood curriculum *Te Whāriki*. Resources and research projects with teachers have since then enriched discussions in New Zealand about what teachers and children might be doing when they are teaching wisely and learning deeply. As Dr. Carr explained, the journey has been a complex one, as the government and the education sector have set in place an interconnected system of policies and supports. Some of these supports have become fragile; some remain strong.

Dr. Charles Pascal

The Latest on Achieving Our Best Future

Dr. Pascal provided an overview of his report *With Our Best Future in Mind*, noting progress regarding its implementation in Ontario and highlighting the key aspects necessary to achieve positive impacts for children, families and taxpayers. The made-for-Ontario plan, which draws from best practice in Canada and beyond, provides a comprehensive prenatal to 12 years policy and program approach that will provide a seamless early learning and care system. The plan calls for full-day learning for all four- and five-year-olds, integrated children's services to age 12 in the form of Child and Family Centres, and a 400-day parental leave program with a 6-week provision for non-birthing parents. A research program, together with in-service and pre-service capacity building for early learning educators, is also included in the plan.

The presentations were followed by questions and discussion.

Section IV: Publications

Many publications have emerged from the activities in this phase of the IQ Project; these are detailed below.

Books

- Chan, K., Elliot, E., Kocher, L., Pacini-Ketchabaw, V., & Sanchez, A. (in process). *Thinking beyond child development: A resource for doing pedagogical narrations with children within a reflective community*. [working title]
- Pacini-Ketchabaw, V. (Ed.). (in press). *Flows, rhythms, and intensities of early childhood education*. New York: Peter Lang. This is an edited collection of chapters authored by IQ Project participants, as follows:
- Berger, I. (in press). Extending the notion of pedagogical narration through Hannah Arendt's political thought. In V. Pacini-Ketchabaw (Ed.), *Flows, rhythms and intensities of early childhood education curriculum*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Chan, K. (in press). Rethinking children's participation in curriculum making: A rhizomatic movement. In V. Pacini-Ketchabaw (Ed.), *Flows, rhythms and intensities of early childhood education curriculum*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Elliot, E. (in press). Thinking beyond a framework: Entering into dialogues. In V. Pacini-Ketchabaw (Ed.), *Flows, rhythms and intensities of early childhood education curriculum*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Kind, S. (in press). Art encounters: Movements in the visual arts and early childhood education. In V. Pacini-Ketchabaw (Ed.), *Flows, rhythms and intensities of early childhood education curriculum*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Kocher, L. (in press). Families and pedagogical narration: Disrupting traditional understandings of family involvement. In V. Pacini-Ketchabaw (Ed.), *Flows, rhythms and intensities of early childhood education curriculum*. New York: Peter Lang.
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Journal Special Issues

A special issue of *Alberta Journal of Educational Research* (in press), edited by V. Pacini-Ketchabaw & L. Prochner. Articles in this issue include the following:

- Bernhard, J. (in press). From Theory to practice: Engaging newcomer parents in their children's education. *Alberta Journal of Educational Research*, 56(3).
- Davidson, K. (in press). The integration of cognitive and sociocultural theories of literacy development for instruction and research: Why? How? *Alberta Journal of Educational Research*, 56(3).
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- Langford, R. (in press). Theorizing an early childhood educator's authority for the advancement. *Alberta Journal of Educational Research*, 56(3).
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- Rose, S. & Whitty, P. (in press). Where do we find the time to do this? Struggling against the tyranny of time. *Alberta Journal of Educational Research*, 56(3).

Journal Articles

- Atkinson, K. (2009, Spring). We can "do" leadership our own way. *The Early Childhood Educator*.
- Elliot, E. (2010). The possibilities of family daycare.
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- Pence, A.R., Anglin, J., & Hunt-Jinnouchi, F. (in press). Creating space for innovation in tertiary education. *Ngoonjook Journal*.

Text versions of the published articles are included in Appendix B.

