

**THE COMMUNITY EARLY LEARNING AND
CHILD CARE FACILITATORS PILOT
PROJECT**

An Evaluation of the Second Year of the Project

August, 2013

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary	4
Introduction.....	7
Methodology	9
Project Recruitment	9
Project Participants	9
Evaluation Methodology.....	10
Main Findings	12
Project Quality and Usefulness to Practice	12
Overall Findings.....	12
Between-Site Differences	13
Years of Participation.....	14
Contemporary Early Years Issues: Understanding and Relevance to Practice.....	15
Practice-Related Skills	18
Changes in Practice at Individual Centres	21
Victoria Centres	21
Burnaby/Coquitlam Centres.....	21
Project Outcomes	22
Critically Reflective Educators	23
Enhanced Learning Opportunities for Children.....	23
Family Involvement	24
Discussion	26
Learning Circles.....	26
Readings.....	26
Guest Speakers.....	26
Critical Reflective Protocol.....	27
Discussion Format	27
Group Diversity	27
Duration of Learning Circles	27
Community Facilitators' Visits.....	28
Electronic Communication	28
Between-Site Differences	29

Summary and Recommendations.....	31
Recommendations.....	31
References.....	33
Appendix A: Invitation Letter to Child Care Centres.....	35
Appendix B: Practitioner Consent Form.....	38
Appendix C: Practitioner Confidentiality Agreement.....	45
Appendix D: Family Information Letter	46
Appendix E: Family Consent Form	49
Appendix F: Family Permission Form.....	54
Appendix G: Learning Circle Focus Group Questions	57
Appendix H: Practitioner Survey.....	58
Appendix I: Community Facilitator Survey.....	63
Appendix J: Family Survey.....	65

Executive Summary

This document is an evaluation of the second year of the Community Early Learning and Child Care Facilitators Pilot Project, which began in October 2012 and concluded in June 2013.

The Community Early Learning and Child Care Facilitators Pilot Project is an innovative model of supporting quality child care in British Columbia. The model, the first of its kind in British Columbia, draws on the foundation created by the ground-breaking Investigating Quality (IQ) Project, which was funded by the Ministry of Children and Family Development from 2005 to 2011. The model also takes inspiration from internationally respected and tested models of supporting high quality child care in Sweden, New Zealand, and Reggio Emilia, Italy.

The new pilot project incorporates the philosophy of the IQ project and some of its major activities, such as monthly learning circles for Early Childhood Educators, but incorporates a new Community Facilitator position. In the two pilot communities (Victoria and Burnaby/Coquitlam), community facilitators make regular visits to early years centres and collaborate with educators in documenting and reflecting on children's learning, introducing new materials, and transforming the early years environment to better support children's learning. The project is also a key support to the continued implementation of the *BC Early Learning Framework* ((Government of British Columbia, 2008).

The project was coordinated by Dr. Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw, co-director, along with Dr. Alan Pence, of the Unit for Early Years Research and Development (web.uvic.ca/~eyrd). Dr. Allison Benner, a research fellow at the Unit, completed the documentation and analysis of the project. The Unit is well known for its commitment to innovative field-based research and professional development across a range of early years settings. In addition to coordinating the IQ Project, the Unit also led the *BC Early Learning Framework* Implementation Project from 2008 to 2010 (see Government of British Columbia, 2009 and Pacini-Ketchabaw, Hoyland, & Handley, 2009).

This evaluation is based on a primarily qualitative methodology that incorporates field-based observations, focus groups, and interviews and surveys with educators, community facilitators, and families.

The evaluation findings indicate that the second year of the pilot project was successful. Educators consider the project activities to be of very good quality and highly relevant to their practice. Educators reported that they gained understanding of a wide range of issues that are relevant to their practice, and that they acquired a number of skills, including pedagogical documentation, which is important to the implementation of the *BC Early Learning Framework* in early years settings. The project helped to foster critical reflection among educators, enhanced learning opportunities for children, and greater family involvement. Educators who had participated in the project for two years reported greater gains than those who had participated for one year. While educators from the Victoria site found the project somewhat less relevant to their practice than educators

in the Burnaby/Coquitlam setting, this result stems primarily from conditions in the centre over this past year that are beyond the scope of the project. Suggestions for improvement are largely minor adjustments to enhance the effectiveness of a model that is considered to be unique and effective by the majority of participants.

In September, 2013, the pilot project will enter its third year. To build on the successes of the first and second years, and to provide a basis for expanding the model and the approaches it promotes to more communities in the future, this report makes the following recommendations:

1. Develop additional resources to support community facilitators, including a repository of readings by topic and a presentation that can be used to orient project participants to the ideas and theories that are explored in the project.
2. Restructure the time allotted to project activities to allow community facilitators to conduct longer visits to centres. Moreover, schedule visits so that they overlap with children's nap time, so that community facilitators have the opportunity to (a) observe and engage with children; and (b) conduct one-on-one and/or small group discussions with educators about pedagogical documentations, project readings, and practice issues. While learning circle and visit summaries should not be eliminated, they may be shorter and less detailed to allow for more face-to-face dialogue with educators.
3. In support of recommendation (2) above, create a communication log in each centre so that educators can write down questions or comments to discuss with the community facilitator.
4. In recruiting more centres to participate in the third year of the pilot project in Victoria and Burnaby/Coquitlam, aim to expand the project to more diverse early learning settings (e.g., to infant/toddler centres, all-day kindergarten programs, and/or Aboriginal child care centres).
5. Use project findings and activities to increase the pool of qualified and experienced community facilitators across BC. For example, interested educators who are currently participating in the project could "shadow" the community facilitators during some of their work, gaining experience in the approaches they use. As well, finalize a draft blueprint developed in 2012-2013 for a practice-based course on the work of the pedagogista/community facilitator, for delivery at the University of Victoria in 2014-2015.
6. Continue to encourage educators outside the project to participate in the learning circles, supporting the sharing of a wider range of perspectives at these meetings and the creation of larger communities of practice that are exploring the innovative approaches introduced by the project.

7. In further support of recommendation (6), within available funding, enhance communication about the project within the early years field to engage more educators around BC in discussing the ideas and approaches introduced by the project. Such communication may include presentations about the project at conferences and meetings and adapting the blog created in 2012-2013 to draw in a larger group of educators outside the project.

This document is structured as follows: The Introduction provides background information about the project, including its history, goals, and main components. The Methodology section describes the project participants and the methodology employed for the evaluation. The following section presents the main findings of the evaluation. In the Discussion section, issues and challenges that were encountered in the project are explored. The final section of the document discusses the overall findings of the report, and makes recommendations for the third year of the pilot project.

Introduction

The report is an evaluation of the second year (2012-2013) of the Community Early Learning and Child Care Facilitators Pilot Project. This project was led by Dr. Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw and Dr. Alan Pence, co-directors of the Unit for Early Years Research and Development at the University of Victoria. Dr. Allison Benner, a research fellow at the Unit, was the main evaluator of the pilot project, and is a co-author of this report.

This pilot project draws on the foundation created by earlier phases of the Investigating Quality (IQ) Project, which was delivered from 2005 to 2011, with funding from the Ministry of Children and Family Development. The IQ Project is rooted in internationally respected and tested theories and practices that differ from those often seen in North American early years practice (see, for example, Cannella, 1997; Grieshaber & Cannella, 2001; MacNaughton, 2003; MacNaughton & Hughes, 2008). These theories and practices broaden and deepen discussions of quality, and open up to local voices and to contextual factors that influence quality early years programming. The Unit has extensive experience in working with this approach, both within Canada (Ball & Pence, 2006; Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2010) and with international partners (Dahlberg, Moss, & Pence, 1999, 2007; Moss & Pence, 1994; Pence & Marfo, 2005). Successive evaluations of the IQ project indicate the success and promise of this approach in British Columbia as well (Pence & Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011; Mort & Read, 2011).

In 2011, the Ministry for Children and Family Development provided funding to build on the foundation created by the IQ Project by developing and implementing the Community Early Years and Child Care Facilitators Pilot Project. The goals of the project are to:

- increase the recruitment and retention of early childhood educators in BC;
- create a new community-based model for early learning and child care that links to existing community-based initiatives in the province;
- build and sustain professionalism within the early learning and child care sector so that it can act as a full partner in promoting BC's economic development, now and in the future;
- enhance and sustain quality in early learning and child care settings; and
- enhance children's learning opportunities, experiences, and outcomes in early learning and child care settings.

In October 2011, the Unit launched the first phase of the pilot project on Vancouver Island (Victoria) and the Lower Mainland (Coquitlam), and in October 2012, the second phase began. As in the IQ project, participating educators in the project attend monthly learning circles. At the learning circles, educators discuss practice in relation to the *BC Early Learning Framework* (Government of British Columbia, 2008), ensuring the ongoing implementation of this important document in BC early years settings, particularly through the use of the critical reflective protocol introduced in *Understanding the BC Early Learning Framework: From theory to practice* (Government of British Columbia, 2009). The educators then explore these perspectives in their centres, engaging in an ongoing, seamless process of action and reflection.

A new feature in the pilot project is the creation of the Community Facilitator position. In addition to coordinating the monthly learning circles, community facilitators play a role similar to that of pedagogistas in the centres of Reggio Emilia, Italy: immersing themselves in the centres, supporting the educators' efforts to engage with children and families in innovative, critically reflective practice, and extending the practice of the educators and the children by introducing new ideas, materials, and media. The ongoing visits of the community facilitators provide for a richer, deeper exploration of the perspectives introduced in the IQ Project, and also create stronger links between participating educators at the community level.

Methodology

Project Recruitment

In the first year of the pilot project, community facilitators recruited eight early years centres to participate in the project, three in Victoria, and five in Burnaby/Coquitlam. Based on the experience of the first year of the project, the co-directors and the community facilitators determined that it would be more effective if the community facilitators could work with a smaller number of centres to allow for longer, more in-depth visits within the available funding.

In Victoria, two of the three participating centres elected to continue to participate in the project for a second year; one of these two centres provided a range of programs (e.g., two half-day preschool programs and a full-time child care program) in three separate rooms, effectively comprising programs that might be offered in a few different centres in a single building. In Burnaby/Coquitlam, two of the five participating centres elected to continue in the second phase, and the community facilitator invited two additional centres to participate. These two additional centres were located in the same early years complex as one of the existing centres, allowing the community facilitator to move easily between locations.

Prospective educators in Victoria and Burnaby/Coquitlam were provided with written information about the project (Appendix A), and were invited to discuss the project with the community facilitator and the project co-directors. Educators who agreed to participate in the centres signed a consent form (Appendix B) and a confidentiality agreement (Appendix C).

Educators in the participating centres provided families with an information letter about the project (Appendix D). Like the educators, families were invited to discuss the project with the project co-directors. Parents who agreed to have their child participate in the project activities signed a consent form (Appendix E) and a permission form (Appendix F) if they were willing to have photographs and videotapes made of their child, and if they were willing to have this documentation shared in project activities (e.g., in pedagogical documentations shared at learning circles).

Project Participants

In Burnaby/Coquitlam, four participating centres were recruited by the summer, 2012. The four participating centres included:

- three licensed non-profit group child care centres for children aged 3-5, enrolling 25 children each. Fourteen educators, including the program coordinator and the three lead teachers, participated in the program.
- a privately owned, home-based licensed multi-age group family child care centre, enrolling eight children. Two educators, the centre manager and an assistant, participated in the project.

In Victoria, the two participating centres were:

- a provincially funded family and child drop-in program for children aged birth to five (StrongStart), running from 8:45–11:45 daily. On any given day, approximately 25-32 children and families attend the program, though the total enrolment is over 200. One educator, the program facilitator, participated in the project.
- A licensed child care centre, offering half-day preschool, full-time child care, and out-of-school care for children aged 3-7 for approximately 60 children. Eleven educators, including the centre Director, participated in the project.

In total, 28 educators participated in the project, 16 in Coquitlam, and 12 in Victoria. In the course of the year, three educators left their centres and one withdrew from the project, leaving 24 participants. Of these educators, one had a graduate degree, 12 had an undergraduate degree, 9 had a college diploma, and 2 held a certificate. Two of the participating educators had less than 3 years of experience working with children, 3 had 3-5 years' experience, 6 had 5-10 years' experience, and 15 had more than 10 years' experience. At the time of the evaluation, 13 of the educators had participated in the project for two years, while 11 had participated for only one year.

Evaluation Methodology

This evaluation employs a qualitative methodology. The findings and recommendations reported in this evaluation report are based on focus groups, interviews, and written surveys conducted in June and July, 2013.

