

# Quebec pilot project to introduce sexual education to daycare-aged kids <sup>[1]</sup>

**Author:** The Canadian Press

**Source:** CTV News

**Format:** Article

**Publication Date:** 19 Jul 2018

## AVAILABILITY

Read online <sup>[2]</sup>

## EXCERPTS

Sexual education, usually reserved for elementary and high school students, will be offered to some 1,200 Quebec daycare and kindergarten students beginning this fall as part of a pilot project.

The project will be run by the Marie-Vincent Foundation, which fights sexual abuse of children and teenagers.

The foundation's director of professional services says the course has been designed for children up to five years old, and touches on notions of sexuality and equality in relationships in an age-appropriate way.

Annie Fournier said the project is designed to help kids feel comfortable talking about relationships from a young age.

"If we start to quietly broach those themes in daycare and afterwards, when kids get to school we'll keep talking about it, and the discussion will be easier and more open," she said.

Some 300 educators will be trained by the foundation to implement the program, which could eventually be extended to more daycares and community centres if the pilot is successful.

Several Quebec government departments are partners in the project, which is timed to coincide with a new sexual education curriculum that will be rolled out in schools in the fall.

The project is called Lantern/Awacic, the latter being an Atikamekw word meaning "little being of light," in reference to a child.

The tools created for the pilot include two books that have been written for children ages three to five that touch on the topics of equality between girls and boys and respecting personal space.

Another book, aimed children up to two years old, teaches that both girls and boys can laugh, cry, get scared and play whatever games they want.

The foundation has also designed a game designed to prevent sexual violence by teaching children what to do when faced with an unacceptable situation, such as someone saying it's OK to touch them because it's "just a game."

"The main message conveyed is that anything that involves the sexual parts (of the body) is not a game and shouldn't be found in a game," Fournier said.

The test regions for the pilot project include two multicultural Montreal neighbourhoods, the Manawan and Wemotaci First Nations, a disadvantaged neighbourhood in Longueuil on Montreal's South Shore, and the rural French-speaking municipality of Saint-Remi, south of Montreal.

Fournier said the program's resources will reflect the different realities of each regions and will be offered in French, English, Innu and Atikamekw.

**Region:** Quebec <sup>[3]</sup>

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