Keynote Presentations

- Pence, A. (2010, February). *Promoting capacity in ECD*. Keynote address at First International Symposium on Indigenous Education and ECD, Puebla, Mexico.
- Pence, A. (2010, June). *International perspectives on early childhood*. Inaugural Panel Address at International Stream for Head Start National Research Conference, Washington, D.C.
- Pence, A. (2010, October). 'Garla Bauondi'—fuelling the fire: Leadership for change. Keynote address at Australian Early Childhood Association, Adelaide, Australia.

Section V: Conclusion

I would like to thank you very much for letting me participate in this project because last year was very rough on me. I honestly thought that I would be getting out of this field. But because of this project, because of all these practitioners who always have wonderful things to say, and seeing all the learning that goes on with children inspired me. I have decided to stay and become an activist in the field. (IQ Project participant, personal communication)

Canadian studies have found that an important indicator of program quality is a well-trained, motivated workforce (Doherty et al., 2003; Goelman et al., 2006), yet Canada's child care workforce is beset with low wages, high turnover, and difficulties both with recruiting educators and retaining those currently in the field (Beach et al., 2004). Doherty et al. (2000) found that most child care centres in Canada provide minimal to mediocre care in their programs. In light of these findings, the potential of the IQ Project's innovative professional development approach to transform the Canadian ELCC landscape is enormous. We therefore recommend that the Province of British Columbia **take this professional development approach to scale in the province.**

In addition, we make the following recommendations:

Recommendations for Policy Development

The IQ Project recommends that the Province of British Columbia:

- Broaden and deepen constrained definitions of quality to allow for the creation of dynamic, innovative, and sustainable early childhood environments that respect British Columbia's diverse cultural communities.
- Create further opportunities for policy makers in the province's ECE field to be exposed to the wealth of knowledge that exists in the field internationally.
- Create ECE policies that support flexible, diverse and context-sensitive practice.

Recommendations for Training

The IQ Project recommends that the Province of British Columbia:

- Develop training that expands beyond the certificate and diploma options currently available in the province and allows for a more comprehensive educational and career ladder involving an appropriate range of professional programs at the Bachelor degree level.
- Develop training that exposes future graduates to diverse perspectives and cutting-edge approaches to quality early childhood education and care, such as those included in the IQ Project.

Recommendations for Practice

The IQ Project recommends that the Province of British Columbia:

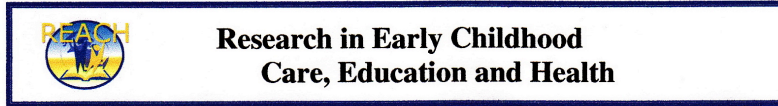
- Support capacity building to develop innovative ECE practices that include and involve diverse children and families.
- Create a new community-based model for early learning and child care, including the role of regional community early years facilitators to act as leaders, mentors and coaches to groups of ECE practitioners across BC.
- Create opportunities for ongoing in-service professional development.
- Create and promote opportunities to continue and support the networking and dialogue among early childhood educators that the IQ Project engendered.
- Create and support centres of innovation that demonstrate sustainable, dynamic, quality early childhood environments.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Forum Poster



Research in Early Childhood Care, Education and Health

REACH is a consortium of early childhood researchers at the University of Victoria. Established in 2003, REACH advances collaborative and interdisciplinary approaches, through university and community partnerships, to enhance early childhood education, health and development in community and cultural contexts. REACH is the Uvic branch of the Human Early Learning Partnership (HELP), a consortium of BC research universities.