In June 2013, the evaluator conducted focus groups with participating educators in Victoria and Burnaby/Coquitlam at the monthly learning circle. This focus group focused on the educators' experiences of the learning circles, including the process of pedagogical documentation and the project readings, and the relationship of the learning circles to other components of the pilot project. The questions used for these focus groups are listed in Appendix G.

The evaluator also distributed a written survey to all participating educators, which they completed at the final learning circle (Appendix H). This survey included discrete ratings of aspects of the project, as well as open-ended questions. A separate written survey was given to the two community facilitators (Appendix I).

Families at participating centres were also invited to participate in the evaluation. A written survey was distributed to each centre (Appendix J) and interested families informed the centres of their intention to participate. Fifteen families responded to the survey, 7 in Burnaby/Coquitlam, and 8 in Victoria.

In addition, the project evaluator regularly attended learning circles in Victoria and Burnaby/Coquitlam, and made monthly visits to each of the six participating centres. The observations and documentation conducted by the evaluator in the learning circles and in the ongoing visits provided the evaluator with contextual information on the project that has assisted in the interpretation of the data collected for this evaluation report.

Main Findings

This section of the report describes the participants' experiences of the project: the project as a whole, the learning circles, the pedagogical facilitators' visits to the participating centres, and other ongoing features of the project, such as regular e-mail communication, guest speakers at learning circles, and visits to exhibits and other child care centres.

Project Quality and Usefulness to Practice

Overall Findings

In surveys, interviews, and focus groups, educators expressed an overall appreciation for the project, as reflected in the following comments:

It is an amazing project and an amazing professional development opportunity. I have become a more reflective early childhood educator. It has been exciting to be a part of this project and to have access to the readings that have provoked my thinking and deepened my understanding about a number of issues and theories. I have been supported tremendously to engage in the practice of pedagogical narration. The project has enriched my practice! (Educator, Victoria)

This project is excellent ... I am growing fast professionally and the daycare program has benefited hugely throughout these [past two] years. ... I think every daycare should have support like this. (Educator, Burnaby/Coquitlam)

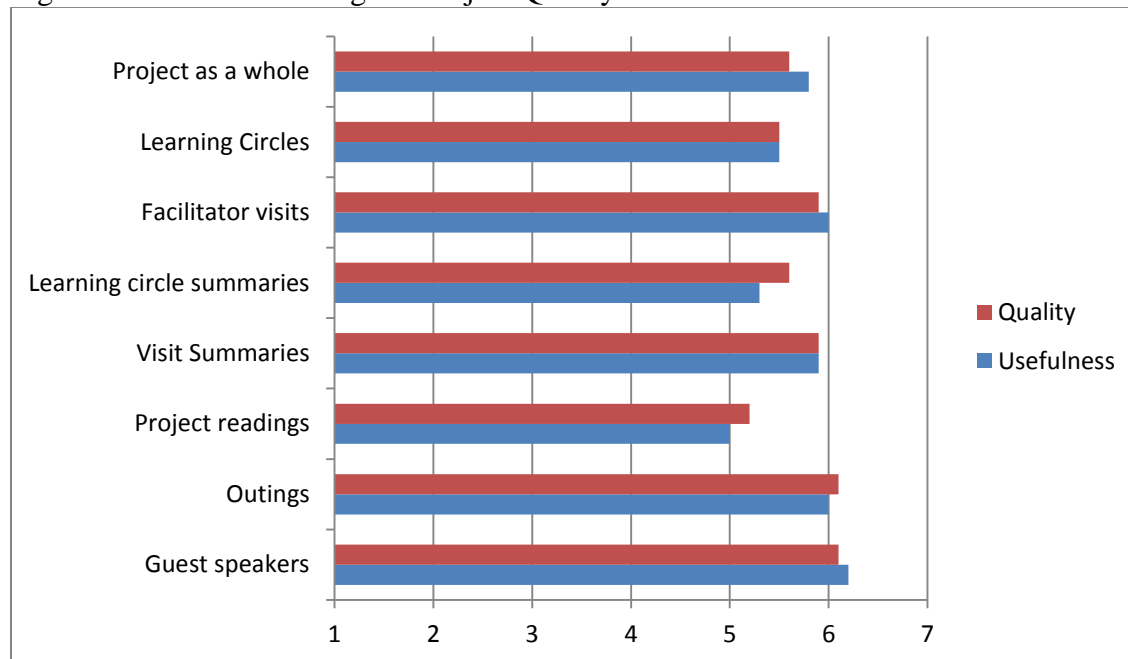
I feel this project sets a model for what professional development should be like. It explores many different pedagogies at the same time and helps somebody like myself who is new to this field in deciding where my own comfort lies. (Educator, Burnaby/Coquitlam)

In addition to providing oral and written comments on the project, participating educators were asked to rate the quality of the project and its usefulness to practice on a 7-point scale, where 1 denotes the lowest and 7 the highest quality or usefulness to practice. As shown below in Figure 1, ratings of the project as a whole, as well as of its various components were relatively high, with most ratings falling somewhere between 5 and 6, corresponding to judgments ranging from "good" to "very good" quality and usefulness to practice. The community facilitators' visits and special events (e.g., guest speakers at learning circles and visits to exhibits or to other child care centres) were rated highest for quality and relevance to practice, while the project readings received the lowest ratings.

Differences in ratings between quality and usefulness to practice were slight, with some components (e.g., project readings, learning circle summaries) judged to be less useful relative to their quality, while other aspects of the project (e.g., facilitators' visits, the project as a whole) were rated higher for usefulness than for quality. However, given that

these differences are generally within one-quarter of a point on the 7-point scale, few useful conclusions can be drawn from them in the compiled results from both project locales.

Figure 1. Educators' Ratings of Project Quality and Usefulness to Practice.

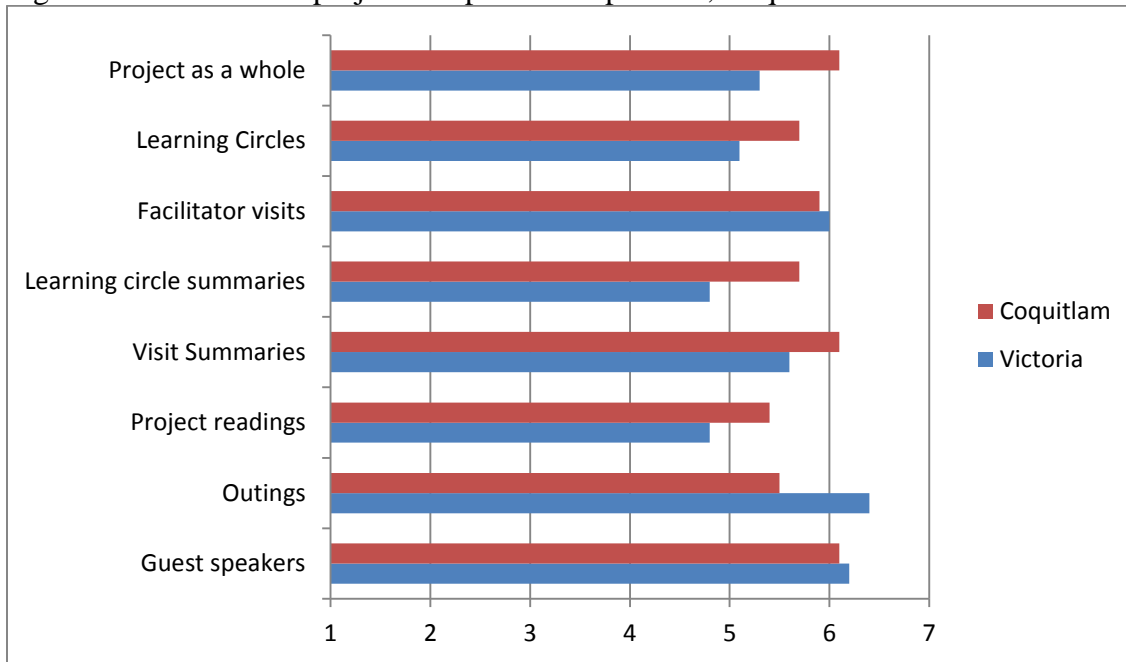


Between-Site Differences

When results are analyzed separately for Victoria and Burnaby/Coquitlam, some differences emerge. While ratings of project quality are somewhat lower for Victoria participants than for Coquitlam participants, these differences are slight—typically one-quarter of a point in difference, on average.

However, differences in ratings of the project's usefulness to practice, while not large, are notable. As shown in Figure 2 below, with the exception of ratings of the usefulness of guest speakers, outings, and the facilitator's visits, ratings of usefulness for all other project components are lower for Victoria participants than for Burnaby/Coquitlam participants by approximately one-half of a point, on average. Possible reasons for this difference will be addressed in the discussion section of this report.

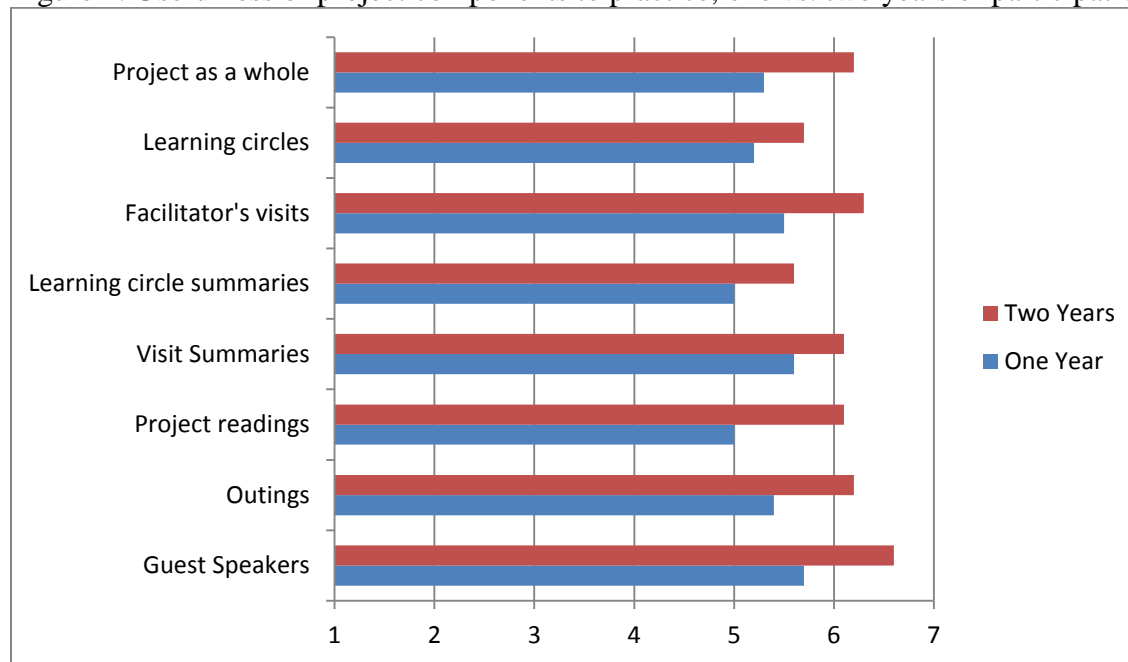
Figure 2. Usefulness of project components to practice, Coquitlam and Victoria.



Years of Participation

By far the most consistent differences in ratings of quality and usefulness were based on years of participation in the project. As noted in the methodology section, 13 educators had participated in the project for two years, while 11 had participated for one year. In both Victoria and Burnaby/Coquitlam, ratings of the project’s quality—and especially its usefulness to practice—tended to be higher among educators who had participated longer in the project. Figure 3 below, which shows educators’ ratings of the project’s usefulness to practice based on one versus two years of participation illustrates this result. In most cases, educators who had participated in the project for two years rated the project from one-half to one whole point higher in terms of its usefulness to practice.

Figure 2. Usefulness of project components to practice, one vs. two years of participation.



