

Online engagement on Indigenous early learning and child care launched^[1]

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AVAILABILITY

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EXCERPTS

The Government of Canada is working to increase the affordability, quality, flexibility and inclusivity of early learning and child care. For Indigenous children and their families, this includes supporting community-led early learning and child care that creates a foundation for pride and confidence in cultural identity.

In support of this commitment, the Honourable Jean-Yves Duclos, Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, today launched an online engagement process to collect stories, views and ideas from Indigenous communities and people across Canada on early learning and child care.

Engagement activities are being led by National Indigenous Organizations, Indigenous partners and the Government of Canada. The online engagement period will run until July 21, 2017. The Government will then collaborate with Indigenous partners to collect and validate the information and take what is learned to co-develop an Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care Framework. In so doing, the Framework will reflect the unique needs and priorities of First Nations, Inuit and Métis children and families across Canada.

You are encouraged to participate in the Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care online engagement process and download a toolkit to help host your own discussions in your community.

Quote

"The Government of Canada believes that all Canadian children deserve a fair chance at success. We are pleased to be working with national Indigenous organizations and engaging with Indigenous peoples to co-develop a distinct approach to Indigenous early learning and child care that provides Indigenous children in Canada with a solid foundation for future success."

– The Honourable Jean-Yves Duclos, Minister of Families, Children and Social Development

Quick Facts

- The Government of Canada is committed to responding to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Calls to Action, including the call to develop culturally appropriate early childhood education programs for Indigenous families.
- Budget 2017 proposes to invest \$7 billion over 10 years, starting in 2018–19, to support and create more high quality, flexible, fully inclusive and affordable child care spaces across the country. A portion of this investment will be dedicated to improving access to culturally appropriate early learning and child care programs for all Indigenous children.
- Budget 2016 proposed investments of \$100 million in 2017–18 to build capacity in existing Indigenous early learning and child care programs while the Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care Framework is being co-developed. From these funds, \$46.2 million is being provided to the First Nations and Inuit Child Care Initiative, \$38.4 million to Aboriginal Head Start On Reserve, and \$15.4 million to Aboriginal Head Start in Urban and Northern Communities.

Background

On March 22, 2017, the Government of Canada released Budget 2017, which proposes to invest \$7 billion over 10 years, starting in 2018–19, to support and create more high quality, affordable child care spaces across the country. A portion of this investment will be dedicated to early learning and child care programs for all Indigenous children.

The Government of Canada has been collaborating with Indigenous peoples since summer 2016 towards the development of an Indigenous early learning and child care framework that will reflect the unique needs and priorities of First Nations, Inuit and Métis children and families across Canada. To further support the development of the Framework, and to complement the engagement activities being led by Indigenous partners, the Government will hold an online engagement process from May 17 to July 21, 2017.

Early learning can include a range of activities designed to support child development and learning for young children, typically from birth to age 6. These activities support language, emotional, intellectual and physical development and can take place in the home, in a pre-school or nursery school, or in a child care or day care setting.

Child care is the caring for a child or children, usually from birth to age 12 or 13, by a day-care centre, babysitter or other provider.

High quality early learning and child care has been shown to have significant short-term and long-term benefits, such as improved childhood development, improved school readiness and educational attainment, increased parental labour market participation, reduced poverty, and improved social mobility between generations.

For Indigenous children and families, culturally appropriate early learning and child care that takes into account the cultures, traditions, values and customs of First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities can be critical in creating a foundation for pride and confidence in their cultural identity.

To reflect the unique needs and priorities of First Nations, Inuit and Métis children and families across Canada, and aligned with the Government of Canada's commitment to reconciliation, an Indigenous early learning and child care framework is being co-developed with Indigenous peoples. This framework is intended to guide future investments and programming approaches in Indigenous early learning and child care.

The Government currently invests in three key Indigenous early learning and child care programs:

- **Aboriginal Head Start On Reserve**, available to First Nations children and families living on reserve, is administered by Health Canada and supports early child development strategies that are designed and controlled by First Nations communities.
- **Aboriginal Head Start in Urban and Northern Communities** is administered by the Public Health Agency of Canada and funds Indigenous community-based organizations in urban and northern areas to develop programs that promote the healthy development of Indigenous preschool children (Inuit, Métis and First Nations children and families living off reserve).
- **First Nations and Inuit Child Care Initiative** is administered by Employment and Social Development Canada and supports First Nations people living on reserves and Inuit communities in developing and implementing child care programs to address their local and regional needs.

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