REACH is pleased to announce

Experiences in Moving Beyond Minimum Standards: A Vision for Early Learning and Child Care

Presentations on the creation of an early learning and child care system that emphasizes links between innovative policies and innovative practices.

| | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  | <p>Professor Margaret Carr is Professor of Education at the University of Waikato in New Zealand. Formerly a kindergarten teacher, she was a co-Director of the Early Childhood Curriculum Development project that developed a national early childhood curriculum for New Zealand in 1996. (Te Whariki). Since that time she has been involved in a number of research projects on curriculum implementation and assessment in early childhood settings and schools. Her most recent book, <i>Learning in the Making: Disposition and Design in Early Education</i>, written with research colleagues, will be published at the end of 2009. Professor Carr developed, with teachers, an assessment format called 'Learning Stories', the subject of a 2001 book: <i>Assessment in Early Childhood Settings: Learning Stories</i>. She has published widely on early childhood curriculum and assessment, learning dispositions, and technology in early childhood. Recent publications include a series of 20 books on formative assessment in early childhood for the Ministry of Education: <i>Kei tua o te pae. Assessment for learning: Early childhood exemplars</i>. These books include a discussion of assessment issues, links to research, and annotated examples from early childhood settings.</p> |
|  | <p>Dr. Charles E. Pascal is the Executive Director of the Atkinson Charitable Foundation that promotes social and economic justice through its granting programs. Pascal has a strong background in education, training, policy development, leadership, and organizational development. He has published extensively in the fields of education and psychology. He graduated from the University of Michigan with a Ph.D. in psychology in 1969 and joined the psychology faculty of McGill University in Montreal. He has served as the President of Sir Sandford Fleming College, Chair of the Council of Regents for Ontario's colleges, and has also held deputy ministerial posts with the Government of Ontario, including the Premier's Council on Health, Community and Social Services, and Education and Training. He has had extensive experience in the developing world, including China and South Africa, providing capacity building expertise in policy making and organizational change. He was Chair of the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) for Ontario from 2005 – 2008, and in late 2007, Premier Dalton McGuinty appointed Pascal as his <i>Special Advisor on Early Learning</i>. In June 2009, Pascal released his report <i>With Our Best Future in Mind: Implementing Early Learning in Ontario</i>.</p> |
|  | <p>Prof. Peter Moss is Professor of Early Childhood Provision at the Thomas Coram Research Unit, Institute of Education at the University of London. His research interests include services for children and relations between them; the workforce in these services; gender issues in work with children; and the relationship between employment and care, with a special interest in leave policies. Much of his work has been cross-national, especially within Europe: between 1986 and 1996 he was Coordinator of the European Childcare Network, and he has just stepped down as the editor of the multi-national and multi-lingual magazine <i>Children in Europe</i>; he is co-coordinator of the international network on leave policies and research. Publications include <i>Beyond Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care: Languages of Evaluation</i> (with Gunilla Dahlberg and Alan Pence); <i>From Children's Services to Children's Spaces</i> (with Pat Petrie); and <i>A New Deal for Children? Re-forming education and care in England, Scotland and Sweden</i> (with Brownen Cohen and Pat Petrie); <i>Ethics and Politics in Early Childhood Education</i> (with Gunilla Dahlberg); <i>Care Work in Europe</i> (with Claire Cameron); <i>The Politics of Parental Leave Policies</i> (edited with Sheila Kamerman); and <i>There are Alternatives! Markets and Democratic Experimentalism in Early Childhood Education and Care</i>. He is the editor of a book series with Gunilla Dahlberg, 'Contesting Early Childhood', which questions current dominant discourses in early childhood and provides space for alternative narratives.</p> |
|  | <p>Dr. Alan Pence is Professor and UNESCO Chair for Early Childhood Education, Care and Development at the University of Victoria, Canada. He is the 2003 recipient of the International Education Leadership Award from the Canadian Bureau for International Education and the inaugural Craigdarroch Research Award for Societal Contributions from the University of Victoria. Dr. Pence has founded several units on campus including: the Early Childhood Development Virtual University (ECDVU), a graduate level web-based leadership and capacity building program active in Africa; the First Nations Partnerships Program (FNPP), an undergraduate community-based academic program supporting Indigenous communities efforts to promote early childhood care and development; and the Unit for Child Care Research and Professional Development (UCCR), home for the Investigating Quality and other research and capacity building projects. He has authored over 100 articles and chapters on a variety of child and education topics. His most recent books include: <i>Africa's Future, Africa's Challenge: Early Childhood Care and Development in Sub-Saharan Africa</i> (edited with Garcia and Evans, 2008), <i>Beyond Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care</i> (with Dahlberg and Moss, 2nd edition 2007), and <i>Supporting Indigenous Children's Development</i> (with Ball, 2006).</p> |
|  | <p>Dr. Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw is an Associate Professor at the School of Child and Youth Care, University of Victoria, Victoria, British Columbia, Canada. Dr. Pacini-Ketchabaw is the co-director of the Investigating Quality Project and the Implementation of the British Columbia Early Learning Framework Project. These initiatives promote the active engagement of early childhood educators in discussions and actions that can lead to the formation of sustainable and positive early learning environments in B.C. She has also taken the lead at the University of Victoria, School of Child and Youth Care in developing an Early Years Specialization offered at the 3rd and 4th years of the Bachelors degree in CYC. In addition, Veronica is an executive for Research in Early Childhood Care, Education and Health (REACH). REACH is a consortium of early childhood researchers at the University of Victoria. She has published many articles on diversity issues in early childhood in international journals. Her most recent book, <i>Rhythms, Flows and Intensities of Early Childhood Education Curriculum</i>, written with research colleagues, will be published in 2010 by Peter Lang.</p> |