Educators who had participated for two years commented on feeling more relaxed, confident, and focused in the second year of the project compared to the first, and more able to make use of the project’s philosophy and activities in practice. The following comments are representative of many made by educators:

A great learning experience got even greater! (Educator, Victoria)

[This year] I was more relaxed. I was more ready to connect with the articles and incorporate some philosophy into my practice. (Educator, Burnaby/Coquitlam)

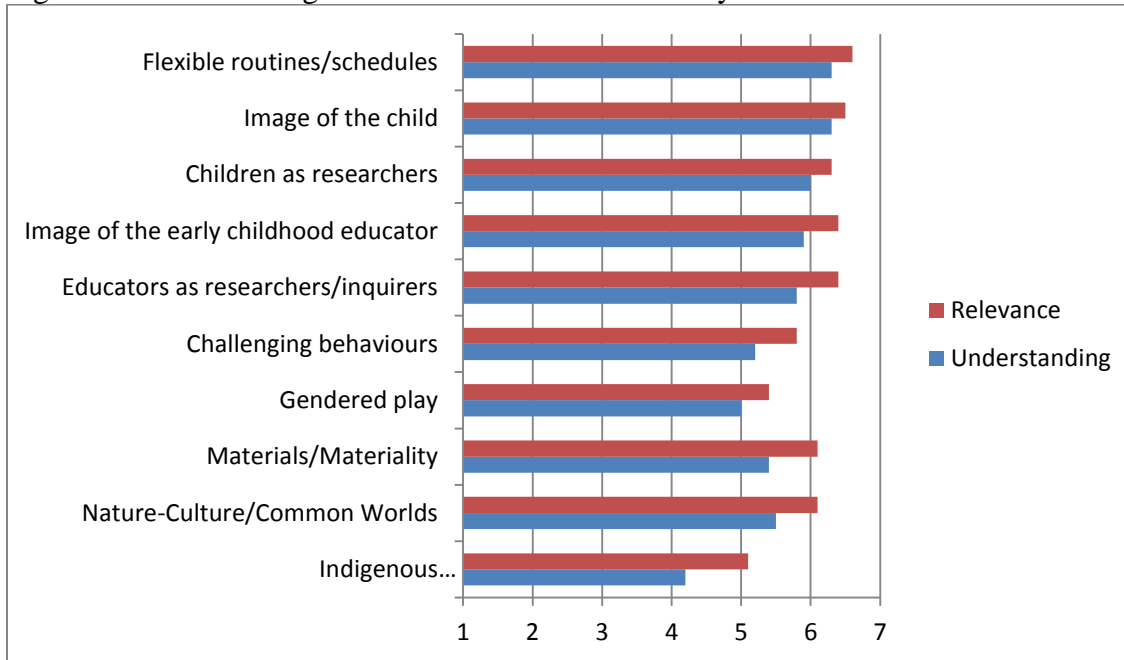
Last year was an introduction. This year I felt confident in my practice, sharing my knowledge/experience and opening my mind to others’ perspectives. (Educator, Burnaby/Coquitlam).

Contemporary Early Years Issues: Understanding and Relevance to Practice

Through learning circles, project readings, and discussions with the community facilitator, educators were exposed to a range of topics and theories that are at the “cutting edge” of early years research and practice. Many of these topics and theories (e.g., image of the child, flexible routines/schedules) have only recently begun to be considered in training programs for early childhood educators, while others (e.g., materiality, common worlds, decolonization) are seldom included at all. For many educators, especially those whose education and training took place more than 5-10 years ago, the project introduced these topics and ideas for the first time.

Educators were asked, based on their experience of the project, to rate their understanding of a range of topics and ideas, as well as their perception of the relevance of the given topic/idea to early years practice. A rating of 1 would correspond to “no understanding” or “not at all relevant,” while a rating of 7 would correspond to “excellent understanding” or “highly relevant.” These ratings are shown in Figure 4 below.

Figure 4. Understanding vs. Relevance of Selected Early Years Issues.

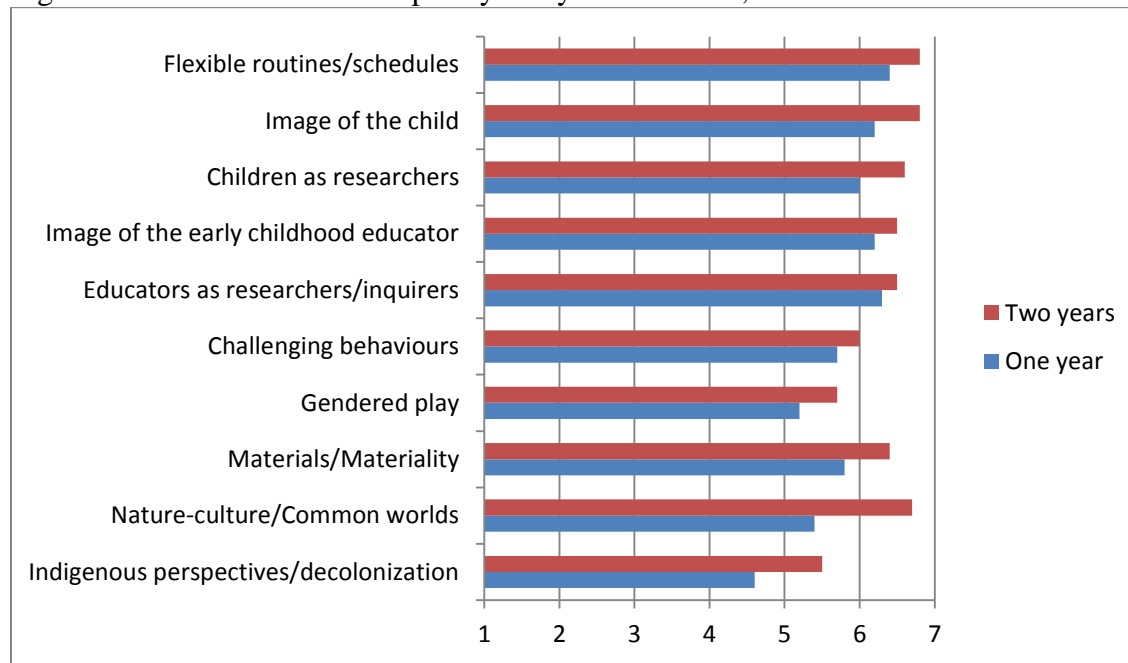


As seen above, on average, educators rated their understanding of most topics/ideas somewhere between 5 and just above 6 (i.e., good to very good understanding), with the exception of Indigenous perspectives/decolonization, which was rated just above 4. In all cases, educators judged the relevance of the topics/issues higher than their actual understanding, a pattern captured by one educator’s comment: “I did not know much about some of the ideas that were introduced in the project and now I feel as though I know a little more but I feel as though there is so much to understand about it” (Educator, Burnaby/Coquitlam).

Generally speaking, with the exception of nature-culture/common worlds, topics/ideas that were more closely related to broader issues of social and political change (e.g., gendered play, Indigenous perspectives/decolonization) were rated somewhat lower in terms of understanding and relevance than topics/ideas that are more easily perceived as related to children’s learning or creativity, or to daily practice, even when these topics/ideas depart from “mainstream” understandings of children, educators, and the early years environment. There were no systematic differences in ratings of topic/idea relevance between Victoria and Burnaby/Coquitlam. However, as shown in Figure 5, educators who had participated in the project for two years tended to rate their understanding of most issues as somewhat higher than educators who had participated for only one year, a trend that was also reflected in their ratings of topic/idea relevance,

which are shown below in Figure 5. As can be seen, the most significant differences were found for nature-culture/common worlds and Indigenous perspectives/decolonization.

Figure 5. Relevance of Contemporary Early Years Issues, One vs. Two Years



When asked about the most central topics/ideas that they took from the project and that they would continue to draw on in practice, educators provided a range of comments that spanned many of the topics/ideas from the project. For example:

The image of the child as strong and capable—I will continue to reflect on what this really means and on the many practical ways to apply this in our everyday times at the centre. (Educator, Victoria)

I will continue to reflect on the idea of inquiry by educators—I want to support this thinking at our centre. (Educator, Victoria)

Flexible routines: I can now use even more flexibility with routines. Also, image of the early childhood educator—I see myself as a more intent listener who really seeks to understand children. (Educator, Victoria)

The relationship-building with nature and the whole idea of humans and non-humans co-existing is a concept that I will definitely be using when I develop my own centre in the future. (Educator, Burnaby/Coquitlam)

The central idea I take away from this project is the post-structuralist idea of deconstruction: whose truth is this? What is their vested interest? Does this serve social justice? I will reflect on these questions in my practice. (Educator, Victoria)

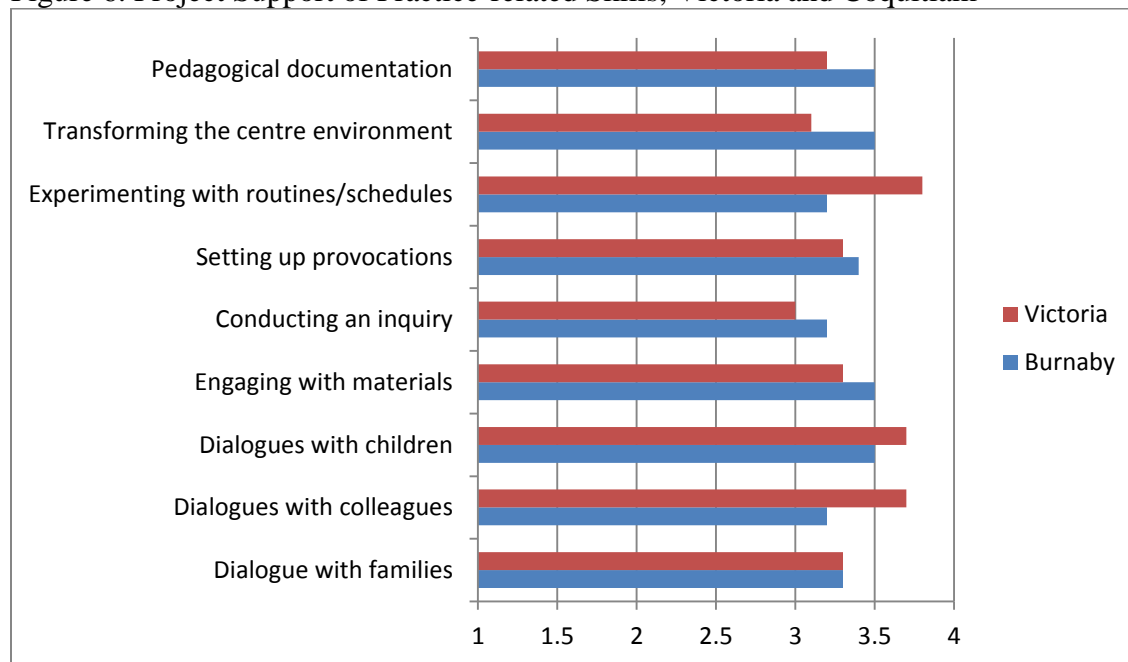
Ideas relating to postcolonialism, modernism, and postmodernism I learned from the books and articles [in the project] but [initially] I didn't pay too much attention to them. Since our discussions at the meetings, I look in the world in a very different way ... I'm more aware and ... concerned about these issues and ideas than I was before. (Educator, Burnaby/Coquitlam)

Practice-Related Skills

Through various project activities (learning circle discussions, visits to exhibits and child care centres), but perhaps especially through the community facilitators' visits and written reflections, participants were provided with enhanced opportunities to strengthen a range of practice-related skills.

Educators were asked to assess on a 4-point scale the extent to which the project supported them to carry out various practice-related activities. A rating of 1 denoted that the project provided no support for the activity, while ratings of 2, 3, and 4 corresponded to "a little", "significantly," and "a great deal," respectively. The results of these assessments are shown in Figure 6 below.

Figure 6. Project Support of Practice-related Skills, Victoria and Coquitlam

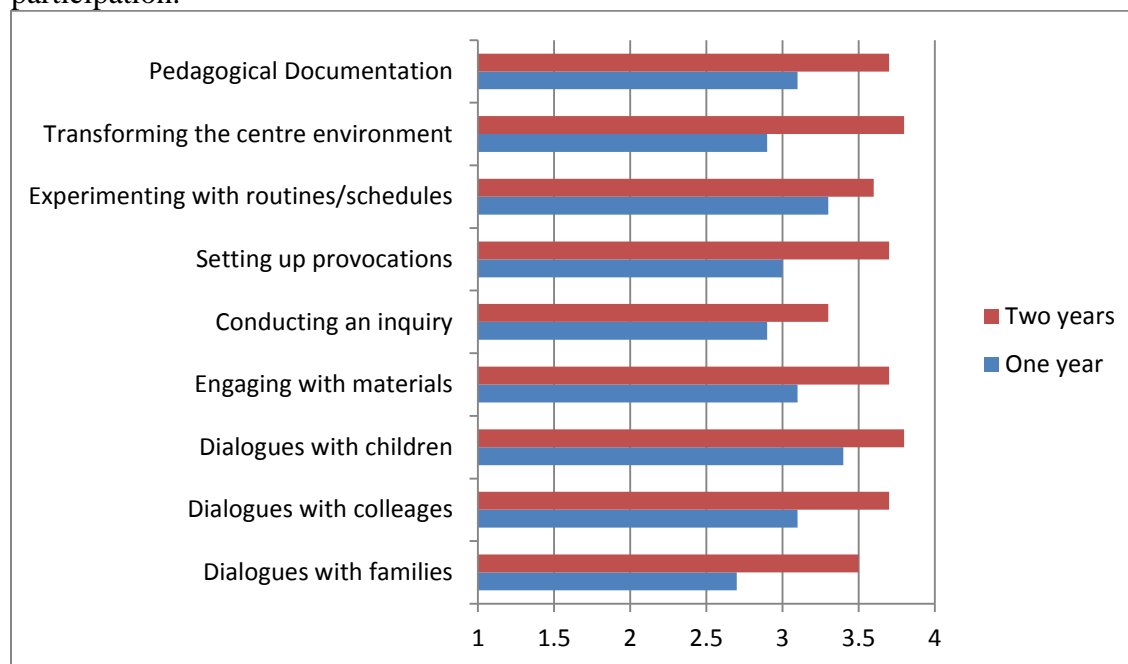


Overall, participants considered that the project had supported them to carry out all the listed activities at least significantly. Differences in the degree to which the project supported these activities in Victoria versus Burnaby/Coquitlam seem connected to the endeavours with which the centres considered themselves most engaged (i.e., the activities they performed most frequently and meaningfully) in each locale. For example, in their written comments, Victoria educators commented most frequently on the

project’s influence on their experiments with routines/schedules, and on their relationships with children and colleagues, a pattern that is reflected in the ratings shown above. However, in most cases, differences between Victoria and Burnaby/Coquitlam are slight, amounting to little more than one-quarter point, so few meaningful conclusions can be drawn about differences between the sites.

A more meaningful contrast can be found in the ratings of educators who had participated in the project for one versus two years. Unsurprisingly, educators who had participated in the project longer reported that the project had supported them in practice-related activities to a greater degree than educators who had participated for only one year. As shown in Figure 7 below, these differences range from approximately one-half to more than one full point on a 4-point scale, illustrating the participants gain significantly in practice-related skills over time.

Figure 7. Project Support of Practice-related Skills, One year vs. two years of participation.



Numerous comments made by educators reflect the increase in skills contributed by the project. Some representative comments are provided below:

- Pedagogical documentation:* I had a little previous experience but felt a little unsure and nervous about it, e.g., “is this good enough”, “I haven’t done it right”. I now feel more confident about its use and see it as a way of looking at things from a child’s point of view—what they are learning and how they see things. (Educator, Victoria)

- *Transforming the centre environment:* [The project] makes me think a lot more about the environment as the “third teacher,” because we constantly change it to meet the needs of children’s learning. The more their learning goes on, the more I need to think about how to use materials and spaces to enhance their learning. (Educator, Burnaby/Coquitlam)
- *Experimenting with routines/schedules:* We had touched base a little about eliminating too many transitions ... what would a more flexible “no clock” in the classroom look like, etc.? So I took the flexibility and more open flow to the routines—not stopping children in the middle of something is a huge benefit. The flow felt easier-going and relaxed and pushed me out of my comfort zone of routine and time. (Educator, Victoria)
- *Setting up provocations:* I try to set provocations as invitations for adults as well as the children. I have found that I really enjoy working with colour, texture, setting items in creatively designed ways for others to encounter. (Educator, Victoria)
- *Conducting an inquiry:* What I have learned ... is setting up an inquiry ... makes the programs less complicated and more clear for both teachers and children, and it can lead the program to go deeper. (Educator, Burnaby/Coquitlam)
- *Engaging with materials:* We are more thoughtful in our presentation of materials and more attentive to the quality of the materials we use. We now use more natural materials and more attractive and delicate materials. (Educator, Victoria)
- *Dialogues with children:* I learned to listen [to children] more, to ask more questions and hear their response. I also see what children do differently and I respond differently. It has made my work exciting and I am always looking forward to working on a project with them. (Educator, Burnaby/Coquitlam)
- *Dialogues with colleagues:* The relationships with my colleagues have grown throughout the last two years. We have gained trust and a sense of belonging. I am able to discuss all aspects of practice with them and I have seen an improvement in the difficult conversations. It’s almost as if they are able to understand that it is not me against them. It’s all of us working together. (Educator, Burnaby/Coquitlam)
- *Dialogues with families:* [The project] has given me reason and opportunity to discuss topics and explain pedagogical choices and practices with parents. It has been the impetus to share many more narrations than I might otherwise have done. (Educator, Victoria)

Changes in Practice at Individual Centres

Over the course of the two years, with the support of the learning circles and the community facilitators' visits, all centres that participated in the project made significant changes in their daily practice. Below is a brief description of the nature of the changes at each participating centre, based on the observations of the project evaluator and the community facilitators. In keeping with the findings reported above, centres who had participated in the project for two years tended to exhibit the most extensive changes.

Victoria Centres

In the first centre, a StrongStart program that had participated in the project for two years, the educator/facilitator integrated the theoretical perspectives introduced by the project into every aspect of her practice. For example, she adopted a flexible schedule, experimented extensively with materials and provocations, documented and shared with children, families, and colleagues her ongoing inquiries and her work with children as co-constructors of knowledge, and explored, in her documentations and her dialogues with families her thinking about children's relationship with materials nature-culture, decolonization, racism, and gender. This educator has provided a new model of what a school-based drop-in program can be, and has presented at conferences and written articles about her experience.

In the second centre, which had also participated in the project for two years, the educators focused on exploring fluidity of movement in routines and schedules and in the centre environment. Based on these explorations, the educators created more flexibility in the environment. As part of an inquiry into children's relationships with nature, they also become more engaged with the forest that surrounds their centre, making regular excursions as part of the program. The educators produced pedagogical narrations and put them into a binder for families to take home. Participants engaged in ongoing dialogues about the role of the educator, the image of the child, the co-construction of knowledge, and materiality. While some of these dialogues were not taken up in observable ways in daily practice, educators have noted their commitment to continuing to explore these ideas in practice in the future.

Burnaby/Coquitlam Centres

In the third centre, a privately owned family child care in its second year within the project, the two educators worked at transforming the environment (e.g., opening up/de-cluttering the space), experimenting with the use of materials (e.g., incorporating more natural materials, eliminating plastic toys), and engaging in an extensive inquiry of nature-culture that engaged children and their families. The owner/educator continued to grow in her use of pedagogical documentation as a means of extending inquiries and promoting children's learning. Through project readings and discussions, she also built a relationship with her colleague, an educator who was new to the project this year and who was initially skeptical of the approaches that were being explored.

In the fourth centre, a full-day program in a university-based child care complex that was in its second year of the project, educators engaged in critically reflective practice to carry out extensive inquiries into paper and water, deepening their understanding of the agency of materials and the idea of nature-culture, incorporating these perspectives into their daily programming and the environment, both indoors and outdoors. This centre also regularly produced pedagogical documentations, posting them around the centre and emailing them to families on a regular basis as a means of creating dialogue about children's learning and the child care program. Through the latter activities, parents have become deeply engaged in dialogue and decision-making around the program and participate more avidly in centre activities (e.g., a tea party to display and auction art produced by the children related to the centre's ongoing inquiries). The lead educator at this centre is now engaged with the program coordinator in planning a conference in 2014, where they hope to have a local First Nations person deliver a keynote address on the histories/ecologies of the environment where the centre is located.

The fifth centre is a full-day program at a university child care complex that has participated in the project for the first time this past year. At this centre, which had previously adopted a strict routine, educators began to experiment with a more flexible schedule and with using pedagogical documentation as a means of exploring children's interests and developing the centre's programming. Perhaps the most significant change at this centre was the strengthening of relationships among the educators as they began to engage in critically reflective dialogues with one another about the project's philosophies and activities and about their diverse approaches to practice.

In the sixth centre, also a full-day program at a university child care complex in its first year of participation in the project, educators engaged in an inquiry about their encounters with the forest that gradually extended into engagement with sticks/building and with Indigenous perspectives. These inquiries were shared with families through pedagogical documentation and through activities that involved families (e.g., a night forest walk for children and their families). At this centre, the community facilitator engaged in several provocations related to the forest inquiry. Perhaps the most important achievement in the first year was the development of a strong, open relationship between the community facilitator and the educators. At this centre, none of the educators had participated in the project the previous year. The ideas and approaches were entirely new to them, and they were initially skeptical. In the second half of the year, the facilitator had a meeting with the group where they began to articulate their questions and concerns, allowing them to engage with the project more deeply.

Project Outcomes

While this evaluation does not include objective measures of project outcomes, it is possible to assess the correspondence/agreement between the impressions of the project evaluator, the community facilitators, and the educators themselves. Based on these correspondences, the project is associated with three main outcomes. First, the project fosters the development of critically reflective educators. Second, the project results in

enhanced learning opportunities for children. Finally, the project has the potential to generate greater family involvement. Below, these outcomes are briefly discussed in turn.

Critically Reflective Educators

As highlighted in previous sections of this report, this project provides educators with a unique opportunity to learn about contemporary issues in the early years field, to discuss those issues with other educators, and to explore, document, and discuss new approaches in their daily practice with the support of a community facilitator.

Initially, many educators are hesitant about, or overwhelmed by, the project. However, over time, they notice they are beginning to think differently about their practice. This shift often results in a more critically reflective orientation to colleagues, to interactions with children, to pedagogical documentation, and to a range of taken-for-granted practices in the early years field. The quotes below capture some of the shifts that many educators observed in themselves as they became more critically reflective:

It has been our habit now to sit down and discuss not only our observations but our practice and everything we do in our centre. ... We ask questions all the time, and get less defensive. (Educator, Burnaby/Coquitlam)

My previous experience in documentation was that it was a one-time thing—if it's done, it's done. Now I've learned to go back to it, reflect upon it, ask for different perspectives and views. (Educator, Burnaby/Coquitlam)

Through ... this project, I grew to a stage where I form my documentations into a series that reflect the longer learning process of the children. The writing in my documentations is also different from before: they contain more reflective questions. (Educator, Burnaby/Coquitlam)

Enhanced Learning Opportunities for Children

As educators become more critically reflective, they become more open to trying new approaches to daily practice, such as exploring materials, experimenting with changes in routines and schedules, and engaging in long-term inquiries with children. All these shifts in practice result in enhanced learning opportunities, a better environment for learning, and more chances to actively engage children in their own learning. For example:

The children have more time and flexibility to explore with materials and become more deeply involved in their play or activities and follow their interests. (Educator, Victoria)

There is a relaxed relationship with the children. Their needs are met differently now as we don't all rush into a room. We move in stages as needed. Because of our "flow" within the centre, there is less rushing. (Educator, Victoria)

More recently, I am using [pedagogical documentations] to convey the children's learning and experiences back to the children. It helps to extend the children's inquiry and make salient the learning process. (Educator, Victoria)

As children view narrations and talk about them, I believe they solidify their learning and they are reinforced to try the activities again and take the learning to a new level. (Educator, Victoria)

As children become more engaged in their own learning, they are better placed to act as co-constructors of knowledge. Several educators commented on changes in children's learning over the course of the project. For example:

[Children's learning] has been the most significant change I have seen this year. There has been a positive shift in children taking pride in the work they do, the relationships they build, and the respect they have for the environment they live in. They question, observe, reflect, and give feedback. They feel confident in their knowledge, they feel confident to ask questions, they trust the people around them. The behaviours have diminished. Children are focused, interested, and seem to love to research and explore. (Educator, Burnaby/Coquitlam)

It seems that children are more vocal and confident in sharing their theories. I stopped giving them facts, and tried instead to hear their thoughts. They seem to feel that their voices are valid and heard. (Educator, Burnaby/Coquitlam)

The children's learning has become deeper. They are coming out of this project with not only a deep sense of knowledge, but a love for learning, exploring, and asking questions. (Educator, Burnaby/Coquitlam)

Family Involvement

All centres in the project used pedagogical documentation as a way to promote greater family involvement in their programming. The continuum of involvement ranged from simply informing parents of their child's activities, to opening up dialogue about their child, to significant involvement in critical reflection and decision-making about programming. The comments below illustrate various ways the project promoted family involvement, from the perspective of educators:

The narrations have given me examples to use as a focus when talking with parents. Some parents have concerns about their children not connecting with other children, for example, The photos and narratives help me to show parents that their child is connecting and interacting. This can trigger more specific questions and discussion with parents. (Educator, Victoria)

This project has helped to build my confidence in discussing curriculum and behaviours with parents so that I'm more comfortable working alongside them rather than for them. (Educator, Burnaby/Coquitlam)

Having the knowledge, ideas, and perspectives about numerous issues read about and discussed in the project has given me information I've needed to intelligently talk with families who question the changes I have made and why they've been made. (Educator, Victoria)

With the confidence the learning circle has given me, I am better able to dialogue with families about their concerns. At times I find myself pushing the envelope to see if they will look differently at a situation. I now discuss, confidently, my image of the child and the capabilities they have. (Educator, Burnaby/Coquitlam)

I learned to involve families more in the decision-making process. It has helped me to see how much they want to be involved.