Tuesday, January 19, 2010
7:00 – 8:30 pm
Harry Hickman Bldg., Room 110



<http://reach.uvic.ca>



Appendix B: Journal Articles

The Possibilities and Challenges of Family Daycare

Enid Elliot

To write this article, Christine and I met and talked about her work several times. We spoke of her experiences as an early childhood educator running a family daycare home; she provided me with notes, some written up on lined yellow paper, other details in a mind map, and some notes written on the computer. These notes themselves reflected the busy-ness of caring for children in her home. Jotting notes down while she gets ready for lunch or a thought put on a mind map as she readied the toddlers to walk the older children to school.

Located in the basement of her house, Christine's daycare is warm and inviting. The day I visited the children appeared comfortable and relaxed, like a group that had been together since they were babies or toddlers. It was a school day and we got the children ready for the walk to the local school. The little ones were used to the routine and looked forward to seeing the neighbours and landmarks they passed each day.

Christine had worked in group child care before she had started her own family daycare home. After having her two sons she felt she could best balance family and work by opening a family daycare and offering her expertise within her neighbourhood. As she says, "family care can have a real sense of family and community." Indeed there was a relaxed, casual, and homelike feeling to the program.

A Strength and a Challenge

Christine acknowledged that caring for children in her home was both a challenge and an asset. A family daycare provider can have babies, preschoolers, and out-of-school care children altogether in her program. This works well for many families, as brothers and sisters can be in the same program and parents only have one trip to make and one setting with which to become familiar. Having brothers and sisters together, babies, and kindergartners together creates a family style grouping. Children can be part of her program for several years experiencing the consistency of one caregiver and environment and an on-going relationship with the same children. Educators also can develop deep relationships over time with families whose children stay in their program.

While this intimacy is nice for parents and children and potentially the educator it also presents logistical problems. As Christine says:

There are many other challenges that the educator must face with a family grouping. There are day-to-day challenges of providing each age with stimulating and challenging activities. You must also maintain safety for the younger children. When putting out art, it needs to challenge the four year olds while not allowing the toddlers to get into inappropriate activities. Each activity or duty requires looking at the whole group. Even something as simple as taking a toddler to potty can cause difficulties. There is only one adult, you lose the extra set of eyes watching the remainder of the group. There are times in the day when you do not feel like you have an opportunity just sit with the children. You are going from diapers, to potty, to a structured activity for older children, as well as trips to the school.