Families, in turn, commented on how much they appreciated the educators' efforts to involve them, and on how these efforts have supported their children's learning, at home and in the centre. For example:

I was able to take one of the books of narrations home and talk to my child about what they did at the centre, what she liked about it, and what she found challenging. I really appreciated this opportunity. (Parent, Victoria)

[The documentations] are a good, constant reminder of the more "out of the box," explorative philosophy that is being encouraged and made available here daily. (Parent, Victoria)

We enjoy receiving [the pedagogical narrations] via email as it helps us understand our child's learning experiences. They are well written and observant and foster appreciation for children's perspectives and appreciation for nature and the environment. (Parent, Burnaby/Coquitlam)

We have used these narratives to choose activities at home that interest our daughter and also to discuss with her how those topics relate to the world around her. (Parent, Burnaby/Coquitlam)

Knowing that the project was going on [through the documentations] gave me more confidence in the program our child attends. It also helped me to try to focus on what the children and our son were doing through their activities. I have tried to extend some of the activities at home if I have had the capacity to do so. I try to participate in whatever I can at the daycare. (Parent, Burnaby/Coquitlam)

Discussion

In general, the evaluation indicates that the Community Early Learning and Child Care Facilitators Pilot Project is successful. Most educators consider the project activities to be of high quality and relevant to their practice. Educators are learning about contemporary early years topics and ideas to which they had little previous exposure, and they are acquiring skills that allow them to explore those topics and ideas in daily practice. The project supports critical reflection among educators, enhanced learning opportunities for children, and greater involvement for families. This section of the report discusses issues and challenges raised by educators and community facilitators during the evaluation that, if addressed, could make the project even more effective in its third year.

Learning Circles

The learning circles provide educators with an opportunity to discuss project readings and pedagogical discussions with their colleagues at greater length and in greater depth than is possible in daily practice. Educators made several comments and suggestions to enhance the experience of the learning circles. These comments are summarized below, by topic.

Readings

Comments on the project readings split along two lines. On the one hand, many educators—especially those in their first year of the project—found the readings inaccessible and hard to relate to their practice, a problem possibly compounded by language barriers, as many educators spoke English as a second language. At the same time, many educators expressed a desire for more extensive discussion of the readings.

Overall, it appears that educators want to focus on the readings, even when they are difficult, but they want more time and support to do so. For example, one educator suggested that an overview of the theories and terminology at the first learning circle of the year would be helpful in orienting new participants to the readings. Another suggested that, if possible, the community facilitator might discuss the articles with individual centres prior to the learning circles, so that educators could better understand their relevance to centres' inquiries.

Guest Speakers

Educators expressed strong appreciation for the guest speakers who were invited to the learning circles, and would like to see more guest speakers invited, if possible. Educators appreciated hearing from others in the early years field, as well as experts in other fields (e.g., the mushroom specialist who spoke at the Burnaby/Coquitlam learning circle, which expanded educators' understanding of nature-culture/common worlds). Guest speakers might be especially helpful in relation to topics/ideas that the educators are having a hard time relating to practice, e.g., Indigenous perspectives/decolonization.

Critical Reflective Protocol

The discussion of pedagogical documentations at the learning circles takes place within the protocol for critical reflection, which is described in *Understanding the British Columbia Early Learning Framework: From theory to practice* (Government of British Columbia, 2009). The protocol involves two main stages: one in which educators ask 1-2 questions about the documentation, and a second in which, following a break, the author of the documentation addresses the questions. This format is intended to promote critical reflection, because, among other things, educators cannot “jump in” with all their comments and the presenter needs to reflect on the questions before responding.

While several educators commented on the effectiveness of this protocol, some expressed a desire for it to be “relaxed” to promote more open, flowing discussion and to reduce the sense of intimidation that some educators new to the project felt in presenting their documentations. While the protocol for critical reflection is an important part of the project, perhaps some opportunities could be provided for more open-ended discussion, whether of pedagogical documentations specifically, or of practice issues more generally.

Discussion Format

Numerous educators commented that they would like more opportunities for small group discussions at the learning circles. Especially for educators in their first year in the project, this format is less intimidating, and gives them an opportunity to discuss the project readings in relation to their experiences in their own centres. That said, the whole-group format also promotes diversity in the discussion, which educators considered a desirable attribute at the learning circles (see below). Thus, perhaps efforts can be made to balance small- and whole-group discussion formats.

Group Diversity

Educators commented on the benefits of having early years colleagues from other centres at the learning circles, to ensure a diversity of perspectives in discussions. This comment came up most often from educators in Victoria, where all but one of the educators at the learning circles came from a single centre. It should be noted here that the Victoria community facilitator, recognizing the limitations of a large group from a single centre, made repeated efforts to invite other centres to the learning circles. These efforts will hopefully prove more successful next year.

Duration of Learning Circles

Many educators from Victoria commented on the challenge of coming to a three-hour meeting in the evening after a long day at their centre, stating that they were unable to focus fully on the discussions due to fatigue. Some educators suggested that the learning circles be shortened to two hours. It is important to note that none of the Burnaby/Coquitlam educators, most of whom receive pay to attend the learning circles, commented on this issue. Thus, it is possible that the perceived lack of support for the extra time entailed in participating in the project is the underlying motivation for these comments.

Community Facilitators' Visits

Educators from Victoria and Burnaby/Coquitlam expressed strong appreciation for the community facilitators' visits to their centres. These visits were considered vital in making connections between project ideas/topics and daily practice. Educators commented on the benefits of the community facilitators' questions, suggestions, and support in daily practice. For educators in their first year of the project, the visits were the primary means by which they formed relationships with the community facilitators. These relationships, while sometimes slow to develop (see Vintimilla, in press, for a discussion of similar challenges), are vital to the success of the project.

Educators had several suggestions for how to enhance the usefulness of the community facilitators' visits. These suggestions are summarized below:

- If possible, have longer weekly visits. Lead teachers in Burnaby/Coquitlam centres suggested that, ideally, visits should be at least two hours per centre to allow time for educators to engage with the community facilitator while also attending to the children.
- Schedule visits to overlap with nap time, so that educators have the opportunity to meet with the facilitators one by one and/or as a group to discuss project readings, pedagogical documentations, and ideas for extending projects and inquiries.
- Create a “communication log” in each centre that educators can use on an ongoing basis to jot down ideas and questions they would like to take up with community facilitators during their visits.

Electronic Communication

Community facilitators invest considerable time in composing written summaries of learning circles and visits, which are sent to educators via e-mail. Between visits, facilitators are also available to answer questions, discuss practice issues, and send relevant articles to educators. While educators rated the learning circle summaries and visit summaries highly for quality and relevance to practice, they provided few details of how this information was useful in their written or oral comments during the evaluation. Moreover, community facilitators noted that while a couple of educators corresponded extensively with them via e-mail about practice issues, they rarely had written responses or face-to-face discussions of the learning circle or visit summaries.

In general, most educators avoided electronic communication. For example, last year, a blog was created to facilitate discussion among educators between visits. Only one-quarter of the educators in the project joined the blog, despite repeated invitations and the development of written instructions. Among those who did join the blog, few discussions took place. Thus, it is possible that electronic communication—whether by e-mail or via a blog platform—is not the most effective way to engage with this group of educators. Given the limited number of hours supported by the project, the available time might be better invested in longer visits and more face-to-face discussions with educators.

That said, to the extent that avoidance of electronic communication reflects a general lack of technical proficiency, community facilitators may be able to provide support. For example, some educators may have limited computer skills, impacting their ability to produce pedagogical documentations. If more time is available for one-to-one and small group meetings during visits, facilitators may be able to provide assistance in acquiring relevant skills. Over time, such proficiency may translate into greater comfort with electronic media in general, making ongoing e-mail communication and participation in blogs more feasible.

Between-Site Differences

As discussed earlier, while educators in Victoria and Burnaby/Coquitlam gave similar ratings for project quality, Victoria educators rated the project as somewhat less useful to their practice. All but one of the participating Victoria educators came from a single centre. The following comments from the centre director, which echo those made by many other educators at the centre, may help to explain why:

We had an extremely challenging and stressful year at the centre. We had a number of very challenging children this year, some who exhibited extreme behaviours. This impacted everyone in the centre—high stress levels, long hours, many stretched to their limit, etc. ... In the end, I was not able to commit the time or attention to many of the readings/narrations, and therefore, was not fully engaged with the project. (Centre Director, Victoria)

The Victoria community facilitator made every effort to support educators in responding to the challenges at the centre—a fact that many educators appreciated and commented on. However, the stressful conditions at the site may have created additional resistance to the project among some educators. These conditions may also have limited educators' willingness and ability to engage fully in project activities, especially given that educators at this centre (unlike most in Burnaby/Coquitlam) received no additional pay for such activities. Ultimately, this centre elected not to participate in the project for a third year. In commenting on this decision, most educators, while noting the significant benefits of the project to their practice, cited the extra time required to participate fully in the project over and above their regular responsibilities.

These factors, while beyond the control of the community facilitator or the project co-directors, should be taken into account in the selection of future participants. Under optimal conditions, having a large number of educators from a single centre presents opportunities for synergy within the team and larger-scale change. Under stressful conditions, resistance may be compounded, limiting the project's outcomes. As well, the project is likely to be more successful in centres that are able to compensate educators for time spent on project activities and/or that provide educators with time during their regular hours to engage in activities such as pedagogical documentation. The latter factor is a reflection of systemic challenges in the early years system that need to be addressed to ensure ongoing recruitment and retention of dedicated early years professionals (see

Beach et al., 2004 and Child Care Human Resources Sector Council, 2009, for a discussion).

Summary and Recommendations

Based on the findings reported throughout this document, the second year of the Community Early Learning and Child Care Facilitators Pilot Program was highly successful.

Based on numerical ratings and written and oral feedback, participating educators considered the project to be of very good quality and highly useful in their practice. The project exposed them to a wide range of topics and ideas that are of importance to the contemporary early years field, including the image of the child and the early childhood educator, children and educators as researchers, and other equally important but less familiar topics, such as gendered play, materiality, nature-culture, and decolonization, which are vital to transforming human relationships with one another and with non-human beings. Based on their participation in the project, they consider themselves to have a very good understanding of most of these issues, and judge them to be highly relevant to practice.

As well, educators have had the opportunity to enhance a range of practice-related skills, many of which are distinctive to this project, including pedagogical documentation, setting up provocations, conducting inquiries, and experimenting with schedules and routines. The project has allowed them to engage more deeply and/or differently with other skills that were already part of their repertoire, such as their ability to participate in dialogues with children, colleagues, and families. Moreover, the longer educators had participated in the project, the greater the gains reported in all the areas noted above.

Taken together, the project activities have helped to support more critically reflective educators, enhanced learning opportunities for children, and greater family involvement. These outcomes all support the goals of the project, which include enhancing quality child care, improving children's opportunities for learning, supporting a cadre of early learning professionals who are motivated to stay in the field.

In brief, the evaluation findings suggest that the model tested through the Community Early Learning and Child Care Facilitators Pilot Program is unique and worth extending to more early years settings across BC. In the course of the evaluation, educators made a number of suggestions to enhance the effectiveness of the project. These suggestions form the basis for the most of the recommendations below.

Recommendations

1. Develop additional resources to support community facilitators, including a repository of readings by topic and a presentation that can be used to orient project participants to the ideas and theories that are explored in the project.

2. Restructure the time allotted to project activities to allow community facilitators to conduct longer visits to centres. Moreover, schedule visits so that they overlap with children's nap time, so that community facilitators have the opportunity to (a) observe and engage with children/regular programming; and (b) conduct one-on-one and/or small group discussions with educators about pedagogical documentations, project readings, and practice issues. While learning circle and visit summaries should not be eliminated, they may be shorter and less detailed to allow for more face-to-face dialogue with educators.
3. In support of recommendation (2) above, create a communication log in each centre so that educators can write down questions or comments to discuss with the community facilitator.
4. In recruiting more centres to participate in the third year of the pilot project in Victoria and Burnaby/Coquitlam, aim to expand the project to more diverse early learning settings (e.g., to infant/toddler centres, all-day kindergarten programs, and/or Aboriginal child care centres).
5. Use project findings and activities to increase the pool of qualified and experienced community facilitators across BC. For example, interested educators who are currently participating in the project could "shadow" the community facilitators during some of their work, gaining experience in the approaches they use. As well, finalize a draft blueprint developed in 2012-2013 for a practice-based course on the work of the pedagogista/community facilitator, for delivery at the University of Victoria in 2014-2015.
6. Continue to encourage educators outside the project to participate in the learning circles, supporting the sharing of a wider range of perspectives at these meetings and the creation of larger communities of practice that are exploring the innovative approaches introduced by the project.
7. In further support of recommendation (6), within available funding, enhance communication about the project within the early years field to engage more educators around BC in discussing the ideas and approaches introduced by the project. Such communication may include presentations about the project at conferences and meetings and adapting the blog created in 2012-2013 to draw in a larger group of educators outside the project.