Being part of the community was a support for Christine, as well as the children. The children were accustomed to greeting some of the same people each morning on the way to school. Christine also enjoyed this contact with parents and other family daycare providers. The links to the neighbours and neighbourhood benefited the children giving them a sense of belonging and connectedness to their community and reinforced Christine's relationships within her neighbourhood. "The community can be a real life preserver on some days." Just seeing another mother out with her kids or a friendly neighbour can help "you get through the day." The neighbourhood was also a focus for all of them at times, "we may bake cookies for an elderly neighbour or make Christmas cards for all the immediate neighbours."

Christine is clear that working on your own can be a challenge and lonely. While she missed the support of other staff she acknowledged that the flexibility of making decisions for yourself on the spur of the moment is an asset. "On a hot summer day you may be able to pack up and head out to a beach or water park for the day. Or on a rainy day you can curl up on the sofa with books and a blanket." Lacking the stimulation of co-workers can result in a relaxed approach to providing a program, not pushing yourself to try new activities or new approaches. There may not be the time or energy to bring in extra materials or ideas or the impetus to read the latest thinking in the field lacking another adult with whom to plan or engage.

Joining the Investigating Quality (IQ) Workshops

Christine was one of two family daycare providers who attended the Victoria IQ Workshops. Both of them shared with the group some of these tensions of caring for children in their homes. Including family child care providers in the group's discussions broadened our perspective and sensitivity to the situations facing different early childhood programs. Group care and preschool serves only a portion of the under six population; family daycares provide caring and learning environments for many children in British Columbia. Working on their own, many educators struggle with the tensions that Christine has articulated during our interview.

Developing a pedagogy of listening within our group of educators who represented preschool, Aboriginal Head Start, group child care, and family daycare challenged all of us. Each educator worked in context with specific interests and situations that informed the educators' practice and their relationships with families and children. While we came together as early childhood educators with some common beliefs and assumptions we also had differences. Understanding the particular issues that Christine faced as a family daycare provider enlarged our understandings of the work we all do.

The professional development opportunity offered by the IQ workshops connected the family daycare providers with a larger network with whom to communicate and reflect. As we investigated the possibilities of documentation and learning stories Christine and Linda, the other family daycare provider in the group, explored how it might work in their settings. Like the group settings they needed to find how to incorporate the process into their daily rhythm. But beyond the practical aspect they had to struggle with how to find the distance to reflect on what they were documenting.

"Developing a learning story for the children could be a challenge in a family child care setting," Christine says. Finding the time and the space to document children's thinking or an ordinary moment with a child was a challenge. Already putting in long days, as children are there from eight in the morning until six in the evening, adding more time to print pictures and text takes commitment and dedication.

Christine found ways to use the pictures and the stories in a manner that fit with her situation. She often jotted down a few sentences to jog her memory for later. Storing digital pictures on the computer or on a memory card also was useful for jogging her memory on a particular incident. Looking at the pictures in her camera with the children later was “an exciting way to create dialog with the children. Seeing themselves immediately after activities gives them a sense of purpose and completion.”

There were drawbacks that Christine was aware of. She explained, “working on learning stories without the support of other staff is difficult to catch as many learning opportunities. While helping one child with a task, you can miss a conversation or interaction with the other children. There is not the extra set of eyes recording or the ears listening.”

A point that I was interested in that was made is that “the learning stories written in a family child care are one-sided. There is not the help of someone else to see the activity from a different point of view, from a different angle, or under different circumstances.” This gathering of other perspectives helps you continue to wonder about what you are observing. Freire says “to see again what had already been seen before always implies seeing angles that were not perceived before” (Friere, 2000, p. 56). Other people can help you see again.

This takes us back to a pedagogy of listening and Carlina Rinaldi’s assertion that “understanding and awareness are generated through sharing and dialogue” (Rinaldi, 2005, p. 21). Working alone in a family daycare setting challenges an educator to remain engaged intellectually with the activities and ideas of the children. Discussing ideas, reflecting on the day’s events can push one’s thinking and hearing another’s perspective can illuminate an incident in a way that furthers understanding.

Rinaldi reminds us that “the teacher’s goal is the same as that of the children: to find meaning in her work and in her existence, to see value and significance in what she does, to escape from being indistinct and anonymous, to be able to see gratifying results from her work and her intelligence” (Rinaldi, 2005, p. 56).