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Appendix A: Invitation Letter to Child Care Centres



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INVESTIGATING QUALITY EARLY CHILDHOOD ENVIRONMENTS

We are happy to inform and invite you to participate in a research initiative entitled “*Investigating Quality Early Childhood Environments*” which is being conducted by Dr. Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw, Dr. Alan Pence and a large group of research assistants. Dr. Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw and Dr. Alan Pence are faculty members at the School of Child and Youth Care in the University of Victoria.

This research is being funded by the Ministry of Children and Family Development, Child Care Policy Branch for the period beginning September 1, 2011 to June 30, 2012.

The purpose of this research project is to situate BC's promotion of quality within the most dynamic discourses currently found internationally regarding quality care. The research will promote the active engagement of key stakeholders, most critically early childhood practitioners (including early childhood educators and family childcare providers) and parents, in discussions and actions that can lead to the formation of sustainable and positive care-giving environments. A participatory action research model will be used to engage early childhood practitioners in BC to reflect on knowledge, experiences, values, and practice to derive richer, contextual meaningful and relevant understandings and practices on ‘quality’ care that best serve the well-being and optimal development of children from diverse backgrounds and settings in BC. The objectives of this project are:

1. To develop a broader understanding of the current major issues constituting the discourse of quality in early childhood care and education from different perspectives emerging through a literature review.
2. To incorporate the issues derived from the literature review to create a rich, contextual and relevant curriculum for early childhood practitioners, that will best meet the needs of children in British Columbia.
3. To engage in professional support and development with BC early childhood practitioners by addressing the issues of quality care through a professional development model, involving group sessions and the design and execution of a

project by practitioners in their practice settings, which will be initiated in the group sessions and carried out in practitioners' settings.

4. To support and collaborate with early childhood practitioners towards designing, executing and evaluating a project in their practice settings.
5. To facilitate focus groups and interview sessions with practitioners towards the evaluation of the professional development model described in points 1 to 4.

Research of this type is important because it will help to advance the development and promotion of rich, contextual, meaningful and relevant understandings and practices related to quality in early childhood settings in BC. This will contribute to new perspectives and knowledge that will best suit and serve children of diverse backgrounds and settings in BC, increasing the benefits of investing in early childhood programs. It will also give you an opportunity to participate in an exciting initiative of professional development.

If you agree to voluntarily participate in this research, your participation will include:

- a) Participating in group sessions (ten three-hour sessions) in which issues related to quality child care will be discussed, with your permission, researchers will be audio and/or video recording the groups sessions.
- b) Implementing a project of your choice in your practice setting related to the issues discussed during the group sessions. Researchers will offer support and guidance during the design and execution of your project, which will involve visits to your setting, engaging in dialogue on an individual and small group basis in person, via email or phone, as well as providing necessary resources. Field notes will be taken by researchers to record conversations during visits in the settings, with your permission. In addition, researchers will collect the field notes and other documentation (e.g., self reflections, photographs, etc.) that you produce during the process of the professional development model. Any photographs that you take of the children during the research project will require permission from the parents (Researchers will give you a form to use).
- c) Participating in a sharing circle that will take place twice during the *Investigating Quality* sessions (September 2011 to June 2012) where all practitioners will meet to share and discuss their experiences, learning, and projects related to the group sessions.
- d) Participating in ongoing and end of project evaluation, which will include, observations, a focus group discussion, interviews, and a survey. Researchers will audio record focus group sessions and interviews with your permission and we will take field notes during the observations.

In total, we will be asking approximately 50 hours of your time throughout a period of 10 months. Involvement in the research project will result in taking time away from your practice. If you agree to participate in this study, we will issue a certificate of participation for the meetings that take place outside working hours which could be used towards your professional development hours. Please note that this certificate must not be coercive. It is unethical to provide undue compensation or inducements to research participants. If you would not participate if the compensation was not offered, then you should decline. If you agree to participate in this study, this form of compensation to you must not be coercive.

Your participation in this project will offer you the opportunity to learn, question and investigate the meanings of quality in early childhood care and education. Through your participation in this project you will benefit from professional development with the potential benefit of increasing your knowledge and skill base in the field of early childhood care and education, contributing to the growth of your practice. You will be involved in the processes of deepening and broadening the understanding of quality in early childhood care and education through the examination of various bodies of literature coupled with reflections on knowledge, experiences and practice by practitioners; contributing to new knowledge in the field of early childhood care and education.

If you are interested in participating in this exciting initiative, please send us a response, at your earliest convenience.

If you require more information please do not hesitate to contact Dr. Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw at (250) 721-6478 or via email at vpacunik@uvic.ca

Please send your response via mail, fax, or electronically to:

Dr. Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw

School of Child & Youth Care

University of Victoria

PO Box 1700, STN CSC

Victoria, B.C. Canada V8W 2Y2

Fax: 250-721-7218

E-mail: vpacunik@uvic.ca

Appendix B: Practitioner Consent Form



University
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Graduate Program
(250) 472-4857

INVESTIGATING QUALITY EARLY CHILDHOOD ENVIRONMENTS

You are being invited to participate in a study entitled “*Investigating Quality Early Childhood Environments*” which is being conducted by Dr. Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw, Dr. Alan Pence and a group of research assistants. Dr. Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw is Assistant Professor at the School of Child and Youth Care in the University of Victoria; and Dr. Alan Pence is Professor at the School of Child and Youth Care in the University of Victoria. If you have any questions you may contact Dr. Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw at (250) 721-6478 or via e-mail at vpacunik@uvic.ca or Dr. Alan Pence at (250) 721-7981 or via e-mail at apence@uvic.ca.

This research is being funded by the Ministry of Children and Family Development, Child Care Policy Branch for the period beginning September 1, 2011 to June 30, 2012.

The purpose of this research project is to situate BC's promotion of quality within the most dynamic discourses currently found internationally regarding quality care. The research will promote the active engagement of key stakeholders -- early childhood practitioners (including early childhood educators working in centre-based child care and family-based childcare providers) and parents-- in discussions and actions that can lead to the formation of sustainable and positive early learning environments. A participatory action research model will be used to engage early childhood practitioners in BC to reflect on knowledge, experiences, values, and practice to derive richer, contextual meaningful and relevant understandings and practices on ‘quality’ care that best serve the well-being and optimal development and learning of children from diverse backgrounds and settings in BC. The objectives of this project are:

1. To develop a broader understanding of the current major issues constituting the discourse of quality in early childhood care and education from different perspectives emerging through a literature review.
2. To incorporate the issues derived from the literature review to create a rich, contextual and relevant curriculum for early childhood practitioners that will best meet the needs of children in British Columbia.

3. To engage in professional support and development with BC early childhood practitioners by addressing the issues of quality care through a professional development model, involving group sessions and the design and execution of a project by practitioners in their practice settings, which will be initiated in the group sessions and carried out in practitioners' settings.
4. To support and collaborate with early childhood practitioners towards designing, executing and evaluating a project in their practice settings.
5. To facilitate focus groups and interview sessions with practitioners towards the evaluation of the professional development model described in points 1 to 4.
6. Research of this type is important because it will help to advance the development and promotion of rich, contextual, meaningful and relevant understandings and practices related to quality in early childhood settings in BC. This will contribute to new perspectives and knowledge that will best suit and serve children of diverse backgrounds and settings in BC, increasing the benefits of investing in early childhood programs.

You are being asked to participate in this study because you are a licensed centre-based or licensed family-based childcare practice. Initially, your setting was contacted and informed about the research project. You (or setting director) contacted us specifying that you would be interested in participating. In addition to you, other practitioners in Vancouver and Victoria are participating in this project. The material provided to you during the group sessions has been previously provided to two groups of practitioners involved in piloting the "Investigating Quality" project since 2006.

If you agree to voluntarily participate in this research, your participation will include:

- a) Participating in group sessions (ten three-hour sessions) in which issues related to quality child care will be discussed. With your permission, researchers will audio and/or video record the group sessions.
- b) Implementing a project of your choice in your practice setting related to the issues discussed during the group sessions. Researchers will offer support and guidance during the design and execution of your project, which will involve visits to your setting, engaging in dialogue on an individual and small group basis in person, via email or phone, as well as providing necessary resources. Field notes will be taken by researchers to record conversations during visits in the settings, with your permission. In addition, researchers will collect the field notes and other documentation (e.g., self reflections, photographs, etc.) that you produce during the process of the professional development model. Any photographs that you take of the children during the research project will require permission from the parents (Researchers will give you a form to use).
- c) Participating in a sharing circle that will take place once a month during the *Investigating Quality* sessions (September 2011 to June 2012) where all practitioners will meet to share and discuss their experiences, learning, and projects related to the group sessions.

- d) Participating in ongoing and end of project evaluation, which will include, observations, a focus group discussion, interviews, and a survey. Researchers will audio record focus group sessions and interviews with your permission and we will take field notes during the observations.

You may review any of the transcripts produced during the project upon request and add any additional comments or extract comments from the original transcripts.

In total, we will be asking approximately 50 hours of your time throughout a period of 10 months. Involvement in the research project will result in taking time away from your practice. If you agree to participate in this study, we will issue a certificate of participation for the meetings that take place outside working hours which could be used towards your professional development hours. Please note that this certificate must not be coercive. It is unethical to provide undue compensation or inducements to research participants. If you would not participate if the compensation was not offered, then you should decline. If you agree to participate in this study, this form of compensation to you must not be coercive.

Participation in this study may cause some inconvenience to you. Engaging in discussions related to your practice during staff meetings might detract your team from other issues. An inconvenience for children and for you might be the interruption or intrusion of being recorded while engaged in daily activities. If this occurs, recording will be stopped. A potential inconvenience to you if you choose to be part of the project outside working hours is that time will be taken from other non-work related activities of your life.

There are no known or anticipated risks to you by participating in this research. You will be involved in group sessions, which will be more or less the same as pre-service professional training sessions and therefore may be somewhat familiar to you. The sessions are not expected to cause undesired stress or emotional disturbance. By being exposed to the contents and the process of the group sessions you will have the opportunity to reflect on your own experiences, practices and values; a process that can be professionally exciting and fulfilling. However, not all your professional experiences may be good. Reflections on negative experiences may be emotionally disturbing at times. An environment of empathy and understanding through listening, respect and appreciation will be established during reflections. A trained facilitator with experience in the field of early childhood education has been hired to deliver the sessions in collaboration with the researchers. You will be asked to contribute only those experiences that you are comfortable and willing to share.

You are invited to select the days and times that a researcher will visit your setting. This approach will not create any possibility of risk other than the usual risks that you may face in your daily activities within your childcare setting. An information letter will be provided to parents to ensure they are aware of researcher visits to your setting. The

project does not involve an evaluation of you or your practice, nor an assessment of children's development and/or learning. As a practitioner you will have the opportunity to engage in a process through which you can receive support and feedback in your practice.

Your participation in this project will offer you the opportunity to learn, question and investigate the meanings of quality in early childhood care and education. Through your participation in this project you will benefit from professional development with the potential benefit of increasing your knowledge and skill base in the field of early childhood care and education, contributing to the growth of your practice. You will be involved in the processes of deepening and broadening the understanding of quality in early childhood care and education through the examination of various bodies of literature coupled with reflections on knowledge, experiences and practice by practitioners; contributing to new knowledge in the field of early childhood care and education. You will receive recognition for your participation in the project. Please see above information regarding a certificate of participation.

Your participation in this research must be completely voluntary. If you do decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time without explanation and without consequences. Similarly, your decision to participate or not to participate will not affect your employment in any way. If any of the issues discussed during the group sessions and/or the visits to your settings make you feel uncomfortable you may leave or stop the discussion at anytime without consequence. If you withdraw from the study your data will only be used after you sign an authorization form. However, please note that it will be very difficult for us to remove what you have said during the focus group sessions. This is due primarily to the fact that after removing one person's dialogue in a discussion, the entire conversation might not make sense in total. We will minimize your data to respect your decision to withdraw while ensuring that we can still gain a good understanding of other participant experiences and insights. If you choose to withdraw from the project, the setting will not continue to receive the funding for a substitute practitioner.

To ensure your continued consent of participation in the research project, prior to each session (i.e. group sessions, setting participation by the researcher during implementation, completion of survey, focus group discussions and interviews during evaluation) we will review the consent form with you verbally.