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Rinaldi, C. (2005). Documentation and assessment: What is the relationship? In A. Clark, A. T. Kjørholt & P. Moss (Eds.), *Beyond listening: Children's perspectives on early childhood services* (pp. 17–28). Bristol, UK: Policy Press.

We Can “Do” Leadership Our Own Way

Kim Atkinson

What happens when you put 23 ECEs into one small room for five days? If you are an ECE, you know exactly what happens. You talk and you connect. You share a common language and common values so connections are made quickly, easily. You laugh together and cry together. You share the stories of the exhilaration of the job, and the exhaustion of the job. You laugh at having hands and fingernails free of fingerprint stains. You talk of the satisfaction of successes and the frustrations of inadequate resources. And when it's over flowers and cards are given, as are hugs. And more tears flow.

From January 27 to February 1 at the first ECEBC Leadership Institute all this occurred as one would expect. But there was so much more.

As so many great events do, this event began as a dream. ECEBC had a vision of gathering together ECEs and giving them the support, the tools, the confidence, and the money to implement leadership projects in their home communities. They hoped to begin constructing a culture of ECE leadership that is community based and built on our unique strengths and our core values. They dreamed this dream so hard that they made it happen. And we 23 were the lucky recipients of the fulfillment of that dream.

Building capacity for leadership in the ECE community was the overriding theme of our five days together. And for that we needed a lot of information. And wow, did we get a lot of information! Presentations included information on the political landscape of child care and education, the economic reality and social implications of the lack of affordable child care, and startling historical and statistical facts on Canada's low ranking internationally in gender equality and spending on child care. A communications expert coached us on framing our message. We discussed presentation skills, target audiences, how to create a budget, how to define the outcomes we hoped for, and much more. It was enough information to make our heads spin!

But perhaps more important than the information was the discussion around redefining leadership itself. We discussed the general lack of leadership in the ECE community and our collective fears and reticence of taking on leadership roles. And in the course of the carefully planned exercises sprinkled throughout the five days an amazing idea emerged: as ECEs we can “do” leadership our own way. We don't have to change who we are. We are nurturers and caregivers. We value and listen to others. We respect differences and we serve healthy snacks. We check in with how everyone feels. We are smart and flexible and resourceful. We sit in circles. This is how we “do” leadership.

But, and make no mistake, this is a big BUT, to be leaders in our field and in our communities, we first have to value our work. In our gut we know what we do is important, but we don't talk about it much. We give of ourselves to the families and children we work with, without giving to ourselves. If we don't begin valuing our work, who will?

The five days of the Leadership Institute exceeded all my expectations. I came away renewed, reaffirmed, and equipped with skills and knowledge to build on. And the credit for this great experience goes directly to the women with the dream. Sheila Davidson, Rita Chudnovsky, and Toni Hoyland modelled leadership in the very best ECE way. They exude warmth, kindness, humour, and respect. They were constantly gauging our response to each presentation—were we tired, overloaded, hungry? We were given opportunities to share fears, reflect on our gifts, and use our hearts and our heads.

But also in the best ECE way, they demonstrated intelligence and vast knowledge throughout the five days. They know their stuff! Each can rattle off statistics, dates, historical data, and policies with an eloquence that will send you out the door with a placard over your shoulder!

And, rounding out the best ECE way, there was Maria Mejia, the goddess of all things practical. She dispensed maps, guided us on the bus, organized meals, and knew exactly where to go to find the best sushi.

The five days were intense. And now we have gone back to our communities full of energy and ideas. Our projects have been given shape and focus, and we feel empowered. If we are overwhelmed, we know those women with the dream are only a phone call away. And in May we gather again to share our progress. And we will share in the most ECE of ways.

This article was published in the Spring 2009 issue of The Early Childhood Educator, journal of the ECEBC. It is available online at http://www.ecebc.ca/resources/journal_archive.html