In terms of protecting your anonymity, your name will not be revealed in transcripts, reports, or publications that we produce and any information you provide will remain anonymous. We will change such things as your name, details about you and any kind of information that identifies you. Our research results will not reveal the identity of you or your family. However, participants involved in the group sessions and focus group

sessions will be able to recognize you. We will ask that all participants respect the confidentiality of the group by not revealing participant discussions with others outside of the group, including the identity or identifying information of other participants. We cannot guarantee that all group members will keep everything that is said in the group confidential. In addition, it may be possible that participating practitioners will be identified by their own childcare setting community (i.e., colleagues, parents) and potentially by other childcare settings (especially in small communities).

If you would like to have your name used in future publications please sign the additional consent section below.

Your confidentiality and the confidentiality of the data will be protected by means of storing all files and data in a locked filing cabinet and password protected computer files in Dr. Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw's office (Room B132 in the Human and Social Development Building) and/or in the research office at L-Hut building, both at the University of Victoria. These are secure locations where data will only be accessible to the researchers involved in the project, who have signed confidentiality agreements. Data will be stored for a maximum period of 5 years. All forms of data will be destroyed by April 1, 2016. Electronic data will be deleted, paper copied will be shredded and audio and video records will be erased or burnt.

It is anticipated that the results of this study will be shared with others in the following ways: a paper will be prepared with the results of the evaluation and mailed to the participating childcare settings and to the Ministry of Children and Family Development, Child Care Policy Branch. Articles, book chapters and PhD theses will also be written.

In addition to being able to contact the researchers at the phone numbers given above, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Associate Vice-President, Research at the University of Victoria (250-472-4545).

You are encouraged to ask any clarifying questions with regard to your participation in this research and we will answer your questions to the best of our knowledge and your satisfaction. Your signatures below indicate that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study and that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researchers.

<i>Name of Participant</i>	<i>Signature</i>	<i>Date</i>
----------------------------	------------------	-------------

A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.

I agree to have my group sessions, focus sessions and interviews audiotaped and/or videotaped.

I wish to review the transcripts of the focus group sessions and interviews.

Please check here Yes No

Your signature below indicates that you give permission to the researchers involved in the “*Investigating Quality Early Childhood Environments*” study, to use your names in future publications and presentations (conferences, institutes, workshops, etc) related to the study. Anticipated publications include articles, book chapters and an Early Childhood Education manual for College Instructors. Publications and presentations will acknowledge the authorship of your contributions.

<i>Name of Participant</i>	<i>Signature</i>	<i>Date</i>
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Authorization to use data upon withdrawal from the project

Upon my withdrawal from the research project entitled “*Investigating Quality Early Childhood Environments*”, I hereby grant Dr. Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw and Dr. Alan Pence the right and permission to use my data in the following ways:

- In results of the evaluation which will be mailed to participating childcare settings and to the Ministry of Children and Family Development and the Child Care Policy Branch.
- In articles, book chapters, conference presentations and Doctoral Theses.

Print Name

Signature

Date

Appendix C: Practitioner Confidentiality Agreement



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Graduate Program
(250) 472-4857

Investigating Quality Early Childhood Environments

Confidentiality agreement for practitioners

Researchers at the University of Victoria are committed to the principle that the confidentiality and anonymity of each individual participant must be protected.

All early childhood practitioners involved in this research project must sign the confidentiality agreement.

1. I will keep completely confidential all information arising from the research project concerning individual children and parents to which I gain access, as well as the comments/reflections done by other practitioners in the group sessions.
2. I will keep confidential the names of all participants as well as any information that can identify them.
3. I will not discuss participant involvement in the research project with others outside of the project.

I give my personal pledge that I shall abide by this assurance of confidentiality

Print Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

If you have any question about confidentiality issues, please contact:

Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw

Phone: (250) 721-6468

Email: vpacini@uvic.ca

Appendix D: Family Information Letter



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INVESTIGATING QUALITY EARLY CHILDHOOD ENVIRONMENTS

We are happy to inform you about a research initiative entitled “*Investigating Quality Early Childhood Environments*” in which the childcare centre your child(ren) attends is participating. The research is directed by Dr. Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw, Dr. Alan Pence and a large group of research assistants. Dr. Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw is Associate Professor at the School of Child and Youth Care in the University of Victoria; and Dr. Alan Pence is Professor at the School of Child and Youth Care in the University of Victoria. If you have any questions, you may contact Dr. Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw at (250) 721-6478 or vpacinik@uvic.ca.

This research is being funded by the Ministry of Children and Family Development, Child Care Policy Branch for the period beginning September 1, 2011 to June 30, 2012.

The purpose of this research project is to situate BC's promotion of quality within the most dynamic discussions currently found internationally regarding quality care. The research will promote the active engagement of key stakeholders, most critically early childhood practitioners (including early childhood educators and family childcare providers) in discussions and actions that can lead to the formation of sustainable and positive care-giving environments. A participatory action research model will be used to engage early childhood practitioners in BC to reflect upon their knowledge, values, experiences and practice, and to explore the meanings and practices of quality care that will best serve the well being and development of children from diverse backgrounds and settings in British Columbia. The objectives of this project are:

1. To develop a broader understanding of the current major issues constituting the discourse of quality in early childhood care and education from different perspectives emerging through a literature review.
2. To incorporate the issues derived from the literature review to create a rich, contextual and relevant curriculum for early childhood practitioners that will best meet the needs of children in British Columbia.
3. To engage in professional support and development with BC early childhood practitioners by addressing the issues of quality care through a professional

development model, involving group sessions and the design and execution of a project by practitioners in their practice settings, which will be initiated in the group sessions and carried out in practitioners' settings.

4. To support and collaborate with early childhood practitioners towards designing, executing and evaluating a project in their practice settings.
5. To facilitate focus groups and interview sessions with practitioners towards the evaluation of the professional development model described in points 1 to 4.

Research of this type is important because it will help to advance the development and promotion of rich, contextual, meaningful and relevant understandings and practices related to quality in early childhood settings in BC. This will contribute to new perspectives and knowledge that will best suit and serve children of diverse backgrounds and settings in BC, increasing the benefits of investing in early childhood programs. We are extremely excited about embarking in this initiative with the childcare setting and look forward to meeting you.

Please note that this research does not involve observations and/or assessments of the children. Rather we will collaborate directly with the practitioners in the settings to offer support in their daily activities. Practitioners will participate in group sessions once a month, and design and implement a project of their own through which they will document their practices, collect children's work and take photographs of key learning experiences. Therefore, we would like to ask your permission to use children's work and photographs/recordings in the research. Please see form attached.

During the research project researchers will be collaborating with practitioners in an exchange of shared experience, dialogue and feedback through the professional development model. Researchers will visit the settings to offer practitioners support during the implementation of their projects. The practitioner in your childcare setting will have a schedule of researcher visits, which will take place during normal setting hours.

Photographs and/or video recordings of your child will only be taken with your permission. Any photographs and/or video recordings taken will not be revealed in transcripts, reports, or publications that we produce unless we have your permission. The confidentiality of the data (photographs, video recordings and children's work) will be protected by means of storing the data in a locked filing cabinet in a secure location as described in the letter of permission. You may receive the photographs taken of your child, upon request. Your child's daily activities in the setting will not be disrupted or negatively impacted during researcher visits and we do not foresee any inconvenience or risk to your child as a result of her or his participation.

We anticipate that the practitioners' participation will have multiple benefits for the child care setting. By participating in this project your child and family will be exposed to an enhanced environment that will be meaningful and supportive to your child's educational and developmental experiences. We expect to effectively evaluate the execution of the project in the childcare setting and develop information which will be helpful in advancing a curriculum model which we expect will best serve the well-being and optimal development of children from diverse backgrounds and settings in BC.

If you have any questions/comments please do not hesitate to discuss them with the childcare setting practitioners and/or Dr. Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw at (250) 721-6478 or vpacinik@uvic.ca.

In addition to being able to contact the researcher at the phone number given above, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Associate Vice-President, Research at the University of Victoria (250-472-4545).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'V. Pacini-Ketchabaw', written in a cursive style.

Dr. Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw

Appendix E: Family Consent Form



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INVESTIGATING QUALITY EARLY CHILDHOOD ENVIRONMENTS

You are being invited to participate in a study entitled “*Investigating Quality Early Childhood Environments*” which is being conducted by Dr. Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw, Dr. Alan Pence and a large group of research assistants. Dr. Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw is Associate Professor at the School of Child and Youth Care in the University of Victoria; and Dr. Alan Pence is Professor at the School of Child and Youth Care in the University of Victoria. If you have any questions you may contact Dr. Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw at (250) 721-6478 or via e-mail at vpacini@uvic.ca or Dr. Alan Pence at (250) 721-7981 or via e-mail at apence@uvic.ca.

This research is being funded by the Ministry of Children and Family Development, Child Care Policy Branch for the period beginning September 1, 2011 to June 30, 2012.

The purpose of this research project is to situate BC's promotion of quality within the most dynamic discussions currently found internationally regarding quality care. The research will promote the active engagement of key stakeholders, most critically early childhood practitioners (including early childhood educators and family childcare providers) in discussions and actions that can lead to the formation of sustainable and positive care-giving environments. A participatory action research model will be used to engage early childhood practitioners in BC to reflect upon their knowledge, values, experiences and practice, and to explore the meanings and practices of quality care that will best serve the well being and development of children from diverse backgrounds and settings in British Columbia. The objectives of this project are:

1. To develop a broader understanding of the current major issues constituting the discourse of quality in early childhood care and education from different perspectives emerging through a literature review.
2. To incorporate the issues derived from the literature review to create a rich, contextual and relevant curriculum for early childhood practitioners that will best meet the needs of children in British Columbia.
3. To engage in professional support and development with BC early childhood practitioners by addressing the issues of quality care through a professional development model, involving group sessions and the design and execution of a

project by practitioners in their practice settings, which will be initiated in the group sessions and carried out in practitioners' settings.

4. To support and collaborate with early childhood practitioners towards designing, executing and evaluating a project in their practice settings.
5. To facilitate focus groups and interview sessions with practitioners towards the evaluation of the professional development model described in points 1 to 4.

Research of this type is important because it will help to advance the development and promotion of rich, contextual, meaningful and relevant understandings and practices related to quality in early childhood settings in BC. This will contribute to new perspectives and knowledge that will best suit and serve children of diverse backgrounds and settings in BC, increasing the benefits of investing in early childhood programs.

You are being approached to participate in this research project because the practitioners in your childcare setting have been involved in the project described above. Your participation is required for the evaluation of the professional development model (as described in point 5). Your participation is important because it will help us understand the implications and effects of the professional development model that the practitioners in your childcare setting participated.

If you agree to voluntarily participate in this research, your participation will include taking part in two focus group discussions, two surveys and two interviews (at the beginning and end of the project). Researchers will audio record the focus group sessions and interviews with your permission. You may review your transcripts from the focus group sessions and interviews upon request and add any additional comments or extract comments from the original transcripts.

The inconvenience to you due to your involvement may mean taking time away from work, family, and/ or other activities. An attempt will be made to schedule the focus group and interview sessions around your work and family schedule.

There are no known or anticipated risks to you by participating in this research. It is expected that you may have had both positive and negative experiences regarding childcare and childcare services for your children. Reflections on negative experiences may be emotionally disturbing at times. An environment of empathy and understanding through listening, respect and appreciation will be established during the focus group and interview. A interviewer/facilitator with experience in the field of early childhood education and counselling will facilitate the sessions. You will be asked to contribute only those experiences that you are comfortable and willing to share.

Your participation in this project will offer you the opportunity to engage in discussions surrounding quality of care for your children and the experiences that you have had since the practitioners in the child care centre that your child(ren) attend began their

participation in the project. Your experiences and insights will contribute to the development of quality childcare in BC.

Your participation in this research must be completely voluntary. If you do decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time without explanation or consequences. Similarly, your decision to participate or not to participate will not affect your access to services at the childcare setting. If any of the issues discussed during the sessions make you feel uncomfortable you may leave or stop the discussion at anytime without consequence. If you withdraw from the project your data will only be used after you sign an authorization form. However, please note that it will be very difficult for us to remove what you have said during the focus group sessions. This is due primarily to the fact that after removing one person's dialogue in a discussion, the group conversation may not make sense. We will however minimize your personal data while ensuring we can still gain a good understanding of other participants' experiences and insights.

To ensure your continued consent to participate in this research, prior to the focus group and interview sessions we will review the consent form verbally.

In terms of protecting your anonymity, your name will not be revealed in transcripts, reports, or publications that we produce and any information you provide will remain anonymous. We will change such things as your name, details about you and any kind of information that identifies you. The research results will not reveal the identity of you or your family. However, participants involved in the focus group sessions will be able to recognize you. We ask that all participants in the focus group respect the confidentiality of the group by not revealing participant information of other participants. We cannot guarantee that all group members will keep everything that is said in the group confidential. In addition, you may be identified by your own childcare setting community (i.e., practitioners, other parents) and potentially by other participating childcare settings (especially in a small community). We will ask the practitioners to keep this information confidential by signing a confidentiality agreement but cannot guarantee complete confidentiality.

Your confidentiality and the confidentiality of the data will be protected by means of storing all files and data in a locked filing cabinet and password protected computer files in Dr. Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw's office (Room B132 in the Human and Social Development Building) and/or in the research office at L-Hut building, both at the University of Victoria. These are secure locations where data will only be accessible to the researchers involved in the project, who have signed confidentiality agreements. Data will be stored for a maximum period of 5 years. All forms of data will be destroyed by April 1, 2016. Electronic data will be deleted, paper copied will be shredded and audio and video recordings will be erased or burnt.

It is anticipated that the results of this study will be shared with others in the following ways: a paper will be prepared with the results of the evaluation and mailed to the participating centres and to the Ministry of Children and Family Development, Child

Care Policy Branch. Articles, book chapters and Masters and Doctoral Theses will also be written.

In addition to being able to contact the researchers at the phone numbers given above, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Associate Vice-President, Research at the University of Victoria (250-472-4545).

You are encouraged to ask any clarifying questions with regard to your participation in this research and we will answer your questions to the best of our knowledge and your satisfaction. Your signatures below indicate that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study and that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researchers.

<i>Name of Participant</i>	<i>Signature</i>	<i>Date</i>
----------------------------	------------------	-------------

A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.

<hr style="border: none; border-top: 1px solid black;"/>	I wish to review the transcripts of the interviews and focus groups
I agree to have my focus groups and interviews audiotaped	Please check here <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

Authorization to use data upon withdrawal from the project

Upon my withdrawal from the research project entitled “*Investigating Quality Early Childhood Environments*”, I hereby grant Dr. Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw and Dr. Alan Pence the right and permission to use my data in the following ways:

- In results of the evaluation which will be mailed to participating childcare settings and to the Ministry of Children and Family Development and the Child Care Policy Branch.
- In articles, book chapters, conference presentations and Doctoral Theses.

Print Name

Signature

Date

Appendix F: Family Permission Form



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Permission to use children's work, photographs and video/audio recordings

Investigating Quality Early Childhood Environments

Principal Investigator:

Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw, Ph.D.

Phone: (250) 721-6478

Email: vpacunik@uvic.ca

Your signature below indicates that you give permission to the practitioners and researchers involved in Investigating Quality Early Childhood Environments to use your child's work, take photographs and video recordings of key learning activities in which your child may be involved as a part of the research project. Your child's work/photographs/video/audio recordings might be used in activities done by practitioners and/or researchers including: articles, book chapters, presentations, face-to-face group discussions, electronic e-mail-based (password protected) group discussions, and PhD thesis written as part of the project. The photographs/video/audio recordings might also be uploaded into an online course website which is password protected and only accessible to early childhood educators enrolled in the Investigating Quality initiative and research team members.

In terms of protecting your child's anonymity, his/her name will not be revealed in transcripts, reports, or publications that we produce that include the photograph/work of the child and any personal information about the child will remain anonymous. We will change such things as his/her name, details about the child and any kind of information that identify him/her. Our research results will not reveal the identity of your child or your family.

However, participants involved in the childcare centre your child attends/and those who know your child will be able to recognize him/her in the photographs/video recordings. We ask all personnel and parents in the childcare centre to respect the confidentiality of the children by not revealing their identity or other identifying information. We cannot

guarantee that all members will keep the identity of your child confidential. In addition, your child may be identified by community members especially in a small community.

The confidentiality of the data will be protected by ensuring that no one other than the researchers will have access to the photographs and video recordings of your child as well as his/her work. The confidentiality of the data (photographs, video recordings, and children's work) will be protected by means of storing the data in a locked filing cabinet and password protected computer files in Dr. Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw's office (Room B 132 in the Human and Social Development Building) and/or in the research office at L-Hut building, both at the University of Victoria.

These are secure locations where data will only be accessible to the researchers involved in the project, who have signed confidentiality agreements. Data will be stored for a maximum period of 5 years. All forms of data will be destroyed by April 1, 2016. Electronic data will be deleted, paper copied will be shredded and video recordings will be erased or burnt. A copy of this form will be left with you and a copy will remain with the researchers.

Name of child care setting

Name of child/children in care

I agree to have practitioners and researchers participating in Investigating Early Childhood Quality Environments collect my child(ren)'s work, take photographs and/or video/audio recordings of my child during his/her time at the childcare setting.

Signature

Date

Authorization to use data upon withdrawal from the project

Upon my child’s withdrawal from the research project entitled “Investigating Quality Early Childhood Environments”, I hereby grant Dr. Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw and Dr. Alan Pence the right and permission to use my data in the following ways:

- In results of the evaluation which will be mailed to participating childcare settings and to the Ministry of Children and Family Development and the Child Care Policy Branch.

- In articles, book chapters, conference presentations and Theses.

Print Name

Signature

Date

Appendix G: Learning Circle Focus Group Questions

1. Describe your experience of the learning circles over this past year. For example, what did you find of most value in the learning circles? Was there anything you did not find valuable? If it helps, describe an experience at the learning circle that you particularly enjoyed or did not enjoy.
2. How did the learning circles support your ability to produce and present pedagogical documentations? What kinds of activities did you find most useful and supportive in this respect?
3. Describe how or whether the learning circles have supported you to develop a critical perspective on your practice.
4. What issues and ideas have you found most useful and/or interesting in relation to your practice?
5. How have the learning circles complemented the visits of the Community Facilitator to your centre?
6. How have the learning circles affected your relationships with your colleagues?
7. If this is your second year in the project, how did your experience of the learning circles differ from your experiences last year?
8. How practical are the learning circles as a model of professional development for early childhood educators across the province? Would you consider participating in learning circles in the future? Do you have any suggestions for how learning circles might be most helpful to early childhood educators?

Appendix H: Practitioner Survey

GENERAL INFORMATION

1. Which best describes your current level of education?
 - a. High school
 - b. College diploma
 - c. College/university degree
 - d. Graduate degree

2. Which best describes the number of years you have worked with young children?
 - a. College or university practicum only
 - b. Less than 3 years
 - c. 3–5 years
 - d. 5–10 years
 - e. More than 10 years

3. Describe the program in which you work:
 - a. Program type
 - b. Number of children
 - c. Ages of children
 - d. Number of colleagues
 - e. Location of program—rural or urban
 - f. Your position in the program

4. How many years have you been involved in the project?
 - a. One
 - b. Two

RATINGS OF THE PROJECT'S QUALITY AND RELEVANCE

5. On a scale of 1-7 (where 7 = highest quality and 1= lowest quality), rate the *quality* of the following project activities:

Project as a whole	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Learning circles	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Facilitator's visits	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Learning circle summaries	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Facilitator's visit summaries	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Project readings	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Visits to centres/exhibits	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Guest Speakers	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Project Blog	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

6. On a scale of 1-7 (where 7 = extremely useful and 1= of no use), rate the following aspects of the project, based on *how useful they were to you personally in your practice*:

Project as a whole	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Learning circles	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Pedagogical Facilitator visits	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Learning circle summaries	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Facilitator's visit summaries	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Project readings	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Visits to centres/exhibits	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Guest Speakers	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Project Blog	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

7. Throughout the project, we have read about and/or discussed a number of ideas in relation to early years practice. On a scale of 1 to 7 (where 7=excellent understanding and 1=no understanding), rate ***how well you feel you understand these issues/ideas, based on your experience in the project.***

Flexible routines/schedules	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Image of the child	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Children as researchers	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Image of the early childhood educator	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Educators as researchers/inquirers	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Challenging behaviours	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Gendered play	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Materials/Materiality	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Nature-culture/Common worlds	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Indigenous perspectives / decolonization	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

8. In relation to the same ideas above, on a scale of 1 to 7 (where 7=highly relevant and 1=irrelevant), rate ***how relevant you consider the following ideas/issues to be in relation to your practice.***

Flexible routines/schedules	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Image of the child	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Children as researchers	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Image of the early childhood educator	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Educators as researchers/inquirers	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Challenging behaviours	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Gendered play	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Materials/Materiality	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Nature-culture/Common worlds	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Indigenous perspectives / decolonization	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

9. On a four-point scale, where 1=not at all, 2=a little, 3=significantly, and 4=a great deal, evaluate *the extent to which the project supported you to carry out the following practice-related activities*:

Pedagogical documentations	1	2	3	4
Transforming the centre environment	1	2	3	4
Experimenting with routines/schedules	1	2	3	4
Setting up provocations	1	2	3	4
Conducting an inquiry	1	2	3	4
Engaging with materials	1	2	3	4
Dialogues with children	1	2	3	4
Dialogues with colleagues	1	2	3	4
Dialogues with families	1	2	3	4

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

10. What is your overall perception of what this project is about? If you were describing this project to a colleague in another child care centre, what would you say?
11. How did you benefit from the visits of the pedagogical facilitator? In your perception, what was the role of the pedagogical facilitator in your centre?
12. What was your previous experience of pedagogical documentation prior to the onset of the project? How do you use pedagogical documentation in your practice now? How did the project affect your views and your use of pedagogical documentation?
13. Describe how the project affected your relationships with (a) children; (b) families; and (c) colleagues in the centre.
14. How do you think the project activities benefited children’s learning?
15. How did the project influence your relationships with materials and the child care environment?
16. What was your previous exposure to the ideas that were introduced to the project? What are the central ideas you took from the project? In what ways do these ideas affect your practice? Do you think you will draw on these ideas in the future? Why or why not?

17. At the beginning of this year, you and your colleagues were asked to engage in an inquiry about some topic in the context of your practice. What was your inquiry? Describe how this inquiry affected your engagement in your practice.
18. What factors (e.g., about the project delivery or the conditions in your particular centre) enhanced or detracted from your ability to engage with the project?
19. If this is your second year in the project, how did you experience this year compared to the first year?
20. Would you participate in this project again? Why or why not?
21. Please use this space to add any comments you want to make about the project that were not addressed in the other questions.

Appendix I: Community Facilitator Survey

1. Describe your experience of the different components of the Community Early Learning and Child Care Facilitators Pilot Program (“the project”) over this past year. In your response, you may reflect on how this year’s experience differs from last year’s, including the experience of working with new centres and working with centres for a second year.
 - the learning circles;
 - your visits to the participating centres;
 - your ongoing communications with participating centres between visits and between learning circles;
 - your collaboration with other project staff (the other Community Facilitator, the Principal Investigator, the participant-evaluator).
 -
2. How did the different components of the project support one another?
3. What changes did you witness in participating centres in terms of:
 - daily schedule/programming;
 - work with materials / materiality;
 - attitudes and practices relating to children’s learning and children’s roles as co-constructors of knowledge;
 - attitudes and practices relating to the role of the early childhood educator;
 - use of pedagogical documentation;
 - integration of project ideas and related literature into practice;
 - children and educators’ relationships with nature/nature-culture/the environment;
 - children and educators’ relationship with issues such as decolonization, racism, and gender.
4. What did you consider to be the greatest successes of the project over the past eight months in your community?
5. What were the greatest challenges you experienced in carrying out your role this year?

6. What resources would support you in carrying out your role in the future?
7. How effective do you consider the project to be as a model of professional development for early childhood educators, and as a way of creating high quality environments for children and families in BC?
8. Based on your experience over the past two years, what are some directions you would like the project to explore next year? What changes, if any, might you suggest to the model for future delivery in more BC communities?
9. Is there anything else about your experience with the project that you would like to share?

Appendix J: Family Survey

1. How many children participate in your child care centre, and how long have they been attending?
2. Are you aware that your child's centre has been participating in the Child Care Community Facilitator Pilot Project? How were you made aware of the pilot project, and what is your impression of its purpose?
3. In what ways has your family been involved in the pilot project? How has this involvement helped you in your efforts to support your child's early experiences at home and/or in the child care centre?
4. Have you noticed any changes in your child's centre in the past year? If so, what were the changes and what did you think about them?
5. Have you noticed the stories and pictures (pedagogical narrations) about children's learning on the walls of your child's centre? Has the centre sent you any of these stories and pictures? What do you think of them?
6. Does your child mention any favourite activities at the centre? If so, what are they?
7. How has the child care centre allowed your child to pursue his/her interests and further his/her learning?
8. What are your suggestions about how the centre can provide the best possible experiences for you and